

# Red Cross Offers Back to School Safety Steps As Nation's Classrooms Get Ready for New School Year

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Summer vacation for students around the country is drawing to a close as the nation's schools prepare to open their doors for the new school year. So, while you're making that list of school supplies the kids will need, take a look at these safety steps from the American Red Cross and make your student's trip back to the classroom a safe one.

Keeping all students safe is the primary concern for everyone, but there are special steps for parents of younger kids and those going to school for the first time:

- Make sure the child knows their phone number, address, how to get in touch with their parents at work, how to get in touch with another trusted adult and how to dial 9-1-1.
- Teach children not to talk to strangers or accept rides from someone they don't know.

## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

- If children ride a bus to school, they should plan to get to their bus stop early and stand away from the curb while waiting for the bus to arrive.
- Board the bus only after it has come to a complete stop and the driver or attendant has instructed you to get on.
- Only board your bus, never an alternate one.
- Always stay in clear view of the bus driver and never walk behind the bus.
- Cross the street at the corner, obeying traffic signals and staying in the crosswalk.
- Never dart out into the street or cross between parked cars.

## GETTING TO SCHOOL BY CAR, BIKE, ON FOOT

- If children ride in a car to get to school, they should always wear a seat belt. Younger children should use car seats or booster seats until the lap-shoulder belt fits properly (typically for children ages 8-12 and over 4'9"), and ride in the back seat until they are at least 13 years old.
- If a teenager is going to drive to school, parents should mandate that they use seat belts. Drivers should not use their cell phone to text or make calls, and should avoid eating or drinking while driving.
- Some students ride their bike to school. They should always wear a helmet and ride on the right in the same direction as the traffic is going.
- When children are walking to school, they should only cross the street at an intersection, and use a route along which the school has placed crossing guards. Parents should walk young children to school, along with children taking new routes or attending new schools, at least for the first week to ensure they know how to get there safely. Arrange for the kids to walk to school with a friend or classmate.

## DRIVERS, SLOW DOWN!

Drivers should be aware that children are out walking or biking to school and slow down, especially in residential areas and school zones. Motorists should know what the yellow and red bus signals mean. Yellow flashing lights indicate the bus is getting ready to stop and motorists should slow down and be prepared to stop. Red flashing lights and an extended stop sign indicate the bus is stopped and children are getting on or off. Drivers in both directions must stop their vehicles and wait until the lights go off, the stop sign is back in place and the bus is moving before they can start driving again.

## PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES AND TAKE A FIRST AID CLASS

Know what the emergency plan is at your child's school in case a disaster or an unforeseen event occurs. Develop a family emergency plan so everyone will know who to contact and where to go if something happens while children are at school and parents are at work. Details are available at [redcross.org/prepare](http://redcross.org/prepare). The Red Cross First Aid App provides instant access to information on handling the most common first aid emergencies whether it be before, during or after school. Download the app for free by searching for 'American Red Cross' in your app store or at [redcross.org/apps](http://redcross.org/apps). Learn and practice First Aid and CPR/AED skills by taking a course ([redcross.org/takeaclass](http://redcross.org/takeaclass)) so you can help save a life.

**About the American Red Cross:**

*The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) or [cruzrojaamericana.org](http://cruzrojaamericana.org), or visit us on Twitter at [@RedCross](https://twitter.com/RedCross).*