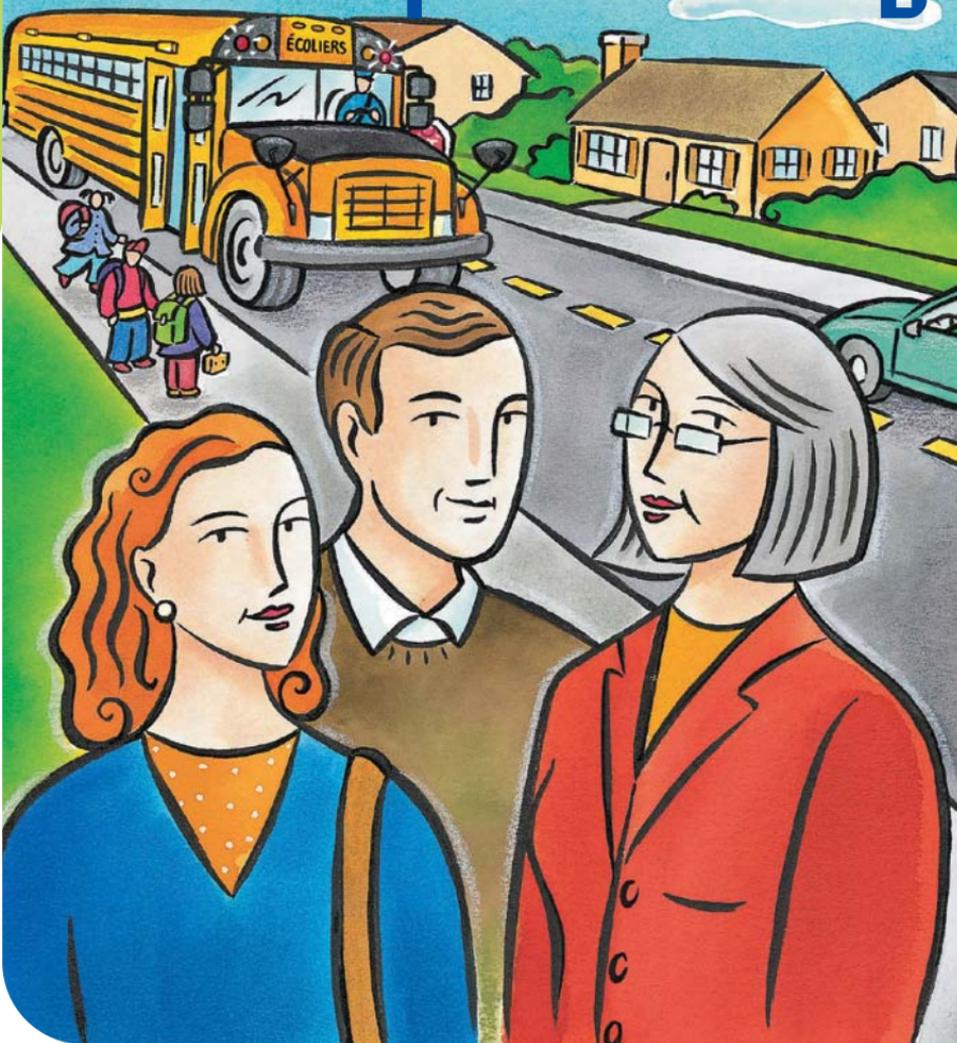


School Bus Transportation, A Shared Responsibility



By Citizens

Over 10,000 vehicles are involved in school bus transportation, carrying some 563,000 students every day, over a distance of one million kilometres across Québec.

Despite this much road use and consequent exposure to accident risk, it remains one of the safest means of travel, since there have been no deaths among school-age victims riding a school bus since 1986.

This is still no reason to let down our guard, because children are most vulnerable to accidents when getting on or getting off a school bus or when crossing the street.

No one, however, is provided with magic protection from accidents, which is the very reason that everyone must assume a share of responsibility for keeping risk to a minimum, including bus drivers, school administrators, carriers, parents and motorists.

By Bus Drivers

Driving a school bus requires special skills. This is why it is mandatory to hold an appropriate driver's licence and to follow regular training in order to be certified. Bus drivers carry many responsibilities. In addition to completing several routes a day with a bus filled with schoolchildren, they must:

- carry out a pre-trip inspection of the vehicle;
- ensure the safety of passengers both inside and outside the bus;
- maintain discipline;
- respect routes and schedules determined by the school board.

This is not always easy, so parents are advised to contact school authorities or the person in charge of school bus transportation at the school board when a student reports a problem that occurred on the bus. They are in the best position to deal with the situation.



By Parents and By Children

Be especially watchful and cautious when dropping off or picking up your child at school. Complaints are far too frequent about hurried parents who inadvertently endanger children in areas near schools. At all times:

- remain vigilant around school buses and in school zones;
- obey speed limits, slow down as soon as a school bus's yellow lights start flashing and stop your vehicle at least five metres away from a bus with its red flashing lights on;
- at school, respect the drop-off areas reserved for school buses. Stop your vehicle in the area designated by the school. Watch out for children around you.

As a parent, you have an important role to play in ensuring the safety of your children, both inside and outside the bus. Regularly remind them of the following rules of conduct.

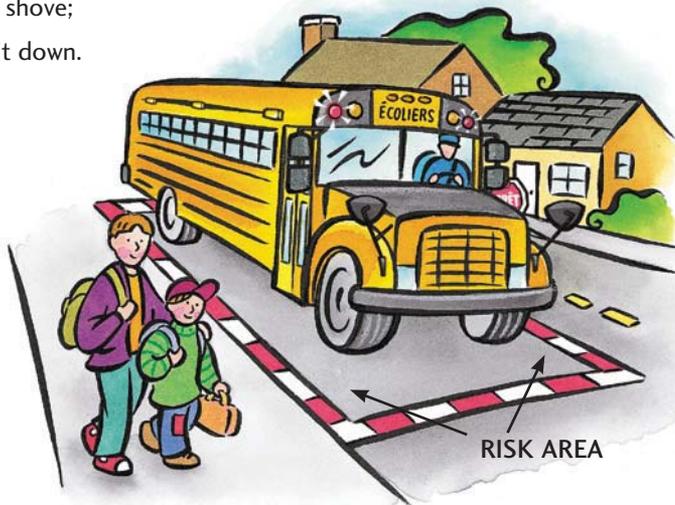
Getting ready

- To avoid missing the bus, they must get up early enough to have breakfast and get to the stop on time;
- **They must always use the sidewalk**, when going to or coming from the bus stop;
- If there is no sidewalk, **they must walk on the left side of the roadway, facing traffic.**



At the bus stop

- Wait in line for the bus without shoving the other students;
- Quietly wait until the bus has come to a **full stop** before approaching it;
- Wait until the red flashing lights go on and the driver opens the door;
- Stay in line to climb aboard, hold the handrail and don't shove;
- Go to your seat and sit down.



On board

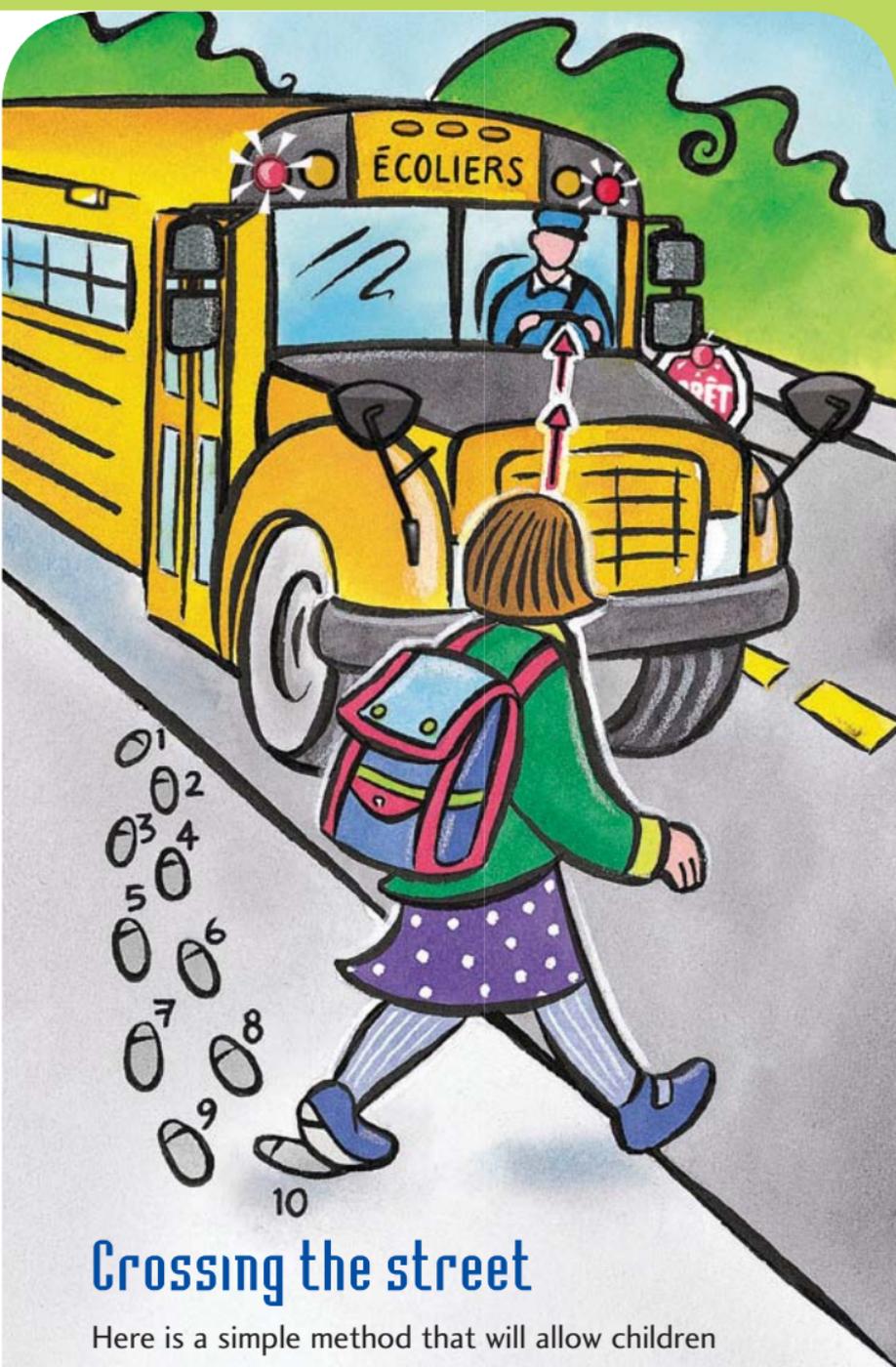
So as not to disturb the driver's concentration:

- remain seated and stay quiet;
- keep your head and arms inside the bus at all times;
- keep your lunch box or book bag with you or put it under the seat, leaving the aisle free;
- do not throw objects (or food) either inside or outside the bus.

Getting off the bus

School bus accidents often occur at stops, mainly because children remain too close to the bus. Emphasize these points:

- Wait until the bus comes to a full stop before leaving your seat;
- Stay in line to get off, without pushing, and hold onto the handrail;
- Move away from the bus quickly and never go behind the bus;
- **Ask the driver what to do to get something from under the bus or near the tires. If you cannot get the driver's attention, wait until the bus has moved away before stooping to pick up what was dropped or get an adult's help.**



Crossing the street

Here is a simple method that will allow children to cross in front of the bus safely.

The Ten Steps Rule:

- Take ten steps after leaving the bus before crossing, that way you can see the driver, who can also see you;
- Walk in front of the bus, then look left and right, **then left again**, to check that there is no traffic before crossing;*
- Cross quickly **but without running**.*

*These rules also apply when the crossing control arm is deployed.

School zones are risk areas,

so be on the lookout for school buses. Obey speed limits and road signs.



Warning of a school zone or a crosswalk for schoolchildren ahead



Beginning of a school zone

This sign is accompanied by another indicating the periods during which a speed limit, lower than the limit in effect for public roads, is applicable in a school zone.



School crosswalk

Yield the right of way to pedestrians.



Warning of a school bus stop ahead

This alerts motorists to the possible presence of a school bus stopped to take on or let off passengers.

It's yellow... Prepare to stop

Advance warning of a stop, a safety measure

School bus drivers must signal their intention to stop.

This safety measure gives motorists behind or about to meet a school bus the time to avoid sudden braking or acceleration.

A two-step process

1 Prepare to stop

when these school bus lights are activated:

- its four alternating yellow lights or its hazard lights.

2 Bring your vehicle to a full stop at least five metres away from the bus

when these are in operation:

- its flashing red lights
and
- its stop sign.

Beware!

- Passing a school bus whose flashing RED lights are operating or driving past one in the opposite lane results in the entry of nine demerit points on a driver's record, and a fine of between \$200 and \$300.

- However, this is not mandatory when meeting a school bus traveling in a lane separated by a median.



A good question: Seat belts or not?

Transport Canada has concluded that school bus protection mechanisms provide passengers with good protection, with a compartmentalization system that includes high-back deformable seats located close together which can absorb energy. Built on heavy duty truck chassis, school buses provided increased resistance with the addition of side impact bars. The raised floor also means that passengers are above the point of impact in the event of a side collision.

Having seat belts installed in school buses could make children less safe.

Results of collision tests conducted by Transport Canada have shown that school bus occupants wearing a lap belt were more likely to suffer serious head and neck injuries than occupants who were not belted in at the time of a head-on collision.

The Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec and its partners count on everyone's cooperation to further lower the accident toll.

Contact the person in charge of school bus transportation at your school board to help with any school transportation-related issues.

Additional copies can be ordered by calling:

- ▶ 418 643-7620 (Québec area)
- ▶ 514 873-7620 (Montréal area)
- ▶ 1 800-361-7620 (from elsewhere—Québec, Canada, USA)

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