

Traffic Safety Education Guide

Why is traffic safety education is so important?

Children have to be taught the skills they need to be safe, independent road users now and in the future.

Road-related trauma is the greatest cause of injury and death for children aged 5 – 14 years. Across all age groups boys are particularly vulnerable.

Everybody needs to learn the skills to manage roads and traffic safely. Research shows that young children can learn these skills from a very early age provided they:

- ❖ Have good role models to learn from
- ❖ Are given lots of opportunities to learn while they are supervised in real road and traffic situations
- ❖ Are given positive feedback from someone who cares for them
- ❖ Work out what to do for themselves – though they might need help sometimes

The Healthy Moves Program provides children with a supervised, healthy and fun environment to not only walk to and from primary school but to gain important traffic safety skills.

The primary role of participating adults in the Healthy Moves program is to assist children to walk safely to and from school. VicRoads as part of its participation in the Healthy Moves program has developed some information to assist you in your role as *'driver' and 'conductor'*.

Children's inexperience in traffic means they have not yet developed the skills to be safe

Tools/Skills needed by the 'driver' and 'conductor' of the Healthy Moves

- Use common sense, make eye contact with drivers and other road users.
- Don't be afraid to use your voice to let the children know what you are doing.
- Choose safe places to cross the road- where you have good clear visibility of traffic in all directions and where drivers can see you
- Always hold the hand of young children
- Always use the following crossing procedure – wherever you cross the road

May have short concentration span or be thinking about one thing at a time and ignoring other things happening around them. In traffic this can be very dangerous.

Have trouble judging the speed of vehicles. They may let a slow vehicle pass and cross in front of a fast one.

Are less likely to take notice of objects not directly in front of them. Unless they deliberately turn their heads they may not notice vehicles to their right or left.

May often have problems working out where sounds are coming from. They may expect traffic to come from the wrong direction.

Cannot be relied on to use safe behaviour consistently. Are likely to be easily distracted, especially in the company of friends.

May have a poorly developed concept of danger.

May be able to say when the road is clear and safe to cross, but a sudden change in traffic conditions can cause confusion and panic.

Are unlikely to change from the chosen path, even if it is dangerous.

Often have trouble stopping at the kerb, especially if excited, and may dart out onto the road without thinking.

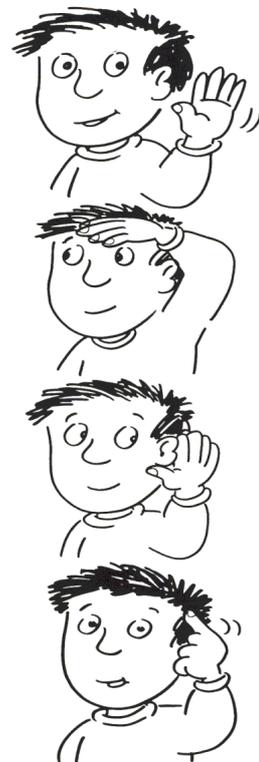
Children's limitations in traffic situations

From VicRoads "Road Smart: Children and Traffic Safety" © VicRoads 1997

Stop, Look Listen, Think procedure



- 1- **STOP** one step back from the kerb or shoulder of the road.
- 2- **LOOK** in all directions for approaching traffic.
- 3- **LISTEN** in all directions for approaching traffic.
- 4- **THINK** about whether: you have time to cross; traffic will reach you before you are all the way across the road; you have looked everywhere that traffic might come from; you have a long way to cross; and you will wait if there is a safe place to do so in the middle of the road.



- Use available crossing facilities (traffic lights, pedestrian operated signals, school crossings, zebra crossings) to safely cross the road
- Be alert near driveways, carparks
- Children should walk in an orderly fashion on the footpath
- Road crossings should be made as a group where possible. The adult at the front should stop the children and wait for all participants to catch up. The crossing should be assessed by the adults given actual circumstances, and children encouraged to 'Stop, Look, Listen & Think' then walk (not run) across the road when safe to do so.
- The HEALTHY MOVES 'Driver' walking at the front of the Bus should look out for and advise the group on potential dangers or footpath obstructions.
- The HEALTHY MOVES 'Conductor' should ensure that the group stays together and that children do not fall behind the main group.

Once the HEALTHY MOVES has been operating for some time, it would be terrific if the 'driver' and 'conductor' provided the children with the opportunity to help 'guide' the bus. A child within the group could be given the responsibility to choose the safe crossing points, to outline the stop look listen and think crossing procedure, to outline safe behaviours and unsafe behaviours. This opportunity will provide very practical learning opportunities for children in a supervised environment.

The experiences of the Healthy Moves program will ensure long term road safety learnings of young children.

Research has found that children actually find it easier to know how to THINK if you actually ask them to **decide**. There are questions that drivers could ask that might help a child to decide when or where it is safe to cross.

Is this a good place to cross the road? Why/not?

Can you see a long way from here?

Is there anything blocking our view of the traffic?

Which vehicle is the closest to us?

Do you think the driver of the car, truck, motorbike etc can see us here?

Do we have enough time to cross?

Do we have to go a long way or a short way to get across the road?

Is the traffic moving fast or slow?

The important thing is for bus drivers and conductors to give positive feedback whenever possible to the safe behavior shown by the children.

It is also important to provide positive responses for children when they misread or misjudge a situation. Use positive language 'We walk on the footpath' instead of "Don't run".

Relevant road rules

(summarised – for full details please see the Victorian Road Rules)

Walkers/Pedestrians:

Pedestrians must not cross a road within 20 metres of a crossing on the road, except at the crossing or another crossing.

Walkers must obey traffic or pedestrian lights when available. If the pedestrian lights show red and the pedestrian has not already started crossing, the pedestrian must not start to cross. If, while the pedestrian is crossing the road, the 'walk signal lights' change to flashing red or red, the person must not stay on the road longer than necessary to cross safely to the side of the road or a dividing strip/safety zone.

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