



Back to school basics: Road safety in 2020



All across Canada, millions of students are getting ready to head back to school after an extended time off. While classroom safety is top of mind for parents and educators, we also need to remember the importance of *travelling safely* to and from school each day.

In 2018 alone, more than 370 pedestrians and cyclists were killed in a collision with a motor vehicle.¹



Issue #1

Dangerous and distracted driving

Dangerous driving around schools, such as speeding, texting while driving or not obeying traffic signs, puts kids at higher risk of getting seriously injured.

It's anticipated that, to avoid crowded buses, more parents will be driving their children to school, so there will likely be more car traffic. Some school boards may also be introducing staggered start times, which means drivers will have to remain alert throughout the day while near school zones.

Background



About three out of every five road users have experienced a “near miss” (narrowly avoiding a collision) while driving, walking or cycling. With road conditions constantly changing, it's important to stay alert and watch for pedestrians, cyclists and potential road obstacles.²

Tips



- Municipalities are in charge of creating safe road infrastructure, but it's up to drivers to act responsibly and share the road.³
- Lowering motor vehicle speeds can be an effective way to improve road safety, as higher speeds increase the severity of crashes—and pedestrian and cyclist fatalities increase as motor vehicle speeds go up as well.
 - As a motorist, you are required to obey all street signs and traffic-calming measures. Get to know the crosswalks, traffic lights and speed bumps in your neighbourhood; if there aren't any, talk to your local political leaders to see what they can do to install them.
 - Put the phone away while you're driving, and invest in a hands-free operating system if you need to stay connected on the road.



Issue #2

Pedestrian and cyclist behaviour

The problem isn't just with drivers. There is a serious lack of education around safe practices (e.g., while crossing the road) and road signage among cyclists and pedestrians too, which contributes to higher rates of road incidents.

Adding to the risk this year, we may see many more students, educators and parents walking and cycling to and from school than before—especially students in middle and high schools, who may not be as familiar with the rules of the road.



Background



According to RSA Insurance, half (50%) of pedestrians aren't sure when cyclists have the right of way, and a third (33%) of cyclists have seen unfamiliar road signs recently.⁴

Tips



Educate yourself on best practices when driving in school zones.⁵

- Teach your children the rules of the road, especially if they're cycling or walking to school for the first time.
- Don't double park in a school zone—this blocks visibility for other children and vehicles.
- Try to make eye contact with children who are waiting to cross the road.
- Follow speed limits.
- Do not leave your car idling if you are exiting the vehicle.



Issue #3

Lack of education

It's clear that more education is needed, and all road users agree.



Background



57% of cyclists and 44% of pedestrians want their cities to invest in driver education.⁶

Tips



Model safe road usages for your children.⁷

- If cycling with your child, always indicate your intentions by using hand signals or by ringing your bell.
- Familiarize yourself with your jurisdiction's school schedules, so you know when students will be arriving at or leaving school property throughout the day.
- To identify possible hazards, practise riding or walking the route ahead of the first day back.
- If riding or walking, know your abilities and limits—make sure to watch for drivers and passengers getting in and out of parked cars, and be aware of the risk of car doors opening.
- Put away items that can distract you, such as mobile phones.
- Limit your speed in school zones.



Doing your part

Whether you walk, cycle or drive, we all have roles and responsibilities in keeping our roads safe and our children out of harm's way.

Improved infrastructure, greater education and little more empathy are some of the ways we can improve road safety in Canada.



Background

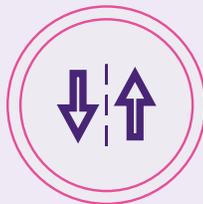
According to RSA Insurance, cyclists (77%), drivers (88%) and pedestrians (73%) agree that they collectively play a role in improving road safety.

Benefits⁸

Healthier children



Decongestion of traffic



Safer school zones



Better academic performance



Talk to your broker for more safety resources like this from RSA.



¹ Transport Canada ² Survey, RSA Canada and TruceTO ³ Walking is an easy, inexpensive, and healthy way for kids to get to school, Tcat.ca ⁴ Survey, RSA and TruceTO ⁵ Back to School: Safety Tips for Drivers, sernis.com ⁶ Ibid. ⁷ 10 tips for Safe-to-School Cycling, biyclingtrade.com.au ⁸ Ontario Active School Travel