

5 Back-to-School Driving Tips

The end of summer vacation comes too quickly for most of us in California. It can also be an exciting time of year for families as they prepare for the back to school season. With summer vacations wrapping up and traffic increasing as people go back to work and back to school, August means different driving patterns and rules of the road.

According to a report by the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHSTA), autumn is the most dangerous time of year for pedestrians. We've included 5 tips below to help keep you, and your kids, safer as they head back to school. Whether you are a new or long-term driver, use these tips to set the example for others on the road.

1. **Respect the big yellow bus.** Imagine being in a large car with 40 noisy 6th-graders. Could be pretty stressful. Do your part and make the bus drivers' lives easier. Yield when they are attempting to merge, and maintain a significant distance behind them, as they often make unexpected stops. Make sure children know to walk in front of - never in back of - buses.
2. **Get in the zone.** Speed limits in California school zones typically range between 15 and 25 mph. Abide by the limits and look out for pedestrians, keeping your foot on the brake. (It goes without saying that school zones are home to newly licensed teenagers who are largely inexperienced). Speed limits aren't just for during school hours either - consider after-school marching band practice, late night football games, and other events. When dropping kids off, remember that curbs are reserved for buses and emergency vehicles, so you shouldn't loiter. If you need a few extra minutes during the drop-off, turn on your hazard lights.
3. **Walk better.** Drivers aren't the only ones who need to obey the rules of the road. A major driving pet peeve is pedestrians who jaywalk, cross at a red light, or text while walking. More than an annoyance, this is a danger, especially in school zones. Remember to be a good pedestrian -- cross at corners/marked crosswalks and in clear view, never between parked cars. Remind your kids to do the same.
4. **A different kind of pool safety.** If you're part of a carpool it's up to you to remind your children/passengers that seatbelts are a must - no matter who they are driving with. Not only are seatbelts the law, they save thousands of lives a year.
5. **Go back to school yourself.** Even if you've been driving for 30 years, make time for a refresher course in safe driving. Driving basics, such as making full stops at stop signs and red lights and other good habits, should also be reviewed. Remember that distracted driving unfortunately didn't end with the summer either, so turn off/put down your cell phone while in the car. While it's an exciting time, getting back to school can be stressful, too. Tolerance and defensive driving will get you *everywhere* you need to go safely.