

# Walking School Bus



## WHAT IS A WALKING SCHOOL BUS?

A walking school bus is a parent/caregiver-initiated group of children walking to school with one or more adults. It can be as simple and informal as several families taking turns walking their children to school from time to time, or as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of volunteers. Once an informal walking school bus is established among several families, you'll likely find many more members of your community who are interested in joining.

### WHY SHOULD I DO IT?

Safety is one of the most common reasons parents and caretakers who live within walking or bicycling distance to school are reluctant to allow their children to walk to school. A well-planned, adult-supervised walking school bus is a great way to ensure kids get to school safely and on time.

Plus it's fun! Spending part of your day walking with a group of kids is not only great exercise, it's a way to connect with the innate curiosity and creativity all children possess. With a walking school bus, every day is a new adventure full of wonderful discoveries, funny observations and lively discussions.

## OK, HOW DO I DO IT?

*(GETTING STARTED IS EASY)*

### 1. Invite families who live nearby.

Reach out to your neighbors and friends! You can also connect with local parents and caretakers through social media, on neighborhood bulletin boards, or school and parent message boards. Families who live farther away can drop their kids at a meeting point and join the walk from there.

### 2. Pick a route and try it out.

When choosing a route, make sure there are sidewalks and paths wide enough to safely accommodate a group of children. Choose "bus stops" (meeting points) along the way.

### 3. Pick roles.

You'll need one adult to lead the group and one at the end to ensure no one gets left behind. Depending on how many students on your "bus", you'll need chaperones – one adult for every six students or more adults for children ages four to six.

### 4. Set a Schedule.

Once a week? Five days a week? Meeting at 8:00am or 8:15am? Set expectations up front to ensure that parents and caretakers are fully "on board" and committed to making the bus a success.

### 5. Have fun!



Safe Routes  
to School

SAN FRANCISCO





## BUT FIRST, SAFETY!

It's important that everyone on your bus is on board with safety precautions. Safety skills should be reviewed with both the adults and children in your Walking School Bus group.



### **1. Always look for cars.**

Drivers are supposed to obey the rules and watch for people walking, but drivers don't always stop for people walking. Use eye contact and communicate with easy to understand gestures to tell drivers when you want to cross.

### **2. Choose the safest routes to walk with the fewest and safest streets to cross.**

Avoid crossing busy or high-speed roads whenever possible.

### **3. Walk along the street safely using sidewalks or paths.**

If there are no side-walks or paths, walk as far from the cars as possible and face traffic. Watch for cars turning or pulling out of driveways.

### **4. Cross at signalized intersections whenever possible.**

- a. Remember that just because it is your turn to cross does not mean that it is safe to cross. Do not trust that cars will obey the rules or that turning cars will see you.
- b. Look to see if cars are coming. Look left, right and left and then behind you and in front of you for turning cars.
- c. Walk, don't run across the street.

### **5. If you must cross the street at mid-block, stop at the curb and look left, right and left again for traffic.**

Wait until no traffic is coming and begin crossing. Keep looking for traffic until you have finished crossing.

### **6. If you must cross between parked cars, stop at the curb and check to see if the cars are running or if anyone is in the driver seat.**

If safe, cross to the edge of the parked cars, and look left, right and left again before crossing.

### **7. Communicate rules.**

Stay behind the leader, do not pass each other in line, only talk to people in the Walking School Bus.

### **8. Have a phone ready in case of emergency.** Create a sign-up sheet for participants.





## FUN FACTS

- Walking to school gives everyone a healthy start to the day.
- Fewer cars around the school makes the school safer, students healthier and parents happier.
- 52% of all SFUSD elementary school students live within one mile of their school.



## KEEPING YOUR BUS RUNNING SMOOTHLY



Be sure to pick an alternate route just in case your primary meeting spot becomes unavailable for some reason, such as construction or a special neighborhood event.



Decide if you will be meeting whether rain or shine.



Offer fun incentives (small prizes) to encourage participation.



Bring snacks like fresh fruit or bars. Be cautious of allergies.



Additional supplies you might consider: vests, stop signs, maps, first aid kit

## LEARN MORE

- See how two SF school in [Chinatown](#) created a [Walking School Bus](#).
- Find walking/biking [maps](#) for SF schools already participating.
- Check out the national site, [walkingschoolbus.org](#), for more ideas.
- Find useful safety tips at [saferoutesinfo.org](#)
- And find other resources at [walkSF.org](#)

