

School Bus Safety: "Avoid Harm, Obey the Stop Arm"



School Bus Safety Rules for Motorists:

Motorists need to observe traffic safety rules around school buses. First and foremost, they must know and understand the school bus laws in their state. In particular, they must be aware that it is illegal in all 50 states to pass a school bus that has stopped to load or unload students. (Ninety-five percent of the respondents in a recent telephone survey ranked this as the most dangerous of all illegal or unsafe driving practices. In fact, collisions involving motorists who illegally passed a stopped school bus accounted for almost one-fourth of the pedestrian fatalities in school bus-related crashes.

Motorists must learn the "flashing signal light system" that school bus drivers use to alert motorists that they are going to stop to load or unload students:

- Yellow flashing lights indicate the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles.
- Red flashing lights and 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 Motorists must stop their cars and wait until the red flashing lights are turned off, the stop arm is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving before they start driving again.

Motorists should also observe the following traffic safety rules:

- When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, watch out for children walking to the bus stop or walking or bicycling to school.
- When driving in neighborhoods and especially in school zones, watch out for young people who may be thinking about getting to school, but may not be thinking about getting there safely.
- Slow Down. Watch for children walking in the street, especially where there are no sidewalks. Watch for children playing and gathering near bus stops.
- Be Alert and ready to stop. Children arriving late for the bus may dart into the street without looking for traffic.

Safety Rules for Students Riding the Bus:

Getting on the school bus

- When waiting for the bus, stay away from traffic and avoid roughhousing or other behavior that can lead to carelessness. Do not stray onto streets, alleys or private property.
- Line up away from the street or road as the school bus approaches.
- Wait until the bus has stopped and the door opens before stepping onto the roadway.
- Use the handrail when stepping onto the bus.

Behavior on the bus

- When on the bus, find a seat and sit down. Loud talking or other noise can distract the bus driver and is not allowed.
- Never put head, arms or hands out of the window.
- Keep aisles clear – books or bags are tripping hazards and can block the way in an emergency.
- Before you reach your stop, get ready to leave by getting your books and belongings together.
- At your stop, wait for the bus to stop completely before getting up from your seat, then walk to the front door and exit, using the handrail.

Getting off the school bus

- If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk at least ten feet ahead of the bus along the side of the road until you can turn around and see the driver.
- Make sure that the driver can see you.
- Wait for a signal from the driver before beginning to cross.
- When the driver signals, walk across the road keeping an eye out for sudden traffic changes.
- Do not cross the center line of the road until the driver has signaled that it is safe for you to begin walking.
- Stay away from the bus' rear wheels at all times.

Correct way to cross the street

- Children should always stop at the curb or the edge of the road and look left, then right, and then left again before crossing.
- They should continue looking in this manner until they are safely across.
- If student's vision is blocked by a parked car or other obstacle, they should move out to where drivers can see them and they can see other vehicles -- then stop, and look left-right-and left again.