



Walking to School

A parent's guide to the national
Walk to School campaign

LIVING STREETS

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST



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What is Walk to School?

Walk to School is a campaign run by national charity Living Streets. The campaign encourages primary school children and their parents to leave the car at home and walk to school. This builds a habit of walking which we hope will remain with them for the rest of their lives as a part of an active lifestyle.

We encourage walking to school through three main routes; our WoW scheme (Walk Once a Week), Walk to School Week in May and International Walk to School Month in October. The Walk to School campaign currently involves 2 million children nationally. It began in 1996 and is funded by the Department for Transport, Department of Health and supported by Transport for London. More information is available from www.walktoschool.org.uk

This guide will tell you all you need to know about getting involved in the campaign, as well as the facts and figures that show why regular walking is such a vital activity for your family.

We also run a project to get secondary school age pupils walking more, called Step Up. For more information about this scheme please visit: www.stepup.org.uk



What is Living Streets?

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

We run a number of campaigns promoting walking including Walking Works (www.walkingworks.org.uk) which is aimed at desk-bound office workers and Fitter for Walking where we work in partnership with local authorities to improve the walking environments in communities around England.

For more information visit the website www.livingstreets.org.uk or see page 9.

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Why Walk to School?

We all know that there are good reasons to walk to school, but read on and you might discover a few things you didn't know!

It's healthy for your children and for you

- Walking to school is a great way for your children to increase their levels of exercise. According to the NHS, 9 out of 10 children could grow up with life threatening diseases such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease partly because they aren't getting enough exercise.
- Up to 72% of children aren't meeting the recommended 60 minutes of exercise per day- walking to school is a great way to help get those minutes up!
- Walking with your children is good for you too - it improves your heart and circulation, increases mental health and wellbeing, helps with weight loss and boosts your immune system.



- People in cars can suffer three times as much pollution as pedestrians because they are sitting in the line of the exhaust fumes from the car in front.

It's free!

- Walking instead of driving saves, on average, £400 per year.

It's easy

- Everyone can factor walking into their school journey- you don't need any special equipment.
- Walking can help develop independence. Children will learn road safety skills which will help them with the journey to secondary school later in life.
- Most parents and children can comfortably walk 1 mile in around 20 minutes!



It's green

- Leaving the car at home will reduce your carbon footprint and help you to make a difference to the environment. In the UK The school run is estimated to be responsible for over 2 million tonnes of CO₂ emitted each year which is more than the annual CO₂ emissions of the Bahamas.
- More people walking and fewer cars on the road during the school run also means less pollution for everyone to breathe in.
- 1 in 5 cars in the morning rush hour is on the school run – if we all try walking that journey more often, we will make a huge impact on congestion in our towns and cities.



It's social

- Walking to school is a great chance to socialise. 62% of parents that walk say their children get to socialise with others before they arrive at the school gates, as opposed to only 31% of children who are driven (Living Streets, 2009).



How does Walk to School work?

The aim of the campaign is simple - we work with parents, schools and local authorities to get as many people as possible walking to school regularly.

We know that parents and teachers have busy lives, so we try to make it easy for everyone to join in.

We organise two annual national awareness events (Walk to School Week and Month) and a year-round walking promotion scheme called

WoW (Walk Once a Week). With great resources and events for individuals and schools to take part in, we want to help you to champion walking to school in your own area.



Walk to School Week

...is the prime opportunity to give walking a go. It's an action-packed awareness week in May each year, where parents, teachers and local authorities run awareness-raising events and activities to get families walking to school. Each year Living Streets comes up with a new theme (past ones have included making friends, health benefits, and even nature detectives!) and we produce posters, games and charts as well as great competitions for the schools, parents and pupils who take part.

Walk to School Month

...runs over a longer period and has an international focus, as schools across the world join forces to promote walking to school. It runs annually in October at the start of the academic year; an ideal time to start new habits. Having a whole month means you can take part whenever it suits you, and we encourage participation by producing free downloadable lesson plans and activities on our website.

“ When my daughter and I walk to school together we feel good about the fact that not only are we keeping ourselves healthy but we are also doing our bit to keep the environment healthy. It would be fantastic to see more parents walking their kids to school.

-Parent

”



WoW

...stands for Walk Once a Week and is our scheme encouraging parents and pupils to walk to school at least once a week throughout the school year. Schools and local authorities can buy sets of themed badges from us (amongst other resources) – one for each month of the academic year.

Children record how they travel to school and if they walk at least four times a month, they receive one of the very popular, collectable WoW badges.

The badges are designed by children at participating WoW schools in an annual UK-wide competition. Each year a new theme is set by Living Streets - in the past these have included 'Nature in the UK' and 'Local Landmarks'.

WoW is an ideal next step after participating in Walk to School Week or Month and has been very popular with parents and children. Because it runs year-round, its biggest benefit is in making regular walking the norm for families. In a recent national survey of WoW schools, just under a fifth of pupils surveyed, reported that they started walking because of WoW (Wavehill report 2009).



Frequently Asked Questions

As a society, we've got out of the habit of walking short journeys. For some parents, there may be worries or questions that can make walking to school seem difficult. We have plenty of information online at www.walktoschool.org.uk which address these barriers, but we've highlighted a couple of the most common concerns, along with our answers, below:

When can I let my child walk to school alone?

Many parents of older children at primary school would like to let their children walk to school by themselves or with friends, but are understandably worried about safety on the roads.

We think that the best way to ensure your children are safe and responsible when they start walking independently is to walk with them in their early years. That way they will gain the experience and confidence needed to deal with traffic as well as getting to know the local area well enough to walk happily on their own or with friends in later years. We recommend asking your child, when you're walking, when and where the safest times and places are to cross the road. This will build up their confidence and ability and show you that they are capable of safe decision making. Once you and they are happy, they can begin travelling independently.



Of course we also know that the risks posed by busy roads and fast moving traffic are very real, and that's why Living Streets works to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

I haven't got enough time!

We know that for many parents getting their children to school and themselves to work can be a real headache, leading parents to feel that they just don't have the time to walk with their children to school.



We have found however, that parents often don't realise just how long the school run takes in the car, especially when you allow for traffic jams and parking hassle. We also know that people often overestimate the time it takes to walk and underestimate the time it takes to drive. You may well find that walking takes no longer than driving, so why not give it a go?

For some families, it really is too far to walk to school every day. If you live more than a 30 minute walk from school, you could try the 'Park and Stride' approach. This involves parking a 15 minute (or more) walk away from the school gate and walking the last stint with your child. Not only do you fit your walk in, but Park and Stride saves you time trying to find a parking space and reduces congestion near the school. If other parents from the school sound interested, why not approach a local pub or community centre, and see if they'll allow you to use their car park?

If you have children at more than one school, and feel you can't fit walking into all the school journeys, a good solution could be to get in touch with other parents whose children are at the same school and take it in turns to walk.

I'm afraid that my child will be in danger from strangers

Despite a small number of high profile tragic cases, the risk of a child being abducted by a stranger is very low. It hasn't increased over the last 30 years- in fact the number of children abducted has actually decreased over the last ten years. It's a hard message, but the truth is we can do our children's long-term health and well-being more harm by 'protecting' them from the real world.

Of course, you could always encourage your child to walk with another child or group of children who live close by, or on the way to school.



How do I get involved?

There are a number of different ways you can get involved with Walk to School. Here are a few ideas- for more information visit www.walktoschool.org.uk

First steps

- The first thing is just to try walking to school with your children. Pick one day a week and see if it's any quicker, cheaper or just more fun!
- Sign up to the Walk to School newsletter – you can do this at www.walktoschool.org.uk
- Ask your child's school if they take part in Walk to School Week, Month events or WoW...

If your school currently doesn't take part, you can...

- Ask if your local authority or School Travel Advisor promote Walk to School Week, Walk to School Month or WoW. Ask whether they provide your school with free resources. If they don't, get in touch with us and we can provide them with more information about the scheme
- Offer to help run an event at your school during Walk to School Week or Month (visit our website for more ideas on what you can do)
- Find out if there are other parents who want to support the Walk to School Campaign too; you could form a group to get your local school involved
- Download free materials from the website, such as publications, posters, statistic sheets
- For more ideas, visit our website: www.walktoschool.org.uk

Above all...

- Spread the word! The simplest thing you can do is to tell people about the campaign. If everyone who hears about it encourages someone else, it will put pressure on the government and local authorities to deliver the services and support that people need

Find out more at:

Website: www.walktoschool.org.uk

Email: walktoschool@livingstreets.org.uk

Tel: 020 7377 4900



Thank you!

For your interest in the Walk to School campaign

We hope you are inspired to get involved! By walking to school you will become part of a wider movement which is fighting obesity and global warming, encouraging children to be healthier and more active and reclaim local streets around the country.

Living Streets' history

We started life in 1929 as the Pedestrians Association and have been the national voice for pedestrians throughout our history. In the early years, our campaigning led to the introduction of the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30mph speed limits. Since then our ambition has grown. Today we influence decision makers nationally and locally and run successful projects to encourage people to walk. We also provide specialist consultancy services to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions, improve public health, and make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.

Please visit www.livingstreets.org.uk for further details of our work and achievements.



Photo credit: Rob Golding

Want more information?

Just tick what information you would like to receive from us, filling in your name, address and email, and we'll be in touch:

- The monthly Walk to School e-newsletter: Tick
- The Living Streets e-newsletter
- Information on running a Walk to School Week or Month event
- A Living Streets 20 mph campaign pack
- Streetlife- a quarterly magazine giving you the latest news from Living Streets and our campaigns
- Information on Step Up, our Walk to School campaign for secondary schools

Full name: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

**Send this back to us in a stamped envelope
addressed to: Walk to School, Living Streets, 4th
floor, Universal House, 88-94 Wentworth Street,
London, E1 7SA**

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