

How to stay safe on the roads

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February 2023

There are many road locations where there are potential risks for children and adults; when walking or cycling on journeys to and from school, work, leisure activities, and shopping. This factsheet outlines these key risks and how to be safe there. The contents of this factsheet can help adults support their children as they become more independent, and walking or cycling journeys on their own (e.g. the journey to secondary school).

Walking and scooting

There are some flashpoints where walkers need to be more alert and keep an eye out for traffic. They are: driveways, crossing the road between parked cars, crossing at official crossing points, shared paths with bicycles, and walking on streets with no pavement.

Cars pulling in and out of driveways

Traffic can traverse pavements to access and leave driveways, which means that they are crossing the pavement where children and adults are walking. Usually, cars are not moving fast but may not be able to see children who may be out of their line of sight, especially if reversing in or out of a driveway. Children must be taught to listen out for engines being turned on where cars may be leaving driveways. Even though the [Highway code](#) states that drivers [should reverse into their driveways](#) (where possible) and that [pedestrians have the right of way](#) on pavements, it's worth pedestrians paying attention as drivers can pull out and enter driveways without looking carefully.

Sharing the pavement with cyclists

Many cyclists will cycle on the pavement, either because the path is a shared path or because they don't feel safe on the road. [Cyclists are supposed to be considerate of other road users](#) (including on pavement), and having a bike bell is recommended to warn pedestrians or other cyclists that a cyclist is approaching. On a shared path, no-one has priority, but it is still considerate for cyclists to slow down and give way to pedestrians using a shared path. [Although it is illegal to cycle on the pavement](#), unless it is a shared path, many children and adults may cycle there. If you see a cyclist coming or hear them from behind, be extra vigilant and be prepared to move out of the way.

Walking on a road with no pavement

Many rural roads will not have a pavement or only have a pavement on one side of the road. Where there is a pavement, it should be used to ensure the pedestrian is walking in a safe space away from traffic. Where there is no pavement, [pedestrians should walk on the right-hand side of the road](#) towards oncoming traffic, except where there is [a right-hand bend in the road, where walkers should cross before reaching the turn. There, they should walk on the left-hand side of the road](#), so that all traffic can see them. It is important that drivers can see pedestrians, so it is [recommended that pedestrians wear hi-vis or fluorescent clothing](#), especially if it is getting late. Doing this will make pedestrians more visible to drivers as they drive past.

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Crossing the road between parked cars

If there is a crossing point nearby, it is always recommended to use this to cross the road. Where there is no designated crossing place, [crossing the road between parked cars should be avoided](#) as traffic will not expect to see you there and may not see you. If this cannot be avoided, [the roadside edge of the parked vehicles should be treated as if it were a kerb](#), and look and listen carefully, and then cross when it is clear.

Crossing at official crossing points

The Highway Code stipulates that pedestrians crossing the road have priority at traffic light crossings when the green man is shown, zebra crossings, at junctions, and when traffic is turning onto side roads where pedestrians may be crossing. Even so, not all drivers know the rules and may not stop where they should. This can mean that pedestrians still need to be aware of traffic around them, and that traffic may not stop, even where pedestrians have a priority, including at traffic lights, where traffic may drive through a red light. It is recommended that when crossing at a signalised crossing, look both ways before stepping into the road, to ensure it is safe to cross.

Crossing close to HGVs, lorries and large vehicles

Crossing the road close to a large vehicle is not recommended, as the driver may not see a pedestrian next to them or crossing the road immediately in front of them, unless at a signalised crossing where the green man phase is in operation. If there is no signalised crossing, it is better to wait until the large vehicle has passed before attempting to cross the road, when it is clear.

Cycling

Cyclists have to share the road with other road traffic, so there are several flashpoints where traffic may cross each other's path. This includes; turning left or right and close to junctions, at traffic lights, at roundabouts, and cycling close to HGVs and large vehicles.

Cyclists turning left or right

Cyclists need to pay attention when making a turn, as this can bring them into the path of traffic, especially when making a right turn, which will require crossing traffic. We recommend that cyclists do the following:

Look over a shoulder to check for any traffic behind them

Use the [appropriate road cycling signals](#) to indicate whether turning left or right (usually by holding an arm out to left or right, respectively), so that it is clear to other road users what manoeuvre is about to happen

Cyclists can then make the turning as long as it is safe to do so (e.g. there aren't cars turning into the road ahead) and there is enough of a gap to turn safely. Other road traffic should slow down to accommodate turning.

Cyclists at traffic lights

Cyclists must obey traffic light signals and not ride through red lights, as this could put them in danger, with other road traffic potentially turning across their path. Not obeying traffic signals can also endanger pedestrians, who may be crossing the road on the green man phase. At a red crossing signal, many cyclists may want to weave through road traffic to the white stop line, to enable them to move away from traffic on the green signal. This can be dangerous as vehicles may open a door or not leave enough room to pass. Cyclists can use the advanced stop line to be ahead of traffic if one is available. The Highway Code recommends that [cyclists act the same way as cars when approaching junctions](#). HGVs and large vehicles can be a danger to cyclists at junctions, and cyclists are not recommended to pass HGVs or large vehicles on the left-hand side as they will be harder to see by large vehicle drivers.

accidents don't have to happen

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Cyclists at junctions

Cyclists need to be aware of other traffic that can turn in or out of junctions on both sides of the road. Drivers may not see cyclists and turn across cyclists' paths. Cyclists need to be alert to drivers pulling off and onto the carriageway.

Cyclists at roundabouts

Roundabouts can be dangerous for cyclists, as cyclists may use them slightly differently than drivers. When arriving at a roundabout, cyclists should check whether it is safe to continue, and when it is safe cycle carefully around the roundabout. Cyclists turning left or going straight on at a roundabout can use the left-hand lane, but when turning right can use the left or right-hand lane. Using hand signals to indicate when turning left or right is essential, especially when using the left-hand lane to turn right.

Cycling close to HGVs and large vehicles

Cyclists should not pass HGVs or large vehicles on the left-hand side, whether the vehicle is stationary or moving, as these vehicles can often have blind spots there. If a HGV is stationary at a white stop line, it's not recommended for cyclists to pull in front of it, unless they can see the driver and make eye contact