

Starting out safely

Road safety tips for parents and caregivers of children under five.



NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY
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Your children need to learn road safety skills, and it's never too early to start. Travelling with your under fives and teaching them basic road safety along the way can be fun. Here are a few tips to get you started.

Children are not small adults. They see the world differently and have difficulty judging speed, distance and danger. Children watch what adults do, so you need to show them how to stay safe through your good example.

Try this: Get down to your child's level at pedestrian crossings and intersections. Notice how hard it is for them to see around large objects or judge the speed of vehicles.

Children under five are too young to go out by themselves but not too young to learn about staying safe. It's never too early for you to start modelling and teaching safe behaviour.

Talk to your child about safe behaviour when you are on or near the road and get into the habit of praising them for doing the right thing, rather than telling them off for doing the wrong thing.

Keep your children close and always hold hands when crossing the road.

At home and play

Wherever possible, avoid reversing your car out of your driveway. This will improve your visibility, particularly if you have a driveway hidden from the footpath.

If you do reverse out, always double check your driveway beforehand. Never depend on the rear-view mirror to check it is clear behind you, because young children are too small to be seen this way.

Shut all gates with access to roads and footpaths. If your property has no fences or gates, or you live in an apartment, set firm boundaries for where your children can play, either at the front of your place, or the back, or both. An easy way to do this is pick a physical thing such as a clothesline or the edge of the grass or garden, and tell your children that is the line they must not step over. Reinforce this from time to time by getting them to show you the line they must not step over.

Also set boundaries when you are visiting someone else's place. For example, when you are visiting an elderly relative provide your children with toys to keep them occupied and set firm boundaries if the property has no fences or gates.

Make sure your children use toys such as ride-on bikes, scooters or balls within a safe area. Children will want to stay inside a safe play area when:

- they have a choice of play activities that change often
- they have helped set up the safe play area with you.

On foot

**Always use the kerb drill to cross the road.
Check the kerb drill in this brochure.**

Children should always hold the hand of a responsible older person when walking near traffic. The older person must walk closest to the traffic.

Take special care in areas such as car parks or busy shopping areas where there is a lot of traffic.

Always get the least mobile (not walking) child out of the car first, then you can keep your eye on the more active children to make sure they don't run into traffic. When you are getting back into the car, get toddlers safely in first, then babies and shopping.

Talk to children about hidden driveways where it is hard to see cars driving in and out, and where drivers may not be able to see the children. When visitors arrive and leave the driveway at your place, hold your child's hand.

When you need to cross the road, use controlled crossing points such as pedestrian crossings, school patrols and traffic signals wherever possible.



Children should always hold the hand of a responsible older person when walking near traffic. The older person must walk closest to the traffic.

Kerb drill

Take time to discuss the kerb drill with your children

- 1** Find a safe place to cross.
- 2** Stop one step back from the kerb (practise this by walking to the kerb and taking one step back).
- 3** Look all ways and listen for traffic wherever it may come from.
- 4** If there is traffic coming, wait until it has passed, then look all ways and listen for traffic again.
- 5** When there is no traffic coming, walk quickly straight across the road, looking all ways for traffic.

Always use the kerb drill to cross the road.



In the car

Child restraints and safety belts in vehicles are vital to your safety and that of your family, whether your trip is short or long. Check that everyone, including yourself, is buckled in before you start the car.

Make sure all child restraints are of the approved standards and fitted properly. See the child restraints section in this brochure.

Make getting in and out of the car as safe as possible by:

- parking on the same side of the road as your destination
- ensuring children get out of the car straight onto a footpath.

Never, ever call a child to come to you from across the road. This is dangerous and your child might think they are allowed to run across a road by themselves. If you are in a hurry, pick your child up and carry them across the road instead.

When you are out and about, use every opportunity to teach your children road safety skills.



Make sure all child restraints are of the approved standards and fitted properly.

Child restraints

The law in New Zealand requires every child under five years of age to be properly restrained in an approved child restraint appropriate for that child when travelling in a car or van. The vehicle safety belt used on its own is not an approved child restraint.

This guide will help you choose the right restraint for your child.

Babies from birth until at least six months

Always use an infant or convertible car seat rear-facing. It's safest to put the car seat in the back of the car. A rear-facing car seat should never be used in the front if there is an airbag in front of the passenger seat.



Babies who have outgrown their rear-facing car seat

While you can use a forward-facing car seat from around six months of age, (with some car seats) it is strongly recommended that you keep your baby in a rear-facing car seat until they are at least one year old. Many car seats will allow this. Use your forward-facing seat until baby outgrows it.



Toddlers who have outgrown their forward-facing seat (3-4 years of age)

A booster seat and/or child safety harness must be used with a lap/diagonal safety belt, not the vehicle lap belt.

A booster seat should be used until your child is able to sit on the vehicle seat with the vehicle lap/diagonal safety belt positioned correctly. This is when:

- the diagonal belt stays across the shoulder, not against the neck
- the lap belt stays low against their thighs and doesn't move up towards their tummy
- they can sit back on the vehicle seat with the safety belt correctly positioned and without slouching for the whole trip.

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions about how to install the car seat.

Check the harness in the car seat is snug against your child and the buckle done up.

If in doubt about a restraint ask advice from a Safe2go technician at Plunket, your rental scheme or your retailer.



Try to...

Make travel fun and comfortable for you and your children.

Protect your children and yourself in and out of the car and always make sure you are all buckled in, or in child restraints.

Our contact details

For general enquiries and contact information for the NZ Transport Agency please check our website www.nzta.govt.nz or email us at info@nzta.govt.nz

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