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August 2026

Back-to-school season is happening in the Southwind District. The backpacks are coming out, school supplies are being purchased, and families are getting back into their school-year routines. The weather is nice, and for some students, that back-to-school routine includes walking or riding a bicycle to and from school. As another school year begins, it is a great time for families to talk about and practice safe habits for getting to school.



If your child will be walking or biking to school, make the trip together before the first day. Identify safe places to cross, stop signs, traffic signals and areas where extra caution may be needed. Younger children should have adult supervision as they learn their route. Older children should still have a planned route and know where they should cross. Whenever possible, encourage children to walk or bike with a sibling, friend or group.

A properly fitted helmet should be part of every bike ride. Remind young riders to:

- Ride on the right side of the road, traveling with traffic.
- Stop at intersections and obey stop signs and traffic signals.
- Look both ways and make sure it is safe before entering a street or turning.
- Use bike lanes and appropriate hand signals when available.

Before school starts, check the bicycle to make sure the tires are properly inflated, the brakes work and the bike is in good condition.

Since not all children ride their bikes to school, students that are walking have some important safety skills to learn as well. Teach children to cross at designated intersections rather than in the middle of a block. Before crossing, look in all directions and continue watching for vehicles. Even when a pedestrian has the right-of-way, drivers may not always see them.

Children should follow traffic signals and listen to crossing guards. Older students should also put away their phones and avoid distractions such as texting or wearing headphones while walking. During early morning or evening hours, brightly colored clothing and reflective materials can help children be more visible to drivers.

Back-to-school safety does not have to be a lecture. Take a practice walk or bike ride and ask your child to point out where they would stop, where they would cross and what they should watch for. Whether your child walks, bikes, takes the bus or travels by car, a few minutes of preparation can help start the school year safely and on the right foot!

For additional information, visit [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) from the American Academy of Pediatrics or explore Bike Easy's Bike & Walk Education Resources.

For more information, please contact Community Vitality Agent Amanda Clasen at any Southwind District office or at amclasen@ksu.edu.