

# How to Get More Kids Walking To School



**Ideas for Primary School  
Parents and Teachers**

Safe Kids Walking

# When We Were Kids

Nearly all of us walked to school every day. We would chat to our friends on the way and arrive fit, refreshed and ready to start the school day. Congestion from school run traffic was not a big issue and the school gates were not such danger zones.

Nowadays many children are driven to school every day, sometimes because they don't go to their nearest school. Lifestyles have changed; walking to school does not always fit in with our busy schedules. Increased traffic makes us cautious of letting even our older children walk alone.



We all want the best for our children; we want them to have friends, to be healthy, happy, confident, independent and to live in a safe, clean environment. Regularly walking to school helps but it's easier said than done when it means breaking habits.

Here are some ideas to help you:

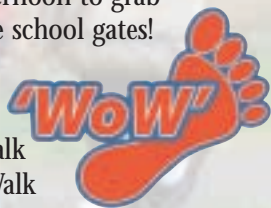
## Park & Stride

Parents who have to drive to school can park well away from the school gates. Some schools arrange with a local pub or supermarket for parents to use the car park. Alternatively parents could park in a quiet side street and walk five minutes - much better than getting to school an hour early in the afternoon to grab your spot outside the school gates!



## WOW Days

WOW stands for Walk On Wednesday or Walk Once a Week and is a great way to encourage parents and children to make the effort to walk to and from school at least once a week. This scheme was pioneered by Living Streets/Transport for London. WOW stickers, badges and certificates may be available from your local authority School Travel Advisor. Otherwise, contact Jo Pike at Living Streets (see Resources)





## Walking Bus

This is when children walk to school in an organised group wearing high visibility clothing. It's much more fun than being driven and walkers are really visible to traffic...so others want to join the gang! It also means children are less likely to be late for school. There are different types - choose the one that suits you best and contact your local authority to see what support they can give. Try linking your Walking Bus to a Park & Stride scheme.

**Informal Walking Bus** - All children walk with their own parents in a large group. You just need to agree a meeting point, leaving time (stick to it!) and a few basic rules for the children. As parents are responsible for their own children, no paperwork is required. It's quick and easy to organise, fun and creates a strong, visible walking culture that will encourage other people to leave the car at home and join you the walkers next instead. Make sure everyone knows that any parent can join and that it's not just a group of friends.

**Formal Walking Bus** - Participating children are collected from designated 'bus stops' and are accompanied to school in a group by registered volunteers (usually parents). Insurance is essential but this is often provided by your local authority. A formal Walking

Bus makes life easier for busy parents if their children can join without them, especially if they need to get to work early - or just want a morning off the school run. In some areas, formal Walking Buses have helped to reduce truancy levels.

It takes a bit of effort to start a formal Walking Bus because you need to fulfil the insurance requirements (volunteer registration, training and CRB checks, route risk assessment by local authority, registering children and drawing up rotas). If you start an informal Walking Bus first it makes it easier to get volunteers for a formal Walking Bus. Once it's set up properly it's quite easy to maintain if you keep the rotas regular. See Resources for further information.

**Junior Conductor** - Older children, age 8+ join the Walking Bus as helpers. They may get special training and a badge or certificate. If they join without their own parents they still need to be registered and do not replace the adult volunteers.



# Safe Kids Walking

## Hi-vis

Not just for the Walking Bus! High visibility fluorescent reflective clothing or accessories can make all children more visible to traffic on the way to and from school all year round. The sun's ultraviolet waves make fluorescent colours 'glow' in daylight and particularly at dusk when light is fading (when children are heading home from school). The reflective strips work after dark when they reflect light back to its source (eg car headlights), which is important for children returning from after-school clubs in winter, for instance.

Parents may be more willing to let older children walk to and from school if they wear hi-vis. Ask the children to vote for or choose favourite styles and colours. Include hi-vis as part of the school uniform or sell



hi-vis products through the school. Visit [www.brightkidz.co.uk](http://www.brightkidz.co.uk) for hi-vis clothing and accessories and details of the BrightKidz for Schools scheme.

## Walk To School Events

National walk to school events are a good way of getting people started with walking to school, or remotivating those who have lapsed. Your local authority may provide you with stickers and information on the National and International Walk to School weeks organised by Living Streets. Road safety charity Brake organises an annual Record Breaking Walking Bus event in which all UK schools can participate in their own neighbourhood. Another good excuse to get something in the local press about your school's efforts to promote walking to school!





## For Teachers

The ideas we have given can be used in your School Travel Plan - a way of setting out the things you want to do to increase walking and cycling to school. Some schools may be able to receive capital funding if they develop a School Travel Plan which includes a survey and is approved by the local authority.

There are plenty of ways that you can make use of walk to school schemes and integrate them into the curriculum and school assemblies. A strong walk to school culture can help to gain Healthy Schools Awards and Eco school status. OFSTED inspectors look favourably on schools that can show they are making an effort to promote walking. If messages about walking and safe parking are channelled by the school through the children to their parents they are more likely to get heard. By giving any keen parents or colleagues your full support you are all more likely to succeed.

## Resources

First contact: your local authority School Travel Advisor.

[www.safekidswalking.org.uk](http://www.safekidswalking.org.uk) for further information on all topics covered in this leaflet. Tel 01536 454994.

[www.brightkidz.co.uk](http://www.brightkidz.co.uk) for high visibility clothing and walk to school promotional products (including Park & Stride,

Walking Bus, Junior Conductor badges and stickers). Tel 01536 454994

[www.walktoschool.org.uk](http://www.walktoschool.org.uk) for information on national and international Walk To School weeks and WOW resources. Tel: 020 7820 1010 (Jo Pike).

[www.saferoutestoschool.org.uk](http://www.saferoutestoschool.org.uk) for lots of other walk to school ideas also ask for their newsletter Routes 2 Action. Tel: 0117 915 0100

[www.youngstransnet.org.uk](http://www.youngstransnet.org.uk) provides an on-line survey which you can use for your school to find out about children's travel needs.

[www.larsoa.org.uk](http://www.larsoa.org.uk) has an on-line weekly newsletter which features walk to school schemes and road safety news.

[www.brake.org.uk](http://www.brake.org.uk) for information on the record-breaking Walking Bus event. Tel 01484 559909 (Jeremy Conroy).

[www.eco-schools.org.uk](http://www.eco-schools.org.uk) how to make your school 'greener'.

[www.lhsp.org](http://www.lhsp.org) to find your local contact for the Healthy Schools programme.

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The information in this leaflet is intended to be a guide on promoting walking to school and does not constitute road safety advice. Please note there are regional variations in the popularity, support and resources available for these schemes.

We would like to thank all those who have supported us. WOW and Walk to School logos reproduced with permission of Living Streets. Photos on pages 1 and 3 reproduced with permission of Angel Design.

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