

4 Must-Know Back-To-School Safety Tips for Truck Drivers

Class is back in session. As kids return to school, it's time for truck drivers to share the road with an estimated [480,000 school buses](#) nationwide. Expect heavier traffic and unpredictable behavior from drivers, pedestrians and cyclists. Stay alert with these four must-know back-to-school safety tips:

1. Know what to expect and plan accordingly

Don't be one of those drivers caught on camera passing a stopped school bus. When a bus flashes its red lights and extends its stop arm, it's illegal to pass it in all 50 states. The only exception is if you're on a divided road. At a minimum, keep a 10-foot buffer zone around the bus, which is the bus driver's blind spot.

When following a bus, be prepared to stop often. Remember that buses must come to a full stop at all railroad crossings.

2. Slow down in school zones

The road directly in front of a school is one of the most dangerous places to drive. Some school zones are marked with yellow lights that flash when they're active. Others have signs listing the school zone's hours. Know your school zone areas and always obey the posted school zone speed limit, which is often between 10-20 mph. Remember that school zones can stretch several blocks. If you're unsure where the zone starts and ends, always err on the side of caution.

It's also wise to lower your speed on all roads during back-to-school season. Reducing your speed by just 5% [lowers the risk of a fatal crash by 30%](#).

3. Watch for bikes and walkers

Many kids and teens walk or ride their bicycles to school, and they become distracted easily. Some listen to music on headphones. Others talk and play with their friends and don't pay attention to traffic.

Be prepared and drive defensively. Expect children to cross the road anywhere, not just in marked crosswalks. Scan the sidewalks and both sides of the street. Drive



cautiously near playgrounds and bus stops, where children gather. And never honk your horn at children. Doing so may startle them and cause an accident.

4. Plan your route — and your time

Expect the heaviest bus and pedestrian traffic between the hours of 6 – 9 a.m. and 2 – 5 p.m. Choose roadways that avoid congested residential streets. Plan extra time into your schedule. Expect to encounter less experienced student drivers who may drive erratically.

Bonus tips: Don't drive distracted. And always obey crossing guards. They have the same authority as law enforcement officers in most states. Remember to drive hands free, adjust your mirrors and other vehicle settings before you drive, and always stay aware of your surroundings while behind the wheel.