

SAFETY ON THE BUS ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

If you haven't travelled alone on the school bus before, here are some things you may be worried about, and some tips to keep yourself safe.

WORRY 1. What should I do if I miss my bus in the morning? Check before it ever happens with your parents, school or the bus driver, to find out if there is a later bus you can catch and what time will it get you to school. Keep a Phonecard, or mobile phone on you and know a couple of contact numbers you can call if you are uncertain what you should do, or need help at any time.

WORRY 2. How will I know when to get off the bus? Practise the journey beforehand with your parents before you have to do the trip alone. Arrange to meet up at the bus stop with a friend or group from the same school, so you can travel together. On the journey, note any interesting places you pass on the way, to help you get your bearings. Make yourself a simple map of the journey marking in these places and the names of the most important roads you use.

WORRY 3. How can I make sure I stay safe during the journey? Stay in your seat, and if a seat belt is available, keep it on at all times. Sit near the driver, or away from anyone who might irritate you. If anyone bothers you, tell the driver, your parents and your teacher at once. Don't carry any unnecessary "valuables", such as an expensive mobile phone, computer game, watch or iPod / MP3 player with you. Make sure all your belongings are clearly marked with your name, home post code and school.

WORRY 4. What about if I feel ill on the journey? The best way to avoid feeling sick on a bus, is not to eat during the journey! If you do suffer from travel sickness, keep some peppermints handy, and don't try to read while the bus is moving! If you suffer from a problem such as epilepsy, diabetes or have a strong allergy, keep a card on you or wear a bracelet with details of your condition and its treatment. Ask your parents to give the driver details of what to do if you become ill, and who to contact.

WORRY 5. Supposing someone starts to bully me? Always tell an adult if you are being bullied. Keep telling until someone listens. You have a right to feel safe, and nobody should be able to take that away from you. Ask the driver to deal with the bully. Shout "NO!" very loudly so everyone knows what is happening. Move to a different seat near the driver or a responsible adult where you can't see the bully, and they can't see you. Stay with a group of friends if you can, to support each other.

WORRY 6. Should I always get off at the same bus stop? Yes, unless you have a special reason that has been agreed in advance with everyone concerned. If there is a problem, you will be close to home when you get off the bus, and your parent / carer will be sure where to meet you. Don't risk getting off early to walk round the shops or through the park with a friend, especially when the evenings get darker. Always let your parents know in advance if you plan to change any of your regular arrangements, such as if you wanted to attend a homework club or after-school sports event.

WORRY 7. How do I let my parent/carer know I have a problem without others knowing? Arrange a safe word that only you and they know. If you chose the word "fish" for instance, you could call your parents and say "I forgot to feed the goldfish this morning" and your parents would know you needed to be met at the bus stop, or helped out of an awkward situation. Never tell anyone else your safe word, and change it if you've ever had to use it. If you've lost your phone or money to get home, tell your teacher or report to the school office. They will be able to contact your parents or make sure you can get home safely.

WORRY 8. What can I do to stop worrying about what might go wrong? Play a little game called "What would you do if....." with your parents and family. Explain each of the things that worry you, and ask your family what they would do. Choose the answer you think is best, and practise it with your family until you are sure you know what to do and don't feel anxious any more. For example "What would you do if someone behind kept pushing you?"

- Move to a different seat - Say "Stop pushing!" really loudly
- Tell the driver
- Make a joke and say: "You obviously really like me, you can't leave me alone!"

USEFUL SKILLS

Work with your child on the following skills to keep them safe.

1. **Positive Body Language.** Stand straight, head up, look relaxed and confident. Avoid looking at the floor, hunching shoulders or displaying obvious tension.
2. **Eye Contact.** Look people in the eye when you speak. Don't stare or look afraid - just hold their eyes, calmly and confidently.
3. **Say No!** Say or shout "No!" if there is a bullying problem to get the attention of others who may help.