

Safe habits wise at the school bus stop

Teaching, reminding students how to enter, exit vehicle essential

More than 25 million students nationwide take a bus to and from school daily. Design and safety features make school buses the safest way to transport children.

Flashing red lights, crossview mirrors and stop-sign arms allow buses to meet high standards that are essential in protecting students. They also incorporate energy-absorbing seatbacks, high-crush standards and rollover protection.

Students are 70% more likely to get to school safely by taking a bus than traveling by car, according to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Children often are killed away from a bus during loading and unloading operations than while traveling on it.

The beginning of a new school year is upon us and it's important that parents and children familiarize themselves with traffic-safety rules. Following certain practices enhance school bus safety and reduce concern of an accident.

Parents should make sure their children aren't late to their bus stops. They should arrive at least five minutes before the bus is scheduled for pickup. Acquaint your child with the bus stop. Let them know to remain at least six feet away from the curb and remind them that the stop is not a place to run



CATCHING A BUS – Children should practice proper safety habits when riding a bus to school. *Image: Stuart Monk. Adobe Stock.*

or play.

Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop, with the door open and the bus driver indicating it's OK to board, before approaching the bus door.

Children never should walk behind a school bus. Should a child need to cross a street have them walk on a sidewalk or along the side of the street

to a place at least 10 feet in front of the bus before crossing. It's essential to make eye contact with the bus driver before crossing to make sure the driver is aware of the child crossing.

Remind your children to pay attention to the surroundings as they are traveling. Teach them to count the number of stops the bus makes before

they get to and from school.

Check notifications, emails, texts, weather alerts and local and social media to make sure you are updated on school-related news like closures, delays, driver changes and other issues. Notify the school if your child has an appointment, sick day or will be getting off at a different stop. This way, administrators can accommodate the change.

Drivers, meanwhile, should remember that every state has a law that makes it illegal to pass a school bus that has its red lights flashing and stop-arm extended while it is stopped on undivided highways to load and unload students. Bus drivers use a "flashing-signal-light system" to alert motorists. Yellow flashing lights indicate the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Drivers should drive slowly and prepare to stop.

Red-flashing lights and extended stop arms indicate the bus has stopped and children are entering or exiting the vehicle. Motorists must stop their cars and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the extended stop-arm is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving before putting their vehicles back in motion.

Children have been riding for nearly a century. We all know the routine, but it never hurts to remind ourselves of the best practices.

Safety precautions best way to save lives

Motorcyclists, drivers must responsibly share the roads

The distinct sounds of motorcycles are synonymous with summer. Exhaust wafts from their tailpipes as they speed through highways, over bridges and quiet backroads.

The freedom felt while riding a motorcycle is an experience few roadway adventures can match. But with it comes responsibility – to riders and fellow motorists.

Motorcycle crashes often are catastrophic. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that motorcycle crashes resulted in 5,932 deaths in 2021 – a 7.7% increase from the previous year. It's the highest number of motorcycle deaths since 1975. August is the most dangerous month, with 14% of all crashes occurring. Motorcycle deaths also accounted for 14% of the total traffic fatalities in 2021.

Motorcycle riders can be as much as 30 times more likely than passenger-vehicle occupants to die in a crash and four times more likely to be injured, according to NHTSA. Disturbing statistics that can be avoided by the motorcyclists' and drivers' responsibilities to share the road.

AAA offers tips to make roads safer for everyone.

As a driver:

- Check mirrors and blind spots



CRASH COURSE – It's essential motorcyclists and drivers take precautions while sharing the highway. It's the most effective way to lessen a rising number of fatalities. *Image: yaroslav1986. Adobe Stock.*

for motorcyclists before entering or leaving lanes of traffic and at intersections. Most multivehicle motorcycle crashes occur when drivers simply didn't see the motorcyclist.

- Signal before changing lanes or merging with traffic. Even when signaling, allow enough time to determine a motorcyclist's

intention before you proceed.

- Increase following distance behind motorcycles and provide time to maneuver or stop in an emergency.
- Never try to share a lane with motorcycles. They have the same right to lanes as any other vehicle.

As a motorcyclist:

- Before you ride, check tire pressure

and tread depth. Make sure brakes, headlights and signal indicators are in working order.

- Make sure any cargo is secure and balanced and adjust suspension and tire pressure to accommodate the extra weight.
- Always ride with a helmet that meets the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard – look for "DOT" symbol on the back. Helmets save lives and are required in many states.
- Wear other protective gear, such as gloves, a jacket and pants.
- Make yourself visible. Keep your lights on, wear bright colors and use reflective tape, even during the daytime. Position yourself in the lane where drivers can see you.
- Follow traffic laws, always use turn signals and combine hand signals with turn signals when you can to make your intentions clear.
- Never ride impaired – nearly 30% of fatally injured riders were driving under the influence of alcohol, according to NHTSA.

Summer is the season for millions of motorcyclists to hop on their bikes and cruise the highways. The more riders and drivers who put safety first, the more memorable the season will be for all the right reasons.