



TIPSHEET

WALK and BIKE to SCHOOL EVENTS



Walk and bike to school events bring schools and communities together to celebrate the many benefits of walking and biking as viable modes of transportation. Promoting walking and biking to your students may help establish healthy habits for life.



How do I plan and promote an event?

- Get principal approval and Parent Teacher Association/Organization (PTA/PTO) support.
- Register your event (if it is planned around an official Walk or Bike to School Day) and notify your local Safe Routes to School (SRTS) coordinator, if your community or school has one.
- Plan your event activity or activities.
- Invite students and parents to participate.
- One week, then two days, and again the day before the event, remind students that it is happening. Get creative and build excitement through your announcements!
- Create posters and/or banners to advertise the event and greet students as they arrive. Reward participants with incentives!
- Ask students and parents for feedback and use that feedback to enhance future events



WALK TO SCHOOL DAYS



Walk to School Day in the USA began in 1997 as a one-day event aimed at building awareness for the need for walkable communities. Walk to School Day is an event schools can use to promote safer and more accessible streets, healthier habits, and cleaner air. International Walk to School Day occurs every October. The easiest way to participate may be to encourage students and families who live close enough to walk or bicycle to school from their homes on a route that's appropriate for these modes. They might join other families and form groups in their neighborhoods to travel to school together. This is the essence of Walk and Bike to School Days.

How can I include families who live too far to walk?

Coordinate a Park and Walk Site

A park and walk site is pre-determined, off-campus parking lot that serves as a meeting area for families who typically drive their students to school. Park and walk sites enable students who can't walk or bike from home to take part in SRTS events at the school. They also help reduce traffic congestion near the school, which makes the environment better for more walkers and bikers.

With a park and walk site, families can either park and walk the remaining distance to school, or drop their student off with designated adult volunteers who walk groups of children from the parking area to school. Follow these steps for planning an event with a park and walk site:

- Pick a location. Get approval from the person who owns or manages the site (e.g., store manager or an authorized representative). Consider that the site should have enough space to safely store cars and/or buses that park or drop off students.
- Map out a safe route and test-walk it. This will give you a better sense of timing and help to identify where kids may need assistance with crossings.
- Recruit volunteers to serve as chaperones to help kids cross at intersections. Reach out to and request that local officials and law enforcement agencies take part.
- Provide pedestrian safety education reminders before and during the walk.
- Let parents know where to go and which route the kids will take.
- If the park and walk is successful, consider making it permanent!

Organize a Walk at School or Neighborhood Walk-About

- Organized walks on school grounds or through nearby neighborhoods with safe routes are great ways to include kids who can't walk or bike from home. They can happen before, during, or after school...even on weekends!
- Map out a safe route and take a test walk. This will give you a better sense of timing and help to identify where kids may need assistance with crossings.
- Recruit volunteers to help supervise student walkers. Reach out to local officials and law enforcement agencies.
- Provide pedestrian safety education reminders before and during the walk.
- Let parents know what is happening. Permission slips may be required for a neighborhood walk-about.

Hold a Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Assembly

Assemblies are a great way to educate students about pedestrian safety, personal safety, helmet use, bicycle readiness, and more. Potential speakers include law enforcement officers, safety advocates, bike/pedestrian advocates... even students! Consider including a Safety Assembly as part of an overall Safety Week!

BIKE TO SCHOOL DAYS



The first-ever National Bike to School Day took place on May 9, 2012, and builds on the popularity of Walk to School Day, which is celebrated across the country – and the world – each October. National Bike to School Day provides an opportunity for schools across the country to join together to celebrate National Bike Month. Start small, or start big! Bike to School Day events come in all shapes and sizes. The trick is to create the day that fits your community’s interests and circumstances.

How can I participate on a small scale?

Small events can be a great way to gauge interest in bicycling and lay the groundwork for creating a bigger event next year. For a small event you could:

- Encourage parents to bicycle to school with their children on Bike to School Day. Identify families who ride to school on a regular basis and encourage them to invite other students in the neighborhood to join them.
- Identify a central place for students and parents to meet, such as at a neighborhood park. Then the group can complete the journey to school together.
- Once bicyclists arrive at school, hold an activity to celebrate bicycling.

How can I participate on a large scale?

Larger events may involve more routes and more adult volunteers. A big event also might include activities that extend beyond the day of the event, to become a week- or month-long celebration e.g., Bike to School Week.)

- Encourage students, parents and other adults coming from the same neighborhood to form bicycle trains, in which adults and students ride along designated routes and “pick up” students along the way to school. For more information about bike trains, see the MN Bicycle Train Tip Sheet.
- Hold a bicycle skills clinic (or a bike rodeo) so that students can learn or demonstrate basic safety skills. Police departments and bicycle advocates are helpful here.
- Offer free or low-cost helmets prior to the event to ensure that everyone has access to this basic safety equipment. Look for a partner like a local children’s hospital, police department, or Safe Kids coalition to help coordinate a “bike helmet fit check” and/or a helmet giveaway.
- Provide a bicycle maintenance clinic where student may bring their bikes for a checkup prior to the event. A poorly maintained bicycle can cause a crash that may have been prevented with some simple checks. Enlist the help of a local bike shop to repair broken chains, tighten brakes, and fix flat tires. As an alternative, encourage parents and students to conduct an “ABC Quick Check” (air, brakes, chain) before the ride begins.
- Encourage students to be creative by decorating their bikes with streamers, signs or balloons. They can put stickers, school decals, plastic flowers or other fun decorations on their helmets. This can happen after school or as part of art class. Adults should help students make fun but safe decisions so that the bicycle is still safe to ride after decorating.
- Announce the start of a bike club for the school. Bike clubs can organize rides and train students to be bike mechanics who work on their own bicycles or repair bicycles that have been donated for others to use.