

Walking to school independently

How to tell when your child is ready to walk without you

Many children begin walking to school without an adult sometime between the ages 7 and 12. Every child and every situation is unique, so not all children are ready to walk independently at the same time.

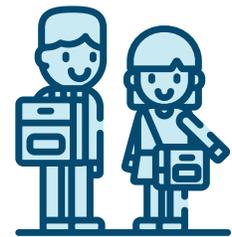
Children are always observing and learning safety skills whenever they are out with you. Remember to always model what you would like them to do!

When you are on an outing with your child, look for opportunities to discuss safe walking skills. For example, if you are crossing a street, ask them where it would be best to cross and talk to them about it.

Here are some suggestions and things to look for.

Do they know the route to school well? Can they:

- Find their way both to and from school?
- Show you another route?
- Point out homes of family friends along the way?
- Locate the school crossings and other safe crossing points on their route?



Do they have the skills? Do they always:

- Pay attention and stay focused?
- Walk on the sidewalk?
- Walk facing traffic when there is no sidewalk?
- Treat driveways as “mini-roads” and watch for vehicles backing-up?
- Identify safe crossing points such as a school crossing or stop sign?
- Solve problems and answer “What to do when” questions?
- Keep devices and ear buds in their backpacks?



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Can they join others or start gradually?

- Is there a nearby friend? Walking with a friend or two is fun and builds confidence!
- Can they walk part of the route by themselves? You can gradually let them go a little farther without you.
- Is there a quieter time of the day? Walking home from school can be good way to start.
- Do they have a responsible older sibling who can walk with them?

Looking for more information?

Check out these links:



- Walk Zone maps** to find crossing guards and common routes for your child's school.
- A pedestrian skills checklist - **Sidewalk Smarts Passport**.
- School zone safety** information from City of Ottawa.
- More tips and maps about walking to school on **Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA)** website.
- Learn about **School Active Transportation Planning**.

Being able to walk to school by themselves is an important milestone for children. By walking to school, they are learning important life skills, getting exercise, enjoying fresh air, spending time with friends, and arriving at school on time and ready to learn.