Safety Tips for Walking and Bicycling

Walking and bicycling is fun, it helps keep us fit, and gives us mobility and a sense of independence. However, kids are not "little adults" and can not be expected to make safe decisions without adequate discussion and training. The attitudes you, as a parent, instill in your child now will determine how he or she will walk and ride for years to come.

Remember-children are not "little adults." They:

- Can't judge how fast cars are moving toward them
- Are shorter and smaller than adults, and hard for motorists to see
- Forget to look for traffic if they're playing or thinking about something else (like the ice cream truck)
- Get distracted easily and act unpredictably
- Don't have as full a range of vision as adults
- Believe that motorists can stop immediately
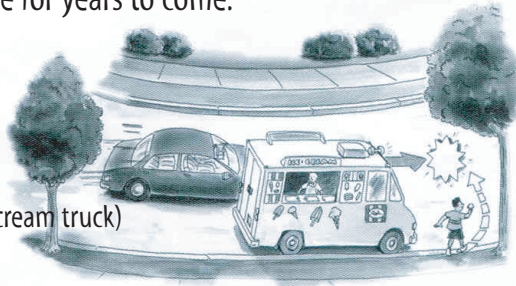
Safe Walking Tips

1. Set a good example.
When crossing the street with a child, always:

- Stop at the curb, edge or parked car
- Look left, right, and left again before crossing, even checking behind you for right turning vehicles
- Keep on looking before you reach the other side of the street
- Walk, don't run

2. Remind children to:

- Never dart out from between parked cars
- Never play in the street

3. Point out examples of "Edges" like curbs and driveways

- Edges should be thought of like cliff edges. Curbs and driveways are edges as are barriers to your vision like bushes, fences or parked cars. You always stop, look and listen at an edge EVEN if you are at a curb and there is a green pedestrian light. Stop, look left, right and left again to look for moving cars before moving past an edge. Looking behind you before crossing is also important, for cars that may be approaching and turning from behind.

Safe Bicycling Tips

Helmet Safety & Fitting:

- In the State of California it is the law that everyone 17 and under must wear a helmet when riding a bicycle, scooter, skateboard or anything else with wheels because it will greatly reduce your chance of serious injury in a collision. It is important to set a good example for your child and wear a helmet whenever YOU ride a bicycle. A helmet will help prevent you from serious head injury! When fitting, helmets should be level on the head with room for only 2 fingers to fit between strap and chin. When strapped, they should not "wiggle around" when the child shakes their head.

How old is old enough to ride safely?

- There is no "magic age" at which a bicyclist becomes safe. Some ten year olds are accomplished road users, while some adult riders are "accidents looking to happen." Nevertheless, it can be said that before the age of ten, few kids can really understand traffic. They can be taught certain specific skills but they will have trouble understanding concepts like "right-of-way."

If you are an experienced cyclist, you can take your child out for training rides in abandoned parking lots, or bike paths. In Santa Barbara, it is actually illegal to ride on the sidewalk at any age because it can be dangerous to pedestrians and to the bikers themselves crossing driveways. Above are some important rules to keep in mind.

- No playing on the road
- No riding on busy streets
- No riding at night
- Stop for all stop signs
- Ride on the right with traffic
- Always wear a helmet

Four Common Crashes

1. Driveway Rideout: (see figure A)
When a youngster rides out of the driveway and gets hit by a car, that's a "rideout" collision.

▶ **What you can do**: The most important thing you can do is teach your child about driveway safety. Take your child outside to the driveway and have him or her practice the following steps:
- ▶ Stop before entering the street.
- ▶ Scan left, right, and left for traffic.
- ▶ If there's no traffic, proceed into the roadway.

2. Running the stop sign: (see figure B)
Most riders who get hit riding through stop signs **know** that they are supposed to stop. They just don't see why...or they get distracted. The thing to impress upon your child is that, while he or she may not get hit every time, running stop signs will eventually result in a crash.

▶ **What you can do**: take your child to a stop sign near home. Explain what it means emphasizing the following points:
- ▶ Stop at all stop signs regardless of what is happening.
- ▶ Scan both directions for traffic.
- ▶ Wait for any cross traffic to clear.
- ▶ Proceed only when safe.

3. Turning without warning: (see figure C)
Another major collision type involves bicyclists who make unexpected left turns. They neither scan behind for traffic nor do they signal. The key factor here is **neglecting to scan to the rear**. If the cyclists had looked, they would have seen the cars coming up from behind.

▶ **What you can do**: Teach your child to walk across busy streets with his or her bike at least until he or she has had some advanced training and is old enough to understand traffic. For residential street riding, you can teach your child to **always scan and signal before turning left**. A big part of this lesson is teaching the child how to scan to the rear without swerving. Take the child to a playground to practice riding along a straight paint line while scanning behind. Stand alongside and hold up one arm or two and after the child rides by, call his or her name. After 15 minutes of practice a 10 year old should be able to look behind and identify how many arms you are holding up-all without swerving **more than 6 inches in either direction**.

4. Wrong-Way riding: (see figure D)
This type of crash happens most often when a cyclist surprises a motorist by "appearing out of nowhere" riding against traffic.

▶ **What you can do**: Teach your child to always ride **with** the flow of traffic. Remember a bicycle is a vehicle and the same rules apply.

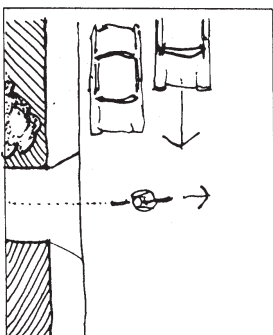For more information visit the Safe Routes to School website at www.coast-santabarbara.org or call 875-3562
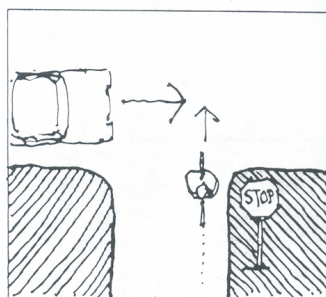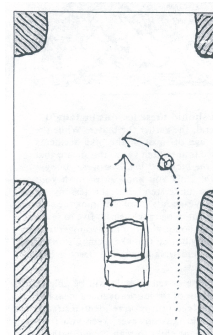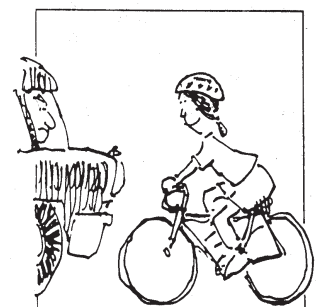

Fig. A

Fig. B

Fig. C

Fig. D