



When Can My Child Safely Walk or Ride to School Alone?

As parents, you get to determine when your child is ready to travel to school alone. But how do you know when your child is actually ready to do so? Here are a few questions to consider when making your decision.



Is there a legal age for my child to travel to school alone?

Oregon has no legal minimum age requirement for children traveling to school on their own.

Your child's school or school district may have policies and guidelines along with recommendations for walking and biking routes to the school or bus stop.



If there's no legal age, how can I know when my child is ready to travel to school alone?

Being "old enough" is different from being ready. Think about your unique child – can your child:

- Pay attention?
- Remember and follow rules?
- Make good decisions?
- Feel comfortable on their own?

Some kids may be ready at a younger age or later than their peers. As parents, you know your child best, so use your parental judgment.

Age Practice
Experience Attention
Readiness
Responsibility



What can I do to prepare my child to walk or bike to school safely?

Your child will need to recognize, remember and obey traffic signs, signals and pavement markings. Practice with your child by walking or biking together. Repeated practice helps kids get better at it and you feel more comfortable with their skills.

Identify a safe route to and from school or the bus stop. The school may already have route maps with recommendations. If not, here are some considerations:

- Look for less busy roads and slower speeds.
- If there are no sidewalks, choose roads with shoulders where walkers can face oncoming traffic.
- Find the locations of your school's crossing guards.
- Choose crossing locations that have a clear view of traffic.
- Practice the route with your child until you are both comfortable.

Consider the time of year. Shorter days and weather conditions will affect visibility and safety. Dress your child in bright and reflective clothing so they can be seen easily by others.



By walking and biking to school, kids learn valuable life-long skills. They arrive to school more prepared to learn, discover their neighborhoods and gain needed independence and confidence.

Can my younger child be accompanied by another older child?

Use your parental judgment to decide if the older child is mature and experienced enough to be a safe travel companion. Consider if your child can accept direction and is comfortable in the company of the older child. Walking or biking in groups is a great way to teach kids getting to and from school on their own.

What about walking to and from the school bus stop?

Follow the same criteria as you would for determining your child's readiness to safely get to school alone. Use your parental judgment to determine what's best for your child.

For younger children:

- Check with your school for their protocol and guidelines.
- Establish an appropriate routine for pick-up and drop-off.
- Make sure your child knows and can repeat your full name, address and telephone number.

