



Safe Driving Tips for Back-to-School Season

It's that time of year again when schools across the county will soon be back in full swing. That means busy playgrounds, more kids running across the street and yellow school busses seemingly everywhere. Motorists can prepare for the back-to-school driving season by following a few simple safety tips.

Slow Down!

The speed limit in school zones is reduced to 25 mph for a reason. Watch for children walking in the street, especially if there are no sidewalks in the neighborhood. Also, look for children playing and congregating near bus stops. Cover the brake pedal with your foot while scanning the road for kids when entering a marked school zone. Remember to always come to a complete stop at stop signs, checking carefully for children on sidewalks and in crosswalks before proceeding.

Yield to School Busses

Exercise caution when approaching a school bus or driving near bus stops. NEVER pass a school bus while its lights are flashing and children are entering or exiting the bus. Yellow flashing lights indicate that the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. You should slow down and prepare to stop. Red flashing lights and an extended stop arm indicate that the bus has stopped, and that children are getting on or off. Motorists must stop their cars and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the extended stop sign is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving before they can start driving again. You may also have to stop if traveling in the *opposite* direction of the bus and it has stopped with red flashing lights, depending on the circumstances and laws in your state. Also, don't tailgate a bus as they make frequent and often sudden stops (Rule of thumb: stay far enough back that you can see the driver in the bus rear-view mirror). Finally, when school busses are trying to merge back into traffic, you must give them the right of way.

Be Alert and Eliminate Distractions

Be aware that children often behave unpredictably, so keep an eye out for kids darting into the street or crossing without first looking both ways for traffic. On streets without crossing guards, pay special attention to children trying to cross the street. Be especially careful on streets without sidewalks or streets with on-street parking as it may be hard to notice a child emerging from behind a car. Don't talk on your phone or send text messages while you're driving (which is actually illegal while in school zones in most states – please check applicable laws in your state).

Reverse Responsibly

Check for children on the sidewalk, driveway and around your vehicle before slowly backing up. If you have children, teach them to never play in, under or around vehicles – even those that are parked.

Watch for Bicycles

Children on bikes are often inexperienced, unsteady and unpredictable. Slow down and allow at least three feet of passing distance between your vehicle and the bicycle. Always keep an eye out for bicyclists in hot spots like marked school zones, bike lanes and near bus stops.

Look Out for New/Inexperienced Drivers

When driving (especially near high school campuses), keep in mind that a higher number of motorists you encounter may be teens hitting the road for the first time. While learning to drive, teens may be overly tentative or make unexpected maneuvers. Be patient, forgiving and remember to practice your defensive driving techniques.

Most accidents can be avoided if even just one party is paying close attention. Besides having less experience, teen drivers are more often impulsive or distracted, so you need to do your part to ensure their safety. Being aware of back-to-school season driving challenges and following these driving guidelines can help make the streets safer for everyone.

Visit [Allstate Be Aware and Prepare](#) and the [Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety](#) for more, helpful information.