

Pass a Stopped School Bus?

Smile, You're on Camera

Passing a school bus with its red lights flashing has long been illegal in all 50 states. Do it now, however, and you may also get caught on camera.

At least [30 states](#) now permit school buses to carry stop-arm cameras that snap pictures of drivers making illegal passes. Those drivers could face fines and citations that will not only negatively affect your CDL but will also impact the company you drive for.

As the 2026 school year begins, more than [480,000 buses](#) are expected to take to the nation's roadways, and commercial motor vehicle drivers must be on alert. Prepare for the season by remembering that your actions behind the wheel can save a child's life. Follow these safe driving habits.

Don't tailgate. Stay at least **6 to 7 seconds** behind a school bus while driving so you have enough room to stop. And remember school buses stop often.

Follow the rules in school zones. Most will limit speeds to between **15 and 25 mph** while children are walking to and from school. You may want to plan different routes to avoid unnecessary delays.

Know the peak hours for school-bus-related accidents. Data shows that pickup (usually **between 3 – 4 p.m.**) is the most dangerous time, while dropoff (typically between **7 – 8 a.m.**) is the second most hazardous. If going through a school zone is unavoidable, plan ahead and giving yourself more commute time to account for the delays and slower speed limits.

Keep the 'danger zone' clear. The **10-foot zone** around the bus is where vehicle-student collisions occur most often. Stop far enough away so kids can load and unload safely.

Stay alert for walkers, bicycles and e-bikes. [Studies show](#) that **1 in 4 kids walk** while distracted, and **80%**



do not cross the street safely. Plus, [pedestrians, bicycles and e-bikes](#) are silent and fast, so you won't know they're nearby unless you see them.

Stop for crosswalks. Obey crossing guards. Never block a crosswalk, even if you're stopped at a red light or waiting to make a turn. Remember to always keep intersections clear.

Plan a bus-free route. Stay on interstates and major highways, especially during peak hours, to limit school traffic-related delays.

Maintain your focus. Keep your eyes on the road by avoiding distractions. Lock up the cell phone and don't eat or change radio stations while driving.

Slow down. Drive below the posted speed limit so you're prepared for the unexpected — kids darting out between cars, bicycles swerving in your path, or children running to the playground.

Practice patience. Stay calm behind the wheel and plan extra time on your routes so you don't feel rushed.

Disclaimer: The information contained herein is a summary. It is provided for general information purposes by Penske and is not a comprehensive review of all the information in applicable regulations and guidance. This information should not be used as a substitute for professional services or legal advice. Penske does not warrant the information contained herein, or the accuracy of the information for any purpose. If legal advice is required, you should obtain the services of a licensed attorney.