

Top Tips for Teen Pedestrians



While the award-winning In One Instant program focuses on teen safe driving, pedestrian safety has become much more important—especially with distracted walking caused by using mobile phones. Teen pedestrians who want to be safe on the road should pay attention to these top tips and make them a habit.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY TIPS

1. STICK TO THE SIDEWALKS: Always use sidewalks or paths. If there aren't any, walk facing traffic and stay as far left as you can.

2. CROSS SMART: Cross streets at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks. Most accidents happen mid-block or away from intersections.

3. LOOK AROUND: Before crossing, look left, right, and left again. Keep looking until you're safely across.

4. EYE CONTACT IS KEY: Before crossing in front of a car, make sure the driver sees you by making eye contact.

5. DITCH DISTRACTIONS: If you need to use your phone or other device, stop walking and find a safe spot. Take off your headphones when crossing the street.

6. BE SEEN: If you're walking when it's dark, wear light or brightly colored clothes and reflective gear so drivers can see you.

7. NO SUDDEN MOVES: Never run or dart out into the street or cross between parked cars.

8. WATCH FOR CARS: Be extra careful around cars that are turning or backing up.

9. STAY ALERT IN PARKING LOTS: Watch for cars backing out when you're walking through a parking lot.

IN ONE INSTANT

10. HERE'S A CHECKLIST THAT WILL HELP YOU IDENTIFY A PEOPLE-ORIENTED STREET:

- Does the street have no more than one lane of traffic in each direction?
- Are the lanes narrow (not much wider than the average car)?
- Is parking either directly on the street or behind the buildings?
- Are the homes and businesses close to the street with amenities (like signage and windows) sized for people?
- Would it be relatively safe and feasible for a person to cross the street at any point, including the middle of the block?
- Are there sufficient sidewalks?
- Are there people out on the street? (No, seriously; is there even a single human being?)

If you can answer yes to several (and ideally all) of the questions above, you're likely on a people-oriented street. The last question is perhaps the most telling indication of a people-oriented street. If you were to visit this street on a nice day, you should see a ton of people walking its sidewalks, visiting its businesses on foot, etc.

This and other helpful resources are available from America Walks at: americawalks.org/resources/

11. KNOW THESE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY MYTHS:

- **Green Always Mean Go:** A green light is your cue to start crossing, but only after you've checked both ways. Cars might be turning right on red or stuck in the intersection and sometimes, drivers might even ignore the light.
- **Crosswalks Are A Magic Shield:** You might feel safe in a crosswalk, but drivers might not always see you, even there. Always make eye contact with drivers before crossing.
- **Seeing The Driver Means They See You:** Just because you see a driver, doesn't mean they see you. Always make sure the driver stops before you start crossing.
- **Mobile Phones Don't Cause Pedestrian Accidents:** Not all accidents are caused by phone use, but a lot of high school and middle school students cross the street while distracted, often by texting or using headphones.

Above all, safety is a shared responsibility.

City planners and engineers can also create roadway environments that keep pedestrians safe. Young people can bring light to these issues and advocate for safer streets for all.

While pedestrians should take precautions, drivers also need to be aware of pedestrians and practice safe driving behaviors. Remember, stay alert and stay safe out there!

Sources: safekids.org, mayorlaw.com, wakemed.org, health.ny.gov, lebonheur.org., vumc.org, ctinjurylawyers.com, nhtsa.gov, mcleishorlando.com, saferoutes.utah.gov, injury.research.chop.edu, ukiahdailyjournal.com, zerodeathsmid.gov, amazonaws.com, alerttodayflorida.com, usa.streetsblog.org, safety.fhwa.dot.gov, louisvilleky.gov, trafficlogix.com, inclusivecitymaker.com

Other resources which offer helpful videos, tips, and information about teen pedestrian safety

Safe Kids USA's Walk This Way Program
<https://www.safekids.org/safetytips>

Virtual Teen Traffic Safety Workshop
<https://youtu.be/JclmuYZAkis?si=fm0lNA9tfiKttnX>