

## Driving Around School

All parents want their teenagers to travel to and from school safely.

Over the past 25 years there has been a big change in the way that teens get to school in that car use has doubled. This increase has resulted in road congestion with an estimated one in five cars on the highways now traveling to schools before 9 a.m. Long lines waiting for turns, sleepy teens, impatient drivers, and a steady stream of buses add to the confusion. Driving to school presents many hazards, and teenagers and parents need to stop and think about the responsibilities that come with the luxury of driving to and from school.

- Always wear your seat belt--and make sure all passengers buckle up, too.
- Get to school five to ten minutes early and leave five minutes late to avoid the mad dash into and out of the parking lots. Many accidents happen when drivers rush or are impatient.
- If your school lot has perpendicular spaces (not angle parking), you may want to try to pull through a parking spot so that you can drive straight out instead of backing out. Backing out in crowded lots is tricky. However, pulling straight through a parking space is illegal in some states--so check your local traffic laws before using this tip.
- Watch for kids getting on and off school buses--and don't run into the school buses, either.
- Go slow.
- Don't leave valuables like wallets, shoes, leather jackets, or sports equipment in your cars where they can be seen because this invites break-ins.

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- Always stop for school buses with flashing lights. The flashing lights mean that students are either getting on or off the bus and then may cross the street. Their safety depends on cars obeying this law.
- Don't park in fire lanes around the school. Not only will you probably get a ticket, but you could block the area where a fire truck needs to park in case of an emergency.
- Don't talk on a cell phone, put on make-up, comb your hair, or eat while driving. People who talk on cell phones while driving are four times more likely to have an accident. If you need to make a call, pull off the road to a safe spot and park.
- Be on the lookout for motorcycles, bikes, and pedestrians.
- If your car has been parked outside during a snowstorm, check the exhaust pipes to make sure they are clear before starting up the car. Also check if you back up into a snow bank.

### So are there any words of wisdom that sum up these tips?

Plan ahead and don't wait to the last moment to leave for school. Expect the unexpected. Bad roads, crashes, slow school buses, and a universe of other problems that await all of us on the way to work or school. Be careful, stay alert, and leave a little early.