

TIP #9: BEYOND THE FRONT YARD: CREATING SAFER STREETS AND PLAY PLACES FOR CHILDREN

Crawling... walking... bike riding... in-line and roller skating. As babies grow into school kids they move farther and faster. They love to be on the move-- to the neighbor's house, the school yard, the park or the store! These activities are great for your children, if your neighborhood has safe playgrounds, sidewalks, and parks.

Young children need safe places for active play. They need safe ways to get themselves to school, sports events, and other points of interest. Yet, many communities today are not kid-friendly for walking and biking.

HOW SAFE ARE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS AND RECREATION SITES?

Pedestrian-friendly neighborhood streets include:

- Places to walk off the street (sidewalks, wide shoulders).
- Sidewalks and wide shoulders that make walking easy (no overgrown bushes, dangerous ditches, trash bins, or parked cars in the way).
- Places to cross the streets easily and safely (crosswalks, traffic signals).
- Crossing Guards near schools to help children cross.
- Courteous drivers that obey the speed limits and stop for pedestrians.
- Safe play areas for children.

Safe places for children to play outdoors include:

- Areas that are fenced-in or away from busy streets and traffic.
- Playgrounds where equipment is in good shape.
- Play areas with soft surfaces (wood chips, rubber, sand) below swings and climbing structures.
- Grassy areas for games.
- Paths for bicycling.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

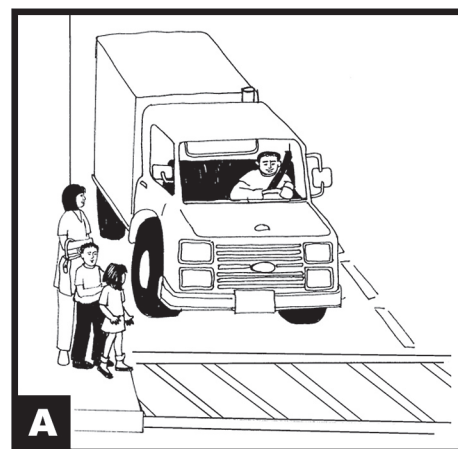
There are things you can do to create safer streets and play areas for children.

Things that you can do yourself:

- As a driver, set an example by stopping and giving pedestrians the right of way (A).
- Share the road safely with bicyclists.
- Obey speed limits, especially in neighborhoods where children play. Be extra careful in school zones.

Things you can do with others:

- Do a safety audit of your neighborhood using the "Walkability Checklist" or "Bikeability Checklist" (see below).
- Share the results with others in your community who are concerned with child safety: neighbors, police officers, traffic engineers, school transportation directors, parent-teacher associations, and other community groups.
- Write letters to your newspaper and speak up at public meetings.
- Work with your city or county traffic safety engineer to identify ways to make the streets safer.
- Encourage construction of playgrounds near homes, if needed, so children don't have to play in streets and parking areas.



To get the Walkability or Bikeability Checklist (check for availability in Spanish) or for more information, visit www.nhtsa.dot.gov