



Promoting walking and bicycling to school:

# **An event planning guide for Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day**









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# It's time to walk and roll!



Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day are energizing events. They can remind adults and students alike of the simple joy of walking or bicycling to school. For many communities, these events lead to more walking and bicycling throughout the school year, sometimes because the event draws attention to safety concerns that need to be addressed or because children and families get inspired to use their feet for the school commute more often. International Walk to School Day takes place every October and National Bike to School Day occurs in May as part of Bike Month. For this year's event dates, see [www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org).

**While the focus is on walking in October and bicycling in May, communities can – and do – choose to just walk, just bike or to have a combination of walking and bicycling at their events.** There's no one right way to do it. Walk and Bike to School Day events come in all shapes and sizes. Start small, or start big – the key is to find a good fit for your community. In the past 10 years more than 17,500 schools in 4,500 cities have held 31,000 Walk to School Day events. They do so for a variety of reasons that range from serious to fun, such as promoting physical activity, bringing attention to safety needs, building a sense of neighborhood and inspiring school spirit. Studies have shown that physical activity can positively impact academic achievement, student morning energy levels and attention, truancy and absenteeism, and can improve schools and their communities through social bonding and community building.

In North Carolina, interest in walking and bicycling to school continues to grow. North Carolina's Bike to School Day participation has tripled since 2012 (the event's first year), from 7 registered events to 41 events in 2014, and Walk to School Day participation nearly doubled between 2013 and 2014.

In a 2014 survey of North Carolina Walk to School Day event organizers, 70% indicated that their event led to the kinds of changes that help make it possible for students to walk and bicycle to school more often, such as school policies designed to encourage active travel to school, pedestrian safety education and signage.





## What if no students live close enough or the route is not safe?

Schools have found creative ways to hold events. Consider an on-campus event, or setting up remote meeting points. For more information, read [When walking or biking from home is not an option](#).



"We had a great morning at Watts Montessori's Walk and Bike to School Day in Durham today! Everyone got a chance to run and bike around the school yard once they arrived!"


**-Active Routes to School Coordinator  
about a Bike to School Day  
event in Durham County**



## Who can be a Walk or Bike to School event organizer?

Anyone who wants to champion holding an event at a school can organize one, as long as the principal gives the green light. Organizers are often PTA members, other parents, school nurses, PE teachers, school principals or local non-profit organizations. This guide is written for anyone who is stepping up to be an event organizer or is involved in planning an event.

## Using this guide

Walk or Bike to School events can be simple or complex so this guide aims to give ideas and inspiration for a range of situations and resources. Whether there is walking, biking or both at your event, much of the planning and ideas are the same. However, events that include bicycling have some special considerations. As you read, take note of the  icon for information that is just for events that include two wheels.

Perhaps the greatest tip for success for any Walk or Bike to School event is to tie it back to something your community really cares about, whether that's promoting an active lifestyle, safety, sense of community or something else. And have fun!

# Steps to planning a Walk or Bike to School Day event

Many successful events begin with little time to spare. A smaller event could simply include the families that sometimes walk or bike to school but make it a point to celebrate together on a special day. A larger event could invite others in the community to walk or ride together and include an activity when the students arrive at school.

This section presents planning steps for two different scenarios: When there is a week to plan, read **Option 1**. When you've got time to plan a more elaborate event, read **Option 2**.


Just as no two events are exactly the same, there is no one right way to have an event. It is about making the event work for your school and community.



## Option 1: When there's no time to spare!

### Day 1:


- Obtain the school principal's approval for a Walk or Bike to School Day event.
- Decide if the event will encourage walking, bicycling or both and how it will be organized. The easiest last minute option is for families to come from their own homes, with other families joining along the way. For schools that can ramp up quickly, another possibility is for students to meet and head to school as a group.
- Register the event at <http://www.walkbiketoschool.org> to be included in the official event count. Registering your event will also give you free access to extra resources and promotional materials and provides free marketing. It lets the media and other schools know what your school is doing.
- For more information about resources that may be available for your school, contact your local Active Routes to School Coordinator at [www.communityclinicalconnections.com/ActiveRoutes](http://www.communityclinicalconnections.com/ActiveRoutes).

 If you anticipate more bicyclists than usual, make a plan for where the bicycles will be stored during the school day.



## Day 2:

- Invite students and parents to participate. If the school has a listserv, use it to announce your event. Download fliers that can easily be printed on a home or school computer at [www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/build-excitement/fliers-and-banners](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/build-excitement/fliers-and-banners).
- Think safety. If some students already walk or bike to school, safety issues should have been addressed. Check with the school, the resource officer (if there is one), or the local police department to see if there are any special safety issues. If groups will be walking or biking, you may want to ask for police assistance with traffic along the route, possibly by accompanying the group or providing traffic control at any major crossings. See [Resources](#) for safety handouts that could be helpful to distribute ahead of time.

 Remind families that bicyclists need to have helmets and wear them correctly.

“This year we had over 100 parents attend, plus community people, and our police and fire departments. We had a great turn out and plan to participate again next year.”

**-Walk to School Event  
Organizer in Rutherford County**



- Create posters or a banner that will greet students when they arrive at school. Potential phrases include, “Thanks for walking,” “It’s Walk to School Day,” “We biked to school today!” For banners, visit [www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/build-excitement/fliers-and-banners](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/build-excitement/fliers-and-banners).

## Day 7:

- Event day is here! Take photos of walkers and riders (if allowed by the school). Once you have the school’s permission, share your event photos on the Safe Routes to School Facebook page [www.facebook.com/saferoutesinfo](http://www.facebook.com/saferoutesinfo), or on the Walk and Bike to School event yearbook page [www.walkbiketoschool.org/go/how-did-it-go/event-yearbooks](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/go/how-did-it-go/event-yearbooks).
- As students arrive, ask them to contribute to a list like: Ways they got their parents to walk and bike to school with them, Top 10 reasons to walk and bike to school and/or Top 10 things that need improvement to make walking and biking to school easier and safer. Save the students’ lists to get ideas for actions that need to be taken in the coming months and ways to make next year’s event even better.

## Days 3-5:

- Recruit volunteers to help distribute fliers and, if desired, to greet walkers and bicyclists on the big day.

## Day 6:

- Make an intercom announcement to remind students to walk or bicycle to school tomorrow.





## Option 2: An event with a bigger splash


Events sometimes have more than one goal (like to kick off weekly Walking Wednesdays, promote physical activity, have fun!) so it makes sense that there might be multiple partners and potentially activities before, during and/or after the event. The sky is the limit so these steps are designed to help you decide how to best maximize your event and reach your goals.


### 1. Get approval from the school

Make sure the school principal supports the event. Some principals even become event champions.

### 2. Envision a fun event

Think about what would work best for your community. Will students meet and form a parade to head to school? Or will families leave from their own homes, adding other families along the way? Will there be a celebration at the school? Ask parents, school staff, administration and students what they think and see **Great ideas for your event**.

 If families are interested in forming a Bike Train to head to school, see the Bike Train guide at <http://walkbiketoschool.org/keep-going>.

 If you anticipate more bicyclists than usual, make a plan for where the bicycles will be stored during the school day.

“Our PTA provided fresh fruit, water, and healthy snacks for all of the walkers once they got to school, and we were able to join with a local coffee shop that provided free coffee to parents, which was great!”

**-Walk to School Event  
Organizer in Wake County**



### 3. Register the event

Register at **[www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org)** to include your event as part of the official national count and access free downloadable materials such as banners, fliers, stickers, punch cards, puzzles and certificates. Registering is also free marketing. It lets the media and other schools know what your school is doing.



## 4. Approach partners and recruit volunteers

There are likely other people or groups who share the desire to promote walking and bicycling to school. Consider inviting teachers, school administrators, law enforcement, local businesses and public officials – maybe even a local celebrity like a local television meteorologist, a college sports team or the high school’s mascot to play a role in the day by walking or bicycling with students, greeting students and families when they arrive at the school or donating refreshments or incentives.


Contact your Active Routes to School Regional Project Coordinator for more information about resources available for your school

**[www.communityclinicalconnections.com/ActiveRoutes](http://www.communityclinicalconnections.com/ActiveRoutes)**.

## 5. Think safety

If some students already walk or bike to school, any safety issues should have already been addressed. However, your event may have many more students arriving on foot or bicycle than usual and that may require special consideration.

Check with the school, the resource officer (if there is one), or the local police department to see if there are any special safety issues. If groups will be walking or riding, you may want to see if local law enforcement can give support by accompanying the group or providing traffic control at key crossings. Let families know if the event is a one-way trip so that they plan for how their student (and student’s bicycle if necessary) will get home again.

 Remind families that bicyclists need to wear helmets.



See **Safety on the event day and beyond** for more information about what to consider and potential strategies. At minimum, review the safety tips in the **Resources** section and share them with families.

## 6. Make a plan to include children with disabilities

Walk and Bike to School Day events create opportunities for all children to interact and socialize with their peers. These events can also provide chances to teach pedestrian and bicycle safety skills and offer positive experiences to encourage independent travel later in life. Schools have found creative ways to make sure children with many kinds of disabilities can participate. Learn more about providing access for all students at [www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/plan-the-event/access-for-all-students](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/plan-the-event/access-for-all-students).

## 7. Promote the event

Make sure that students and parents know how to participate, and let the local media know when and where things are happening. These events make great visuals but check with the school about any photo/video policies first. See **Resources** for Talking Points to help you or the designated spokesperson be ready to talk to media.

For press releases, PSAs, logos, flyers, banners and more go to <http://walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/build-excitement>. Some communities pick a rain date and others choose to proceed rain or shine. Either way, explain the plan in flyers and other communications.

## 8. Celebrate

Enjoy the magic of what a day can do! Take photos of walkers and riders (if allowed by the school). Once you have the school's permission, share your event photos on the Safe Routes to School Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/saferoutesinfo>, or on the Walk and Bike to School event yearbook page <http://walkbiketoschool.org/go/how-did-it-go/event-yearbooks>.



"I had a group of volunteers that helped me make signs and banners to hang up along the route. To promote the event, flyers were posted around school, a flyer went home with the students with all the event details, and morning announcements were made at school. All families were encouraged to carpool to our meeting spot and then walk from there. We ended up having 245 walkers, including Cary's mayor, Harold Weinbrecht, join in the event!"

**-Walk to School Day Event  
Organizer in Wake County**



## 9. Make your next move

If you had a planning team or key volunteers, you may want to host a debriefing meeting to talk about what went well and what should be changed for next year. Many communities are so energized by the event that they want to start doing more to make it possible for students to walk and bicycle more often. See **What's Next** for ideas for taking it beyond the day.

For more information about how to plan a Walk or Bike to School Day event, visit [www.walkbiketoschool.org/getting-started](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/getting-started).



# Great ideas for your event



1. **Carry** signs that display pedestrian or bicycle safety messages like, “Walking to school is cool,” “Watch for Walkers,” or “Hike it Bike It I like it!” For downloadable event signs, visit [www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/build-excitement/event-signs](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/build-excitement/event-signs).
2. **Provide** a nutritious breakfast or snack.
3. **Incorporate** a walking or biking theme into a physical education class.
4. **Calculate** the total steps or miles accrued during the event and display it at the school.
5. **Invite** the school mascot or wear school colors while walking or biking.
6. **Form** a walking school bus or bicycle train. See [www.walkbiketoschool.org/keep-going/ongoing-activities](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/keep-going/ongoing-activities).
7. **Set up** a bicycle decorating station so students can use crepe paper, balloons and other small items to decorate their bicycles. Have an adult check to be sure that decorations will not interfere with safely riding the bicycle or obstruct the view for the rider or other riders nearby.
8. **Ask** all participating students to sign a banner proclaiming, “We walked and rolled to school today!” and hang it in the school. See [www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/build-excitement/fliers-and-banners](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/build-excitement/fliers-and-banners).
9. **Make and display** posters promoting the event at school, along the route(s), and throughout the community.
10. **Provide** parents with maps of suggested walking and bicycling routes to school using resources like Google Maps ([www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps)).
11. **Host** a bicycle skills clinic before the event day. See [Safety on the event day and beyond](#) for more information.
12. **Set up** a helmet fit check station before the ride. See [Safety on the event day and beyond](#).
13. **Ask** students to help plan the event. Members of student councils, student safety patrols and other leadership groups can provide good peer role models.
14. **Designate** an area for parents to “Park and Walk” so that children who live further away can participate. It will also reduce traffic congestion at school. Some schools will allow school buses to drop off students at a meeting point so that they can walk the remainder of the route too.
15. **Play** walking-themed songs such as, “Walking in Memphis” by Marc Cohn, “Walking on Sunshine” by Katrina & the Waves, and “I Would Walk 500 Miles” by the Proclaimers, or songs that make students smile like “Happy” by Pharrell Williams.

# Great ideas from North Carolina events

Not sure what will work with your community or want to try something new? Borrow ideas from other event organizers or use the ideas to show your partners what has already been done.

“Our event was successful because our high school ROTC and band really supports our walk and makes it festive. Our community and parents really support the walk every year.”

**-Walk to School Day Event**  
**Organizer in Cumberland County**



“Event went really well. Lots of participation and organizations that came out, including Safe Kids Cape Fear, Pilots International, FedEx, Chick-fil-A, Wilmington PD and Wilmington Fire Rescue.”

**-Walk to School Day Event**  
**Organizer in New Hanover County**



“As the kids approached the finish line, they were greeted by the school mascot, Mel the koala and rewarded with stickers and Clif bars. The kids enjoyed having their pictures taken with the mayor when they arrived at school and signing the Walk to School Day banner!”

**-Walk to School Day Event**  
**Organizer in Wake County**



“Volunteer teachers, management, and parents manned the table and assisted with the shuttle runs and walking the groups down the school. The Police Department provided crossing services from the sidewalk to the school because we do have a lot of fast-moving traffic on the street perpendicular to our school... The children loved carrying the reflectors provided by one of our parents, drinking the ‘hot’ chocolate, and walking to school with their families and friends.”

**-Walk to School Day Event**  
**Organizer in Durham County**



“We promoted our Walk to School Day by making daily announcements in the school, announced it on our school sign, posted a picture on our website, posted a poster in the window of the building and provided phone calls to the student’s parents. I contacted the church for permission to use them as our meeting point. The Sheriff’s Department assisted with blocking traffic so that we could all walk to school safely. The students who rode the bus were dropped off at the church along with car riders and walkers.”

**-Walk to School Day Event**  
**Organizer in Edgecombe County**



# When walking or biking from home is not an option

Two main factors get in the way of walking or biking from home: Students live too far away and/or there is not a safe route leading to the school. If distance is an issue but there is a walk- or bike-friendly route leading to the school, then a remote meeting point can work well. If the school cannot be safely accessed on foot or bicycle then consider holding an event on the school campus. These events can bring visibility to the reasons why students cannot walk or bike from home and provide a venue to talk about the needed changes.

## Walk at School events

Recess, physical education, or even class time can be dedicated to walking or biking together. Students can use the school field or playground or, with a little planning, walk around the school campus. Resourceful event organizers have even held walks in gyms or class hallways in rainy weather. Consider the following activities:

1. **Walk** laps around the track or create a route around the school campus.

2. **Have** walkers sign a banner. See [www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/build-excitement/fliers-and-banners](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/build-excitement/fliers-and-banners).

3. **Teach** pedestrian or bicycle safety before, after, or as part of the walk. (For ideas, see [Safety on the event day and beyond](#))

4. **Invite** the media to the walking activity and talk about the benefits of active travel to school and why students currently cannot. (See [Resources](#) for Talking points)

“All students, regardless of their mode of transportation to school, participated by walking laps as a school. We integrated safety aspects within the physical education classes. We want students to know the value of being healthy and staying active.”

**-Walk to School Day Event  
Organizer in Cumberland County**



## Events with remote meeting points

1. **Look** for a remote meeting point where families can meet and walk or ride the remainder of the route together. Pick somewhere with a parking lot that does not get much use in the mornings, such as a shopping center or church. For more instructions, see <http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/get-set/event-ideas/designated-starting-points>.

2. **Invite** the media to the walking activity and talk about the benefits of walking to school and why students currently cannot. (See [Resources](#) for Talking points)




# Safety on the event day and beyond

There's a double benefit of the emphasis on safety. Skills that students learn as part of the event are carried with them whenever and wherever they walk or bike. Whether you're planning a specific event route, families are walking or biking from their homes or both, these guidelines can help. To find the safest route to school, look for:




## 1. Places to walk or bicycle where there are sidewalks or paths that are separated from traffic

Choose sidewalks or paths wherever possible, even if that means the trip will take a little longer. If there are no sidewalks or paths, walk as far from motor vehicles as possible, on the side of the street facing traffic.

 Bicyclists can ride on multi-use paths, but generally are not allowed on sidewalks. Check local regulations for your community. Bicyclists should ride in the same direction as traffic. Parents should ride with their children and evaluate the route and their child's skills before deciding if it's okay to bicycle from home.

## 2. Places to cross (if necessary)

Minimize the number of street crossings. Avoid busy, high-speed or multi-lane roads, wherever possible. When available, cross at a location with an adult school crossing guard.

 Dismounting and walking the bicycle across the street may be the best option, especially if there's a crossing guard available.

## 3. Pedestrian- and bike-friendly drivers

Look for places where drivers are paying attention, yielding to pedestrians and cyclists and respecting speed limits.

## 4. A comfortable feeling

Use a route that avoids potential problems like loose dogs, the presence of criminal activity, vacant buildings or poorly lit streets. A law enforcement officer or local traffic engineer could also offer helpful input regarding complex routes.

# Make a plan for the event

Before the event, talk to the principal and other members of the planning team to identify potential issues and how to address them. Potential safety concerns that may be mentioned include:

- Routes that don't have places to walk or bike that are separated from traffic
- Routes that require crossing streets without adequate crossing aids
- Personal security risks like bullying or criminal activity
- The need for students on bicycles to use helmets correctly



These issues don't have to be event-stoppers, but they will certainly influence the event's structure. Whether the concerns are real or perceived, they should be addressed so that students, families and leaders feel comfortable. Often, events are a great opportunity to prompt bigger conversations about how to address any barriers that get in the way of children walking and bicycling to school safely on a regular basis. (See **When walking or biking from home is not an option** for event ideas.) The following ideas might make things click.

- **Get law enforcement involved.**

Depending on the community, it might be possible to temporarily close streets or have law enforcement direct traffic and assist with crossing students. Law enforcement officers can also use what they know about nearby traffic conditions to help design recommended walking and bicycling routes during event planning.

"This day is a promotion for pedestrian safety. We don't necessarily promote walking to school that day, although we have many that do. On days leading up to the event, we teach pedestrian safety, practice skits, and decorate the school. On the day of the event, we hold an assembly in the gym, discuss pedestrian safety tips, perform skits, and practice using the learned skills by crossing the street at a nearby crosswalk."

**-Walk to School Day Event  
Organizer in Wayne County**




- If there are particular streets that should be avoided but alternate routes exist, **create and distribute maps** to show walking and bicycling routes using an online mapping tool like Google Maps at **[www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps)**.
- **Prepare participants with safety education.** Student pedestrians and bicyclists can benefit from education about safe skills before the event. Some organizers get help from law enforcement, others have enthusiastic teachers willing to integrate lessons into their classroom or PE time. Lesson plans are available in Let's Go NC! (see **Beyond the event: Promoting safety every day**).
- **Give parents what their families need to know** for safe walking and bicycling. See **Resources** for Teaching Your Child To Be a Safe Pedestrian, Helping Your Child Be a Safe Bicyclist and ABC Quick Check.
- **Notify drivers about the upcoming event** by using the school's changeable signage, through fliers and other communication channels. Remind them to slow down and yield to walkers and cyclists.





- **Use walkability and bikeability checklists.**

Before the event, these checklists can be used to get a sense of potential concerns on the routes. If routes are sufficient for walking and bicycling but there's interest in pushing for further improvements (such as an expansion of safe routes for students who still don't have a safe option), ask families to use the checklist as part of the event. Past event organizers have tabulated checklist results and had students present them to city leaders as a way to advocate for change. See **Resources** for Walkability and Bikeability checklists.

 Consider **hosting a bicycle skills clinic** on a weekend preceding the event to help build safety skills and check proper helmet fit. The opportunity to ride to school can serve as a great incentive to participate in training before the event and this gives an extra opportunity to

"We had a great turn out! 146 students came out to ride their bikes to school! It was really cool seeing the local police officers leading the kids on their bikes. This was my first Bike to School Day and I am loving the excitement on the community level. Parents, volunteers, and the principal were biking, as well."

**--Active Routes to School  
Coordinator about a Bike to  
School Day event in Moore County**



talk about any special rules for the event. A local bicycle shop, advocacy group, hospital or health department may be able to help with instruction and helmet fitting. See <http://walkbiketoschool.org/keep-going/bike-safety/bicycle-skills-clinic>. At minimum, review the safety tips in the **Resources** section and share them with families.



- 🚲 For events that include bicycling, **remind families that helmets must be worn** and that proper fit is important. While North Carolina law does not require adults to wear bicycle helmets, adults are role models for children and their brains are important, too! Strongly encourage adults to wear helmets.
- 🚲 For children who may not be able to afford helmets, consider whether you can link them to **low-cost or free helmet sources** before the event. If hosting a helmet fitting and sale, the process can be streamlined by ordering each helmet size in a different color.



## Beyond the event: Promoting safety every day

For ongoing safety-related barriers to walking and bicycling, use the event to bring attention to what needs to be done. Having a community leader or transportation official participate in an event is a great way to get their buy-in and commitment to assist with future changes. See [www.walkbiketoschool.org/keep-going](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/keep-going) for more ideas.

Many communities address safety concerns and motivate families by starting walking school bus programs or bicycle trains. Find out more at <http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/keep-going/ongoing-activities>.

Students will need safe walking and biking skills that can serve them throughout their lives. North Carolina is fortunate to have *Let's Go NC! A Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Skills Program* developed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation specifically for schools to use to teach pedestrian and bicycle safety. Use a lesson plan – or the entire curriculum – available at <http://www.ncdot.gov/bikeped/safetyeducation/letsgonc/>, or to at least introduce the basic concepts, see *Pedestrian Safer Journey* (<http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/pedsaferjourney/>) and *Bicycle Safer Journey* (<http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/bicyclesaferjourney/>).



## Sources for low-cost helmets

Low-cost bicycle helmets can be purchased and sold or donated to families at your school. These helmets meet the same crash test standards as all other bicycle helmets available in stores but range in price starting at \$4.00. Allow at least three weeks for shipping. As with any purchase, please do your own research to be sure you are comfortable with the product and company before making a financial commitment.

### **North Carolina Department of Transportation Bicycle Helmet Initiative**

This initiative is an application-based program that will provide up to 24 helmets for low-income children. There is an annual call for applications that begins July 30th. Application deadline is October 31st. Helmets will be mailed to awardees during March and April of the following year. See [http://www.ncdot.gov/bikeped/safetyeducation/helmet\\_initiative/](http://www.ncdot.gov/bikeped/safetyeducation/helmet_initiative/).

### **Easton Bell Sports**

1 800 776-5677, ext.6931 or ext. 6927

### **Helmets R Us**

<http://www.helmetsrus.net/>

### **Local bicycle shop**

If your community has a bicycle shop, ask if they have a way to help.

### **ProRider**

<http://www.prorider.com/>

### **Safe Kids Coalitions**

There may be a local coalition that can help you obtain helmets. Find the nearest coalition at <http://www.safekids.org/coalition/safe-kids-north-carolina>.

For more options, see the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute's list at <http://www.helmets.org/cheapies.htm>.





# What next?

This is when the outcome of the event may surprise you. Many schools and communities want more. So, how do you keep the momentum going?

Start by planning a group debrief, talking about plans for next year's event or establishing ongoing activities at your school. Many events are already a strategic part of long-term efforts to promote safe walking and bicycling. For help transitioning your event into an ongoing activity, visit [www.walkbiketoschool.org/keep-going](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/keep-going). Here, you'll learn more about walking school buses, bike trains, mileage tracking, safety education and classroom activities.

Many schools are surprised at the amazing changes that come from holding an event and how walking and bicycling to school can be a part of addressing larger community issues. Enjoy!

**Special thanks to North Carolina Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day organizers and Regional Active Routes to School Coordinators whose photos and experiences contributed to this guide.**

"We were very encouraged by the number of families who participated in this event, and are currently working on putting a walking policy in place at our school now."

**-Walk to School Day Event  
Organizer in Johnston County**



"We did this at a magnet school where 90% of the kids are driven or bussed. We had all drivers and busses park on the other side of an adjacent park and joyfully walk in to school. We now do this monthly."

**-Walk to School Day Event  
Organizer in Durham County**





# Resources

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**ABC Quick Check**

**Bikeability Checklist**

**Easy Steps to Properly Fit a Bicycle Helmet**

**Helping Your Child Be a Safe Bicyclist**

**Let's Go NC! Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Skills Education Program**

**North Carolina Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day Talking Points**

**Teaching Your Child To Be a Safe Pedestrian**

**Walkability Checklist**

# The **A B C** Quick Check

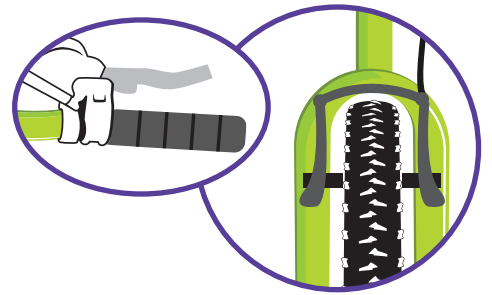
## **A** is for air:

- ✓ Check the air pressure, spin the wheels and make sure the tires are not worn out.



## **B** is for brakes:

- ✓ Check to make sure coaster brakes will stop the bike by spinning the back wheel and applying the brake. If the bike has hand brakes check to see that the levers don't hit the handlebars when squeezed. Lift one tire up at a time and spin it; squeeze the levers to see if the tire stops. The brake pads should be clean, straight and contact the rims properly.



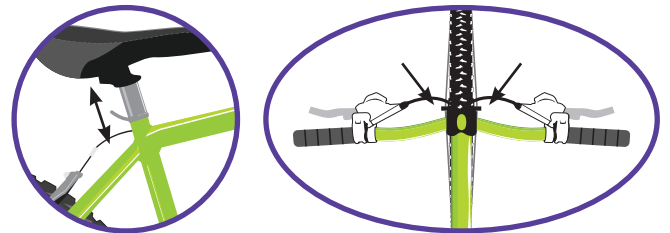
## **C** is for Cranks, Chain, and Cogs:

- ✓ Grab the crank arms and try to wiggle side to side. There should be no movement. Spin the pedals and cranks to see if the chain drives the rear wheel. The chain should look like metal not rust or black gunk. If the bike has gears check to make sure the gear levers and derailleurs (gear-changing mechanism) work to shift the chain between gears.



## Quick Refers to the Quick Release:

- ✓ Some bikes have quick releases on the wheels or the seat post. Check to make sure they are tight and closed properly.



## Check:

- ✓ After making sure the seat and handlebars are tight and the proper height, have the child ride the bicycle around the parking lot and check that everything works well.

# Bikeability Checklist

## How bikeable is your community?

### Riding a bike is fun!

Bicycling is a great way to get around and to get your daily dose of physical activity. It's good for the environment, and it can save you money. No wonder many communities are encouraging people to ride their bikes more often!

### Can you get to where you want to go by bike?

Some communities are more bikeable than others: how does yours rate? Read over the questions in this checklist and then take a ride in your community, perhaps to the local shops, to visit a friend, or even to work. See if you can get where you want to go by bicycle, even if you are just riding around the neighborhood to get some exercise.

At the end of your ride, answer each question and, based on your opinion, circle an overall rating for each question. You can also note any problems you encountered by checking the appropriate box(es). Be sure to make a careful note of any specific locations that need improvement.

Add up the numbers to see how you rated your ride. Then, turn to the pages that show you how to begin to improve those areas where you gave your community a low score. Before you ride, make sure your bike is in good working order, put on a helmet, and be sure you can manage the ride



U.S. Department of Transportation  
**National Highway Traffic Safety  
Administration**



**Pedestrian and Bicycle  
Information Center**



U.S. Department of Transportation  
**Federal Highway  
Administration**



Go for a ride and use this checklist to rate your neighborhood's bikeability.

# How bikeable is your community?

Location of bike ride (be specific):    Rating Scale:



## 1. Did you have a place to bicycle safely?

a) On the road, sharing the road with motor vehicles?

- ☐ Yes    ☐ Some problems (please note locations):
- ☐ No space for bicyclists to ride
  - ☐ Bicycle lane or paved shoulder disappeared
  - ☐ Heavy and/or fast-moving traffic
  - ☐ Too many trucks or buses
  - ☐ No space for bicyclists on bridges or in tunnels
  - ☐ Poorly lighted roadways

Other problems:

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## 2. How was the surface that you rode on?

- ☐ Good    ☐ Some problems, the road or path had:
- ☐ Potholes
  - ☐ Cracked or broken pavement
  - ☐ Debris (e.g. broken glass, sand, gravel, etc.)
  - ☐ Dangerous drain grates, utility covers, or metal plates
  - ☐ Uneven surface or gaps
  - ☐ Slippery surfaces when wet (e.g. bridge decks, construction plates, road markings)
  - ☐ Bumpy or angled railroad tracks
  - ☐ Rumble strips

Other problems:

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**Overall Surface Rating:** (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6

b) On an off-road path or trail, where motor vehicles were not allowed?

- ☐ Yes    ☐ Some problems:
- ☐ Path ended abruptly
  - ☐ Path didn't go where I wanted to go
  - ☐ Path intersected with roads that were difficult to cross
  - ☐ Path was crowded
  - ☐ Path was unsafe because of sharp turns or dangerous downhill
  - ☐ Path was uncomfortable because of too many hills
  - ☐ Path was poorly lighted

Other problems:

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## 3. How were the intersections you rode through?

- ☐ Good    ☐ Some problems:
- ☐ Had to wait too long to cross intersection
  - ☐ Couldn't see crossing traffic
  - ☐ Signal didn't give me enough time to cross the road
  - ☐ Signal didn't change for a bicycle
  - ☐ Unsure where or how to ride through intersection

Other problems:

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**Overall "Safe Place To Ride" Rating:** (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6

**Overall Intersection Rating:** (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Continue the checklist on the next page...

## 4. Did drivers behave well?

- ☐ Good    ☐ Some problems, drivers:
- ☐ Drove too fast
  - ☐ Passed me too close
  - ☐ Did not signal
  - ☐ Harassed me
  - ☐ Cut me off
  - ☐ Ran red lights or stop sign

Other problems:

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**Overall Driver Rating:** (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6

## 5. Was it easy for you to use your bike?

- ☐ Good    ☐ Some problems:
- ☐ No maps, signs, or road markings to help me find my way
  - ☐ No safe or secure place to leave my bicycle at my destination
  - ☐ No way to take my bicycle with me on the bus or train
  - ☐ Scary dogs
  - ☐ Hard to find a direct route I liked
  - ☐ Route was too hilly

Other problems:

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**Overall Intersection Rating:** (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6

## 6. What did you do to make your ride safer?

Your behavior contributes to the bikeability of your community. Check all that apply:

- ☐ Wore a bicycle helmet
- ☐ Obeyed traffic signal and signs
- ☐ Rode in a straight line (didn't weave)
- ☐ Signaled my turns
- ☐ Rode with (not against) traffic
- ☐ Used lights, if riding at night
- ☐ Wore reflective and/or retroreflective materials and bright clothing
- ☐ Was courteous to other travelers (motorist, skaters, pedestrians, etc.)

## 7. Tell us a little about yourself.

In good weather months, about how many days a month do you ride your bike?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Occasionally (one or two)
- ☐ Frequently (5-10)
- ☐ Most (more than 15)
- ☐ Every day

Which of these phrases best describes you?

- ☐ An advanced, confident rider who is comfortable riding in most traffic situations
- ☐ An intermediate rider who is not really comfortable riding in most traffic situations
- ☐ A beginner rider who prefers to stick to the bike path or trail

## How does your community rate?

Add up your ratings and decide.

(Questions 6 and 7 do not contribute to your community's score)

- |          |              |  |
|----------|--------------|--|
| 1. _____ | <b>26-30</b> | Celebrate! You live in a bicycle-friendly community.   |
| 2. _____ | <b>21-25</b> | Your community is pretty good, but there's always room for improvement.                            |
| 3. _____ | <b>16-20</b> | Conditions for riding are okay, but not ideal. Plenty of opportunity for improvements.             |
| 4. _____ | <b>11-15</b> | Conditions are poor and you deserve better than this! Call the mayor and the newspaper right away. |
| 5. _____ | <b>5-10</b>  | Oh dear. Consider wearing body armor and Christmas tree lights before venturing out again.         |

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

## Did you find something that needs to be changed?

On the next page, you'll find suggestions for improving the bikeability of your community based on the problems you identified. Take a look at both the short- and long-term solutions and commit to seeing at least one of each through to the end. If you don't, then who will?

During your bike ride, how did you feel physically? Could you go as far or as fast as you wanted to? Were you short of breath, tired, or were your muscles sore? The next page also has some suggestions to improve the enjoyment of your ride.

Bicycling, whether for transportation or recreation, is a great way to get 30 minutes of physical activity into your day. Riding, just like any other activity, should be something you enjoy doing. The more you enjoy it, the more likely you'll stick with it. Choose routes that match your skill level and physical activities. If a route is too long or hilly, find a new one. Start slowly and work up to your potential.



Now that you know the problems, you can find the answers.

# Improving your community's score

## 1. Did you have a place to bicycle safely?

### What you and your child can do immediately

### What you and your community can do with more time

#### a) On the road?

No space for bicyclists to ride (e.g. no bike lane or shoulder; narrow lanes)

Bicycle lane or paved shoulder disappeared

Heavy and/or fast-moving traffic

Too many trucks or buses

No space for bicyclists on bridges or in tunnels

Poorly lighted roadways

- pick another route for now
- tell local transportation engineers or public works department about specific problems; provide a copy of your checklist
- find a class to boost your confidence about riding in traffic

- participate in local planning meetings
- encourage your community to adopt a plan to improve conditions, including a network of bike lanes on major roads
- ask your public works department to consider "Share the Road" signs at specific locations
- ask your state department of transportation to include paved shoulders on all their rural highways
- establish or join a local bicycle advocacy group

#### b) On an off-road path or trail?

Path ended abruptly

Path didn't go where I wanted to go

Path intersected with roads that were difficult to cross

Path was crowded

Path was unsafe because of sharp turns or dangerous downhill

Path was uncomfortable because of too many hills

Path was poorly lighted

- slow down and take care when using the path
- find an on-street route
- use the path at less crowded times
- tell the trail manager or agency about specific problems

- ask the trail manager or agency to improve directional and warning signs
- petition your local transportation agency to improve path/roadway crossings
- ask for more trails in your community
- establish or join a "Friends of the Trail" advocacy group

## 2. How was the surface you rode on?

Potholes

Cracked or broken pavement

Debris (e.g. broken glass, sand, gravel, etc.)

Dangerous drain grates, utility covers, or metal plates

Uneven surface or gaps

Slippery surfaces when wet (e.g. bridge decks, construction plates, road markings)

Bumpy or angled railroad tracks

Rumble strips

- report problems immediately to public works department or appropriate agency
- keep your eye on the road/path
- pick another route until the problem is fixed (and check to see that the problems are fixed)
- organize a community effort to clean up the path

- participate in local planning meetings
- encourage your community to adopt a plan to improve conditions, including a network of bike lanes on major roads
- ask your public works department to consider "Share the Road" signs at specific locations
- ask your state department of transportation to include paved shoulders on all their rural highways
- establish or join a local bicycle advocacy group

## 3. How were the intersections you rode through?

Had to wait too long to cross intersection

Couldn't see crossing traffic

Signal didn't give me enough time to cross the road

The signal didn't change for a bicycle

Unsure where or how to ride through intersection

- pick another route for now
- tell local transportation engineers or public works department about specific problems
- take a class to improve your riding confidence and skills

- ask the public works department to look at the timing of the specific traffic signals
- ask the public works department to install loop-detectors that detect bicyclists
- suggest improvements to sightlines that include cutting back vegetation; building out the path crossing; and moving parked cars that obstruct your view
- organize community-wide, on-bike training on how to safely ride through intersections

# Improving your community's score

(continued)

## 4. Did drivers behave well?

Drivers:  
Drove too fast  
Passed me too close  
Did not signal  
Harassed me  
Cut me off  
Ran red lights or stop signs

### What you and your child can do immediately

- report unsafe drivers to the police
- set an example by riding responsibly; obey traffic laws; don't antagonize drivers
- always expect the unexpected
- work with your community to raise awareness to share the road

### What you and your community can do with more time

- ask the police department to enforce speed limits and safe driving
- encourage your department of motor vehicles to include "Share the Road" messages in driver tests and correspondence with drivers
- ask city planners and traffic engineers for traffic calming ideas
- encourage your community to use cameras to catch speeders and red light runners

## 5. Was it easy for you to use your bike?

No maps, signs, or road markings to help me find my way  
No safe or secure place to leave my bicycle at my destination  
No way to take my bicycle with me on the bus or train  
Scary dogs  
Hard to find a direct route I liked  
Route was too hilly

- plan your route ahead of time
- find somewhere close by to lock your bike; never leave it unlocked
- report scary dogs to the animal control department
- learn to use all of your gears!

- ask your community to publish a local bike map
- ask your public works department to install bike parking racks at key destinations; work with them to identify locations
- petition your transit agency to install bike racks on all their buses
- plan your local route network to minimize the impact of steep hills
- establish or join a bicycle user group (BUG) at your workplace

## 6. What did you do to make your ride safer?

Wore a bicycle helmet  
Obeyed traffic signals and signs  
Rode in a straight line (didn't weave)  
Signaled my turns  
Rode with (not against) traffic  
Used lights, if riding at night  
Wore reflective materials and bright clothing  
Was courteous to other travelers (motorists, skaters, pedestrians, etc.)

- go to your local bike shop and buy a helmet; get lights and reflectors if you are expecting to ride at night
- always follow the rules of the road and set a good example
- take a class to improve your riding skills and knowledge

- ask the police to enforce bicycle laws
- encourage your school or youth agencies to teach bicycle safety (on-bike)
- start or join a local bicycle club
- become a bicycle safety instructor



Need some guidance? These resources might help...

# Great Resources

## BICYCLING INFORMATION

### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC)**

UNC Highway Safety Research Center  
Chapel Hill, NC  
<http://www.pedbikeinfo.org>  
<http://www.bikinginfo.org>

### **National Center for Safe Routes to School (NCSRTS)**

UNC Highway Safety Research Center  
Chapel Hill, NC  
<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org>

## STREET DESIGN AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

### **American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)**

Washington, D.C.  
<http://www.aashto.org>

### **Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)**

Washington, D.C.  
<http://www.ite.org>

### **Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP)**

Cedarburg, WI  
<http://www.apbp.org>

### **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)**

Bicycle and Pedestrian Program  
Office of Natural and Human Environment  
Washington, DC  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/index.htm>

## PATHS AND TRAILS

### **Rails to Trails Conservancy**

Washington, DC  
<http://www.railtrails.org>

### **National Park Service (NPS)**

Washington, DC  
<http://www.nps.gov/index.htm>



## EDUCATION AND SAFETY

### **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)**

Bicycle Safety Program, Office of Safety Programs  
Washington, DC  
<http://www.nhtsa.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/menuitem.810acae50c651189ca8e410dba046ao/>

### **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)**

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Team, Office of Safety  
Washington, DC  
[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/)

SafeKids World-wide  
Washington, D.C.  
<http://www.safekids.org>

## HEALTH

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity  
Atlanta, GA  
<http://www.dcd.gov/nccdphp/dnpa>

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

Childhood Injury Prevention  
Atlanta, GA  
<http://www.dcd.gov/ncipc>

## ADVOCACY GROUPS

### **Alliance for Biking and Walking**

<http://www.peoplepoweredmovement.org>

### **League of American Bicyclists (LAB)**

<http://www.bikeleague.org>

### **National Center for Bicycling and Walking (NCBW)**

<http://www.bikewalk.org>

## FUNDING SOURCES

### **Transportation Enhancement Activities:**

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/>

### **Safe Routes to School Program:**

<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/>

### **Recreational Trails Program:**

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreails/>

### **National Scenic Byways Program:**

<http://www.bywaysonline.org/>

### **Federal Lands Highway Program:**

<http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/>

# Fitting Your Bike Helmet

**Buy it. Fit it. Wear it.  
EVERY RIDE!**

## The Proper Helmet Fit

Helmets come in various sizes, just like hats. Size can vary between manufacturers. Follow the steps to fit a helmet properly. It may take time to ensure a proper helmet fit, but your life is worth it. It's usually easier to look in the mirror or have someone else adjust the straps. For the most comprehensive list of helmet sizes according to manufacturers, go the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute (BHSI) Web site at: [www.bhsi.org/](http://www.bhsi.org/).

### STEP 1

#### Size:

Measure your head to find your size. Try on several helmets in your size until one feels right. Now put the helmet level on your head and adjust the sizing pads or fit ring until the helmet is snug.

### STEP 2

#### Position:

The helmet should sit level on your head and low on your forehead—one or two finger-widths above your eyebrow.

### STEP 5

#### Chin Strap:

Buckle your chin strap. Tighten the strap until it is snug, so that no more than one or two fingers fit under the strap.

### STEP 3

#### Side Straps:

Adjust the slider on both straps to form a "V" shape under, and slightly in front of, the ears. Lock the slider if possible.

### STEP 6

#### Final Fitting:

**A.** Does your helmet fit right? Open your mouth wide...big yawn! The helmet should pull down on your head. If not, refer back to step 5 and tighten the chin strap.

### STEP 4

#### Buckles:

Center the left buckle under the chin. On most helmets, the straps can be pulled from the back of the helmet to lengthen or shorten the chin straps. This task is easier if you take the helmet off to make these adjustments.

**B.** Does your helmet rock back more than two fingers above the eyebrows? If so, unbuckle and shorten the front strap by moving the slider forward. Buckle and retighten the chin strap, and test again.

**C.** Does your helmet rock forward into your eyes? If so, unbuckle and tighten the back strap by moving the slider back toward the ear. Buckle and retighten the chin strap, and test again.

**D.** Roll the rubber band down to the buckle. All four straps must go through the rubber band and be close to the buckle to prevent the buckle from slipping.



## Replace a Helmet.

Replace your helmet when it has been in a crash; damage is not always visible.

## Buy/Fit the Helmet For Now.

Buy a helmet that fits your head now, not a helmet to “grow into.”

## Ensure Helmet Comfort.

If you buy a helmet that you find comfortable and attractive, you are more likely to wear it. Readjust as necessary to ensure the helmet fits properly each ride.

## Cover Your Forehead.

Adjust the helmet fitting based on your helmet first being in the correct position, level on the head and low on your forehead.

## Adjust Straps Until Snug.

Both the side and chin straps need to be snug.

## Avoid Helmet Rocking.

Your helmet should not rock forward or backward, or side to side on your head.

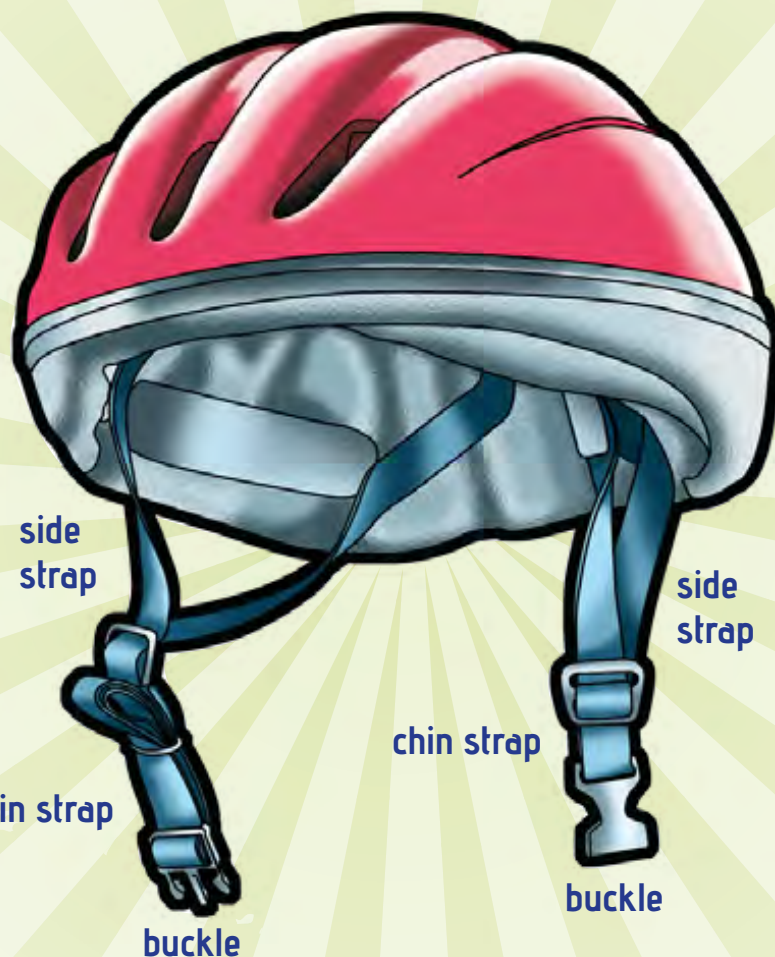
If your helmet rocks more than an inch, go back to step 6, and readjust.

## Be a “Roll” Model for Safe Behavior

Everyone — adult and child — should wear a bicycle helmet each time they ride. Wearing a helmet each ride can encourage the same smart behavior in others.

## Helmet Certification

Bicycle helmets sold in the U.S. must meet the standards issued by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Look for the certification label inside the helmet.



## Helmet Laws

More children ages 5-14 go to emergency rooms for bicycle-related injuries than with any other sport; many are head injuries. As a result, many States and local jurisdictions have child bicycle helmet laws to increase and better ensure the safety of children when bicycling. See: [www.helmets.org/mandator.htm](http://www.helmets.org/mandator.htm).

Like car crashes, bicycle crashes can happen at any time, involving not only children, but adults, many of whom are skilled riders. In fact, middle-age adults represent the average age of bicycle riders killed and injured.

Helmets are the single most effective piece of safety equipment for riders of all ages, if you crash. Everyone should choose to wear a helmet; it just makes sense!

For more information on  
bicycle safety, visit the National  
Highway Traffic Safety  
Administration Web site at:  
[www.nhtsa.dot.gov/bicycles](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/bicycles)

# ROLL MODEL



# Helping your child be a safe bicyclist

Bicycling is a fun and healthy way to spend time with your child and the best way to gauge your child's bicycling skills and judgment. Consider the following three steps before your child rides to school.

## 1. Do a bike and helmet check

- **Bike fit:** When sitting on the bike with feet on the pedals, there should be a slight bend in the knee when the pedal is closest to the ground.
- **Bike visibility:** The bike should have reflectors on the front, back, and both wheels. If riding when it's dark or nearly dark, there should also be lights on the front and back.
- **Helmet fit:** Take the helmet fit test (see sidebar).

## 2. Assess and build skills

If you don't already ride together regularly, take your child to a quiet parking lot or empty street to assess and teach basic skills. Children (and bicyclists of all ages) need to know how to do the following things:

- Wear brightly colored clothes and reflective gear, with helmet buckled, shoelaces tied and pant leg on the chain side tucked so it can't get caught.
- Make sure the tires have enough air, brakes and gears work, the chain isn't loose, and wheels and bolts are tight.
- Keep eyes and ears open.
- Watch for vehicles going in and out of drive-ways and alleys.
- Keep both hands on the handlebars except when signaling. Carry books and other items in a backpack or bag designed to fit on a bicycle.
- Stop before crossing the street, entering a road, or turning. Look left, right, left, and behind for traffic, including pedestrians, bicycles, and cars.

### For riding in the street:

- Ride in the same direction as traffic (with the flow) in a single file.
- Ride to the right side of the road, but far enough from parked cars to avoid any car doors that suddenly open.
- Obey traffic laws. Follow all traffic signs, signals and lane markings.
- Be predictable. Ride in a straight line, not in and out of cars. Use hand signals.

## 3. Plan the route and try it out

Work with your child to pick the route to school and practice riding the route together.

- Choose streets with minimal traffic and lower speeds, and look for routes where you can ride separate from traffic using a path or bicycle lane.
- Limit the number of street crossings, and avoid crossing busy or high-speed streets. Talk with your child about whether it's okay to ride alone, with friends, or only when an adult is on the ride. Children under age ten generally do not have the ability to manage traffic situations on their own, and may be safest riding on the sidewalk or a bike path. Some communities do not permit children to ride on the sidewalk, so check before making a decision.



### Take the helmet fit test

Put your helmet flat on your head. If it moves when you shake your head, you need to tighten your helmet or get a smaller one. Check:



**Eyes:** The helmet should sit low on your forehead – two finger widths above your eyebrows.



**Ears:** With the helmet buckled, the straps should meet just below the ears.



**Mouth:** When buckled, you should be able to fit no more than two fingers between the buckle and chin.



## Talking Points for International Walk to School Day and National Bike to School Day

Talking points are an important tool that can be used to communicate a consistent message. These talking points may be particularly useful for conversations and meetings with key stakeholders, such as parents and local officials, as well as interviews with the media. While this document is several pages, please note that the most relevant information for Walk to School Day and Bike to School day is on the first two pages.

The following information can help communicate important topics and concepts, such as:

- About Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day
- Why walk or bike to school?
- Safe walking and bicycling

### About Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day

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- Schools and communities in North Carolina are joining with others around the country to celebrate International Walk to School Day and National Bike to School Day. Celebrations will include activities like forming walking school buses, bicycle trains to ride in groups, learning about pedestrian safety, build skills in bicycle clinics and celebrating new sidewalks or improved crossings. See this year's dates at [www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org).
- Walk to School Day ([www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org)) is a global event that involves communities from more than 40 countries walking and biking to school on the same day. Bike to School Day ([www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org)) builds on the popularity and success of Walk to School Day and is celebrated in May as part of the National Bike Month.
- To find out who's participating near you, visit [www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org).
- One-time events like Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day can encourage more students to walk or bicycle to school even weeks after the day of the event.<sup>1</sup>
- All bicyclists should wear helmets.

### About walking and bicycling to school in North Carolina

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- Active Routes to School is a North Carolina Safe Routes to School project. It is supported by a partnership between the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the North Carolina Division of Public Health.
- Active Routes to School implements Safe Routes to School strategies through local health departments across North Carolina.
- Active Routes to School promotes safe and active travel to and from school by promoting a safe, appealing environment for walking and biking, while also reducing traffic, fuel consumption and air pollution near schools.
- The goal of this project is to increase the number of North Carolinians that meet the physical activity recommendations by increasing the number of elementary and middle school students who safely walk and bike to school.
- The North Carolina Department of Transportation is partnering with communities around the state to conduct a pedestrian and bicycle safety education and enforcement campaign called, "Watch for Me NC," which includes a focus on schools in some areas. See [www.watchformenc.org](http://www.watchformenc.org).
- Communities around North Carolina are adopting Complete Streets practices to make it easier to get around by bike, car or on foot.
- The North Carolina Department of Transportation has a new statewide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan to support walking and bicycling for all ages as we move into the future.



## Why walk or bike to school?

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- **Fewer children walk or bicycle to school than did so a generation ago.**
  - Nationally
    - Walking/biking to school<sup>2</sup>:
      - In 1969, 48 percent of students in grades K through eight (ages 5 through 14) walked or bicycled to school.
      - In 2009, only 13 percent of students in grades K through eight walked or bicycled to school.
    - Distance and walking/biking to school<sup>2</sup>:
      - In 1969, 89 percent of students in grades K through eight who lived within one mile of school usually walked or bicycled to school.
      - In 2009, only 35 percent of students in grades K through eight who lived within a mile of school usually walked or bicycled to school even once a week.
  - North Carolina
    - Walking/biking to school:
      - In 2011, only 2.7 percent of students grades K through five walked or bicycled to school one or more days per week.<sup>3</sup>
    - Distance and walking/biking to school:
      - In 2011, fifteen percent of children ages 5 through 10 lived less than one mile from school.<sup>3</sup>
- **It's fun!** Walking and bicycling bring a sense of joy and independence.
- **Healthier habits.** The trip to school is a chance for children (and adults!) to get the physical activity they need.
  - Experts recommend that children and adolescents get 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day.<sup>4</sup> In North Carolina, 72.2 percent of students grades K through five and 68 percent of students grades six through eight do not exercise, play a sport, or participate in physical activity for at least 60 minutes for 6-7 days per week.<sup>3</sup>
  - Physical activity is important for the health of all children, including children with disabilities.
  - Less active children are more likely to be overweight.<sup>5</sup> Research shows that overweight children are at increased risk of obesity, and chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, asthma and various cancer types in adulthood.<sup>6,7,8,9,10</sup>
  - Physical activity is associated with improved academic performance in children and adolescents.<sup>11,12,13</sup>
- **Cleaner environment.** Replacing car trips to school with walking or bicycling can reduce congestion and air-polluting emissions. Passenger cars, trucks, motorcycles, and SUVs together account for 62 percent of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>14</sup> The transportation sector is responsible for one third of all carbon dioxide emissions in the US.<sup>15</sup> Air quality is measurably better at schools located in neighborhoods with integrated street and sidewalk networks, and these schools have more students arriving by bicycle and on foot.<sup>16</sup>
- **Promotes safety.** Building sidewalks, providing education programs and adding traffic calming measures are some of the ways to improve safety. Encouraging walking and bicycling to school can help build support for infrastructure improvements for the trip to school and the broader community.
- **Community benefits.** Reducing traffic congestion and creating a sense of neighborhood by being outside walking and bicycling benefit the community as well as provides time to connect with parents, friends and neighbors.

## **Safe walking and bicycling**

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Walking and bicycling need to be safe and accessible transportation options. This means creating safe environments for students of all abilities and teaching safety skills to walkers, bicyclists and drivers.

### **Safe walking and bicycling environments include:**

- Neighborhood schools that are within walking and bicycling distance from homes.
- Sidewalks or bicycle-paths that connect homes with schools.
- Child-friendly opportunities to cross streets (such as the presence of adult crossing guards, raised medians or traffic and pedestrian signals).
- Slow vehicle speeds accomplished through roadway safety measures (traffic calming) and/or police enforcement where needed.
- Pathways that are accessible for students of all abilities.

### **Driver behaviors, like speeding and distracted driving, are safety concerns. Attentive drivers traveling at slower speeds can save lives.**

- Speeding reduces a driver's peripheral vision, increases the distance needed to stop and increases the severity of injury to a pedestrian in a crash.
- Distracted driving draws a driver's vision from the road, hands off the steering wheel or mind off of the act of driving. Examples include talking or texting on the phone and eating while driving.
- Distracted driving increases the braking distance needed to safely avoid pedestrians and bicyclists. Multi-tasking while driving also slows cognitive ability, processing and reaction time.<sup>17</sup>

### **Perceptions about traffic can lead to even less walking and bicycling. As more children are driven, more parents become convinced that traffic conditions are unsafe for walking or bicycling.**

- If more children walked or bicycled to school, it would reduce the number of cars near the school at pick-up and drop-off times, making it safer for walkers and bicyclists and reducing congestion.
- According to a review of over 100,000 surveys of parents, fifty-five percent of parents who reported not allowing their children to walk or bicycle to school identified the number of cars along the route to school as a significant issue in their decision-making process.<sup>18</sup>

### **Safety education includes working with:**

- Children - to provide them with basic safety skills, such as wearing a bicycle helmet, how to choose where to ride, how to obey crossing guards and be visible to drivers.
- Parents - to create awareness of the need for pedestrian and bicyclist safety education and opportunities to walk and bicycle, and the importance of practicing safety skills with their children.
- Drivers - to alert all drivers to the presence of walkers and bicyclists and the need to slow down.
- Law enforcement - to enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety with school zone enforcement.
- Local officials - to identify changes that improve walking and bicycling conditions around schools.

### **Teaching children walking and bicycling safety skills can help create lifelong traffic skills.**

- Short periods of skills-based training can significantly improve child pedestrian behavior.<sup>19</sup>

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# Tips for Parents and Other Adults For Teaching Pedestrian Safety to Children

## SafeRoutes

National Center for Safe Routes to School



TIP SHEET

Walking is a fun and healthy way to spend time with your children while teaching them skills that can serve them well throughout life. The walk to school is a great time to use these safety tips.

### Be a walking role model

Children learn through experience. Walking with parents or another caregiver is an important way for children to practice crossing real streets and picking safe places to walk. There is no magic age when children are old enough to walk without an adult. But, as a parent, you should decide when your child has the skills and experience to deal with traffic safely without you.

As you walk with your child, remember these safety tips:

- Wear bright-colored clothes, and carry flashlights or wear reflective gear if it is dark or hard to see.
- Look for traffic at every driveway and intersection. Be aware of drivers in parked cars that may be getting ready to move.
- Obey all traffic signs and signals.
- Cross the street safely:
  1. Stop at the curb or edge of the street.
  2. Look left, right, left and behind you and in front of you for traffic.
  3. Wait until no traffic is coming and begin crossing.
  4. Keep looking for traffic until you have finished crossing.
  5. Walk, don't run across the street.



### Choose the safest route to school

Select a walking route with less traffic and intersections.

- Pick places where there are sidewalks or paths separated from traffic. If there are no sidewalks or paths, walk as far from the motor vehicles as possible and, if possible, on the side of the street facing traffic.
- Limit the number of street crossings. When available, cross at a location with an adult school crossing guard.
- Avoid crossing busy or high-speed streets.

### Understand your child's limitations

Children are not small adults. It will take time and practice for a child to develop the ability to deal with lots of traffic. Over time, children develop the ability to accurately judge the speed and distance of oncoming traffic. Young children may think that a car is able to stop, when in fact, it is not. Also, children may think that if they can see a driver, the driver can see them. But, children are smaller and harder for drivers to see. Get down to a child's height to experience their perspective and see what they see.

# Walkability Checklist

## How walkable is your community?

### Take a walk with a child and decide for yourselves.

Everyone benefits from walking. These benefits include: improved fitness, cleaner air, reduced risks of certain health problems, and a greater sense of community. But walking needs to be safe and easy. Take a walk with your child and use this checklist to decide if your neighborhood is a friendly place to walk. Take heart if you find problems, there are ways you can make things better.

### Getting started:

First, you'll need to pick a place to walk, like the route to school, a friend's house or just somewhere fun to go. The second step involves the checklist. Read over the checklist before you go, and as you walk, note the locations of things you would like to change. At the end of your walk, give each question a rating. Then add up the numbers to see how you rated your walk overall. After you've rated your walk and identified any problem areas, the next step is to figure out what you can do to improve your community's score. You'll find both immediate answers and long-term solutions under "Improving Your Community's Score..." on the third page.



Take a walk and use this checklist to rate your neighborhood's walkability.

# How walkable is your community?

## Location of walk

## Rating Scale:



### 1. Did you have room to walk?

- ☐ Yes ☐ Some problems:
- ☐ Sidewalks or paths started and stopped
  - ☐ Sidewalks were broken or cracked
  - ☐ Sidewalks were blocked with poles, signs, shrubbery, dumpsters, etc.
  - ☐ No sidewalks, paths, or shoulders
  - ☐ Too much traffic
  - ☐ Something else \_\_\_\_\_

**Rating:** (circle one)  
1 2 3 4 5 6

**Locations of problems:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Was it easy to follow safety rules? Could you and your child...

- ☐ Yes ☐ No Cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen by drivers?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No Stop and look left, right and then left again before crossing streets?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No Walk on sidewalks or shoulders facing traffic where there were no sidewalks?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No Cross with the light?

**Rating:** (circle one)  
1 2 3 4 5 6

**Locations of problems:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Was it easy to cross streets?

- ☐ Yes ☐ Some problems:
- ☐ Road was too wide
  - ☐ Traffic signals made us wait too long or did not give us enough time to cross
  - ☐ Needed striped crosswalks or traffic signals
  - ☐ Parked cars blocked our view of traffic
  - ☐ Trees or plants blocked our view of traffic
  - ☐ Needed curb ramps or ramps needed repair
  - ☐ Something else \_\_\_\_\_

**Rating:** (circle one)  
1 2 3 4 5 6

**Locations of problems:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 5. Was your walk pleasant?

- ☐ Yes ☐ Some problems:
- ☐ Needed more grass, flowers, or trees
  - ☐ Scary dogs
  - ☐ Scary people
  - ☐ Not well lighted
  - ☐ Dirty, lots of litter or trash
  - ☐ Dirty air due to automobile exhaust
  - ☐ Something else \_\_\_\_\_

**Rating:** (circle one)  
1 2 3 4 5 6

**Locations of problems:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Did drivers behave well?

- ☐ Yes ☐ Some problems: Drivers ...
- ☐ Backed out of driveways without looking
  - ☐ Did not yield to people crossing the street
  - ☐ Turned into people crossing the street
  - ☐ Drove too fastp
  - ☐ Sped up to make it through traffic lights or drove through traffic lights?
  - ☐ Something else \_\_\_\_\_

**Rating:** (circle one)  
1 2 3 4 5 6

**Locations of problems:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

### How does your neighborhood stack up? Add up your ratings and decide.

1. _____	<b>26-30</b>	Celebrate! You have a great neighborhood for walking.
2. _____	<b>21-25</b>	Celebrate a little. Your neighborhood is pretty good.
3. _____	<b>16-20</b>	Okay, but it needs work.
4. _____	<b>11-15</b>	It needs lots of work. You deserve better than that.
5. _____	<b>5-10</b>	It's a disaster for walking!
<b>Total:</b> _____		

Now that you've identified the problems,  
go to the next page to find out how to fix them.



Now that you know the problems, you can find the answers.

# Improving your community's score

## 1. Did you have room to walk?

Sidewalks or paths started and stopped  
Sidewalks broken or cracked  
Sidewalks blocked  
No sidewalks, paths or shoulders  
Too much traffic

### What you and your child can do immediately

- pick another route for now
- tell local traffic engineering or public works department about specific problems and provide a copy of the checklist

### What you and your community can do with more time

- speak up at board meetings
- write or petition city for walkways and gather neighborhood signatures
- make media aware of problem
- work with a local transportation engineer to develop a plan for a safe walking route

## 2. Was it easy to cross streets?

Road too wide  
Traffic signals made us wait too long or did not give us enough time to cross  
Crosswalks/traffic signals needed  
View of traffic blocked by parked cars, trees, or plants  
Needed curb ramps or ramps needed repair

- pick another route for now
- share problems and checklist with local traffic engineering or public works department
- trim your trees or bushes that block the street and ask your neighbors to do the same
- leave nice notes on problem cars asking owners not to park there

- push for crosswalks/signals/ parking changes/curb ramps at city meetings
- report to traffic engineer where parked cars are safety hazards
- report illegally parked cars to the police
- request that the public works department trim trees or plants
- make media aware of problem

## 3. Did drivers behave well?

Backed without looking  
Did not yield  
Turned into walkers  
Drove too fast  
Sped up to make traffic lights or drove through red lights

- pick another route for now
- set an example: slow down and be considerate of others
- encourage your neighbors to do the same
- report unsafe driving to the police

- petition for more enforcement
- request protected turns
- ask city planners and traffic engineers for traffic calming ideas
- ask schools about getting crossing guards at key locations
- organize a neighborhood speed watch program

## 4. Could you follow safety rules?

Cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen  
Stop and look left, right, left before crossing  
Walk on sidewalks or shoulders facing traffic  
Cross with the light

- educate yourself and your child about safe walking
- organize parents in your neighborhood to walk children to school

- encourage schools to teach walking safely
- help schools start safe walking programs
- encourage corporate support for flex schedules so parents can walk children to school

## 5. Was your walk pleasant?

Needs grass, flowers, trees  
Scary dogs  
Scary people  
Not well lit  
Dirty, litter  
Lots of traffic

- point out areas to avoid to your child; agree on safe routes
- ask neighbors to keep dogs leashed or fenced
- report scary dogs to the animal control department
- report scary people to the police
- report lighting needs to the police or appropriate public works department
- take a walk with a trash bag
- plant trees, flowers in your yard
- select alternative route with less traffic

- request increased police enforcement
- start a crime watch program in your neighborhood
- organize a community clean-up day
- sponsor a neighborhood beautification or tree-planting day
- begin an adopt-a-street program
- initiate support to provide routes with less traffic to schools in your community (reduced traffic during am and pm school commute times)

## A Quick Health Check

Could not go as far or as fast as we wanted  
Were tired, short of breath or had sore feet or muscles  
Was the sun really hot?  
Was it hot and hazy?

- start with short walks and work up to 30 minutes of walking most days
- invite a friend or child along
- walk along shaded routes where possible
- use sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher, wear a hat and sunglasses
- try not to walk during the hottest time of day

- get media to do a story about the health benefits of walking
- call parks and recreation department about community walks
- encourage corporate support for employee walking programs
- plant shade trees along routes
- have a sun safety seminar for kids
- have kids learn about unhealthy ozone days and the Air Quality Index (AQI)

Need some guidance? These resources might help...

# Great Resources

## WALKING INFORMATION

### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC)**

UNC Highway Safety Research Center  
Chapel Hill, NC  
[www.pedbikeinfo.org](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org)  
[www.walkinginfo.org](http://www.walkinginfo.org)

### **National Center for Safe Routes to School**

Chapel Hill, NC  
[www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org)

### **For More Information about Who Can Help Address Community Problems**

[www.walkinginfo.org/problems/help.cfm](http://www.walkinginfo.org/problems/help.cfm)

### **State Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinators**

<http://www.walkinginfo.org/assistance/contacts.cfm>

## FEDERAL POLICY, GUIDANCE AND FUNDING SOURCES FOR WALKING FACILITIES

### **Federal Highway Administration**

Bicycle and Pedestrian Program  
Office of Natural and Human Environment  
Washington, DC  
[www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/index.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/index.htm)

## PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

### **Federal Highway Administration**

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Team  
Office Of Safety  
Washington, DC  
[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/)

### **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

Traffic Safety Programs  
Washington, DC  
[www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/pedSAFE](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/pedSAFE)

## SIDEWALK ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION

### **US Access Board**

Washington, DC  
Phone: (800) 872-2253;  
(800) 993-2822 (TTY)  
[www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov)





