

Walk and Roll to School

A guide for parents



Dear parents and caregivers,

We all want our children to be healthy, active, safe and do well in school. There are lots of ways to achieve these goals with your children, and one of the first decisions you make each day can play a role in your family's well-being – the trip to school.

Active School Travel, including walking, cycling, scootering or skateboarding to and from school, has many benefits to you, your family and community. But despite these well-known benefits, fewer children today are walking or biking to school as their main modes of travel compared to previous decades. This is contributing to negative health, environmental, and traffic impacts across Peel Region.



As a parent or caregiver, you play an important role in fostering healthy and sustainable active travel habits for your children. If you live close enough to your local school, **make walking or rolling your first choice!**

Walking or cycling together with your children gives you a chance to spend time together while having fun and getting active. You can also encourage your children to walk or roll on their own, with siblings, or friends, depending on their age and maturity. Plan a route and practice the journey with them. Most of all, make the trip fun!

If your local school is far away, **walk to the nearest school bus stop.** Elementary school children are eligible to be bussed to school if they live more than one or two kilometers away from school, depending on their age. Having your children take the bus helps keep school zones safe, reduces congestion, and gives your family a chance to meet up with neighbours and friends.

This guide includes tips and resources to make walking and rolling to school easier for you and your family. To find out more visit:

walkandrollpeel.ca/schools

Benefits of Walking and Rolling to School



Helps to promote well-being and positive mental health, including reducing day-to-day stress



Increases physical fitness/activity including helping to lower risks of chronic disease such as obesity and/or diabetes



Increases the ability to learn, improves concentration, and helps your children do better in school



Helps to reduce traffic congestion in and around school zones which means safer streets for everyone



Helps to reduce your climate impact and the harmful effects of air pollution

Walking Skills Checklist

Are you unsure whether your children have the skills to safely walk to school? Use this checklist to help teach your children and check on their skill level while you walk with them to school and for other trips. Plan and talk about the route you will take, choosing park trails and quiet streets with slower traffic, sidewalks, and safe places to cross the road. These skills are also important when children are travelling by scooter or bike. For more information about bicycling safely, refer to the **Peel Region Cyclists Handbook** and other resources at walkandrollpeel.ca

When your children are mature enough and can do all of these things consistently, it may be time to let them walk to school with friends or on their own. Adapted from STSWR's Sidewalk Smarts.

Walking on sidewalks and trails	Always	Sometimes	Never
Walk on the sidewalk if there is one, even if it is only on one side of the road			
Walk on the road facing traffic when there are no sidewalks			
Walk to the right of a trail to allow faster pedestrians and cyclists to pass			
Check for cars exiting and entering driveways			
Wait for a gap with lots of time to cross without needing to run.			

Crossing at intersections or crossovers (Stop signs, traffic lights or other marked crossings)	Always	Sometimes	Never
Press the push button and wait for walk signal if these are present			
Stop and look all ways			
Look at cars to make sure they have fully stopped and drivers can see you			
Do not start crossing if the orange hand is flashing. If it starts flashing while crossing, continue crossing.			
Keep looking and listening while crossing			

Crossing midblock	Always	Sometimes	Never
Only cross midblock when there is no controlled crossing nearby (i.e., stop signs, signals, or marked crossing)			
Look in all directions on the road before crossing			
Wait for enough time to cross without running			
Stay visible by walking upright and predictably			
Keep looking and listening while crossing			

Walking the route to school	Always	Sometimes	Never
Walk in a group with others (family members, friends, neighbours) when possible			
Know the route to and from school			
Can identify what to do if approached by a stranger			

Ask your child about these key lessons

- I keep looking and listening as I cross
- I stop, listen, and look all ways
- I make my intentions known to others
- I don't push or shove near traffic
- I pay attention to what is going on around me



School Travel

Myths versus Facts

It's too far and takes too long to walk!

It only takes about 10 to 15 minutes to walk 1km. If you take your bike, you can cut that time in half!

If you live further than one or two kilometers from your local school, your child is likely eligible for the bus.

It's too cold/rainy/snowy to walk to school!

The key is to be prepared and dress in layers. If you're dressing your child appropriately for recess, they should be fine for a walk to school. Remember, there's no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing!

It's safer to drive my kid to school!

Children are far more likely to be harmed as a passenger in a car than while walking or biking to school.

By choosing to walk instead of drive, you're making our streets safer for everyone.

I'm worried about strangers and crime!

Families and neighbours walking to and from school can help build a stronger sense of community and improve overall safety of the neighbourhood.

My child is too young to walk to school!

The best way to know whether your child can safely walk or bike to school is to try it with them! Use the Walking Skills Checklist in the centre of the booklet to help gauge your child's readiness.

Active School Travel programs in your community

There are many programs, events, and resources across the Region of Peel that support students, parents, and schools that encourage active school travel, including:

- Peel Health's School Travel Planning Program
- School Bicycle Parking Program
- Bike to School Week
- Peel Children's Safety Village
- School Walking Routes programs
- Peel EcoSchools Program

Find out more about these and other programs at

walkandrollpeel.ca/schools



walkandrollpeel.ca



PeelPolice.ca

