

Talking Points: Addressing Kids

As a law enforcement officer, you are likely to be invited to speak to kids regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety or Safe Routes to School (SRTS). The following is not a speech, but rather ten to fifteen minutes of talking points you can use as a guide to make sure you cover key messages. With more time, and considering the particular circumstances at the school you are visiting, you can elaborate on any of the issues below. The more interactive you can make your talk, the more memorable it will be for the students. Anecdotal experiences will also make your talk more effective.

***Overall message:** Start and end with an upbeat message. The points are mostly about safety, but you should emphasize that walking and bicycling are good for the health of children and is something that your department supports.*

***Opening remarks:** Depending on why you were invited to speak to the children, your opening comments may vary. If you are participating in Walk to School Day or a Safe Routes to School event, you might consider posing various questions to students or making some correlations to children elsewhere, such as:*

- How many of you walked or biked to school today?
 - If you didn't walk or bicycle today, why not?
 - How many of you would like to walk or bike to school?
 - Walk to School Day (week or month) is observed all over the world and children in countries everywhere are walking or biking to school just like you.
 - Children all over the world are joining in on the fun of walking and biking to school.
 - Children all over the world participate in Safe Routes to School programs to increase their health, reduce pollution, and make their community a better place.
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- Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a national effort to encourage and enable children to walk and bicycle to school.

- Walking and bicycling is fun and it helps to improve the environment! Walking and bicycling to school, instead of being driven in a car, helps reduce air and water pollution.
- Be safe while walking and bicycling.
- Children under 10 should have an adult or an older brother or sister walking with them and help them cross streets safely.
- Be careful every time you cross the road. If there is a crossing guard, cross at that location. It's important to follow pedestrian signals at intersections, and stop at the curb and look left/right/left for traffic before crossing.
- Don't use cell phones, text or listen to music when walking or riding in the road or crossing the street:
 - When walking or riding a bike, 100 percent of your attention needs to be focused on looking and listening to your surroundings; use both your eyes and your ears.
 - Don't assume a driver sees you.
 - You are ultimately responsible and in control of your own safety; always watch out for the other "guy".
- Wearing a helmet is absolutely essential! They are not just for when you are riding a bicycle, but also when riding scooters and skateboards. Make sure the helmet you are wearing is designed for the sport.
- For a helmet to be effective in a crash (protect the head and brain from being injured), it must be fitted and worn correctly.
- Avoid the most common mistakes seen with helmet use:
 - Wear a helmet every ride, every time.
 - Wear a helmet properly.
- To fit and wear a bicycle helmet correctly, follow the **2/2/2 rule**:
 - Fit the helmet flat on your head, no more than 2 finger widths above the eyebrow to protect the forehead
 - Adjust the straps so they form a "V" around each ear

- Fasten and tighten the straps. No more than two fingers should fit between the chin and chin strap.
- If you fall and the helmet is hit, get a new helmet. A damaged helmet, even if you can't see it, won't protect your head like it should.
- Only wear a helmet that is suitable for bicycling. Multi-use helmets, increasing in popularity, can be worn if the package labeling states it can be used for bicycling.
- Helmets should meet safety standards. If you are given a used helmet or buy one at a yard sale, look for a label inside that says it meets the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) standards for bicycle helmets.
- Three reasons to wear a helmet:
 - You never know a crash will occur; a helmet is the single most effective piece of equipment for preventing head and brain injuries in the event of a crash. A helmet can save your life. A helmet can help prevent you from a brain injury that can affect you for the rest of your life.
 - Bicycle safety isn't all about how well you ride, or that you haven't ever crashed before, it is also about the people who share the road with you.
 - Wearing a bicycle helmet may be the law. (Cite bike helmet law here, if your State or local jurisdiction has one.)
- Children under 10 years old should bicycle on the sidewalk (where it is allowed under the law) in the same direction as traffic.
- Older children and adults should ride predictably and follow the same rules of the road as motor vehicles:
 - Ride in the same direction as traffic.
 - Follow traffic signs and signals.
 - Look for traffic and signal before changing positions.
- Parents and all adults should follow the same traffic behaviors when walking and bicycling as children; this includes wearing a bicycle helmet.

- With help from teachers and parents, identify the “safe” route for walking and biking to school, a friends' home and other places you visit.
- Always walk with a friend.
- Remind parents to drive the speed limit in your neighborhood and especially near the school.
 - Drivers have a big responsibility to keep kids safe, too.
 - A driver’s speed matters - your life and the life of your peers may count on it. This is why the speed limit is low in neighborhoods and in school zones.
- If possible, avoid walking or bicycling at night for safety reasons. Sometimes, walking and bicycling might be necessary.
 - When walking at dusk, dawn, inclement weather or at night, use a flashlight and wear reflective gear or flashing lights on your body or backpack.
 - When bicycling at dusk, dawn, inclement weather or at night, use a white front light on the bicycle (it’s the law) and a red rear reflector, just like the lights on a car. Wear reflective gear on your body, bicycle or backpack.
- Safety is the key to walking and bicycling.