

Back to School Preparedness Guide

for Parents, Guardians and Children



Our themes



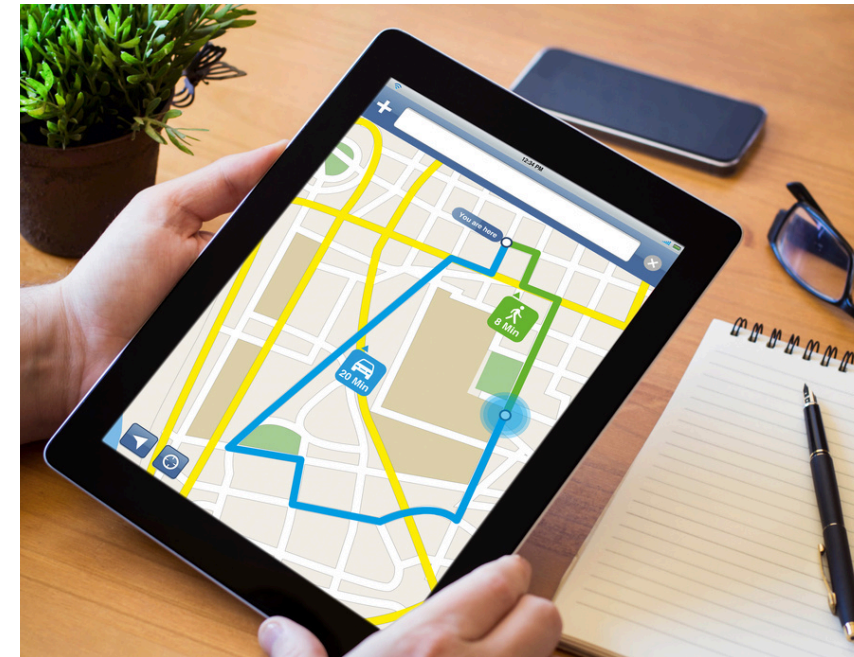
Family passwords **6**

Help kids stay safe by choosing a special word they only share with trusted adults, including caregivers or babysitters.



School bus safety **7**

Know the rules, protect young riders and keep school zones safe for everyone.



Travel route planning **8**

Support safe, independent travel by preparing reliable routes for school. Keep paths simple, visible and have a backup plan in place.



Mental wellness **9**

Ease the transition by planning early, visiting the school ahead of time and adjusting routines before the first day.

Our themes



Backpack safety

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Prevent strain and discomfort with proper backpack fit and packing tips.



Getting to school

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Promote safe, confident travel with tips for walking, biking or taking the bus.



Playground safety

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Keep playtime injury-free with safe surfaces, supervised play and clear rules for equipment use.



Crosswalk safety

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Teach kids how to cross safely and stay alert around traffic.

Our themes



Lunch prep **14**

Support healthy eating with safe storage, balanced meals and a bit of lunch planning each week.



School zone safety **15**

Protect kids on the road by staying alert and following school zone rules.



Emergency kit **16**

Prepare kids for the unexpected with a simple, everyday emergency kit.



Device safety **17**

Protect devices and limit distractions with smart storage and usage habits.

Our themes



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Make sure young children have access to key contact and health information in emergencies.



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Explore more from your utility! Get other free resources, including emergency and savings guides.



Family passwords

Create a **special word or phrase** only your children and trusted adults know, such as babysitters, caregivers or family members.

If someone unexpected says they're there to pick up your child, they should be able to **confirm the password** before your child goes with them.

This adds an extra layer of safety and helps school staff **avoid confusion** about who's authorized for pickup.



School bus safety

Ontario school buses use an eight-light amber-red warning system to keep kids safe.

1. **Amber lights** mean the bus is **about to stop** – slow down.
2. **Red lights** mean the bus **has stopped** – all traffic must stop.

Failing to stop for a school bus with flashing red lights can result in a \$490 fine and six demerit points.

New bus signage reads:

“Do not pass when red lights flashing. Slow down and get ready to stop. Don’t race to get past it – the few seconds you save could lead to a major accident.”

Talk about the route

Discuss the safest way for your children to get to and from school. Help them **recognize crosswalks, traffic lights and safe sidewalks.**

Avoid shortcuts

Make a plan that avoids shortcuts. Go over it with your child and explain why it's safer to stay on the main path, even if others take a different way.

Transit awareness

If your child uses public transit, make sure they know their bus number and route. **Write it down** and go over **what to do if there's a delay.**

Have a backup plan

Create an alternate route in case the main one is blocked. Remind children to call you or a trusted adult if anything feels unsafe.

Travel route planning

Help children **stay safe** by choosing clear, direct routes to and from school. Avoid shortcuts, plan alternatives and review transit options when needed.





Mental wellness

Plan ahead

Most schools are open a **week or two before** the first day. This is a great time to **ask questions, confirm details** or discuss your child's **specific needs**.

Ease the nerves

If your child feels anxious, **visit the school or classroom** ahead of time. Let them know **it's normal to feel unsure** – many other students feel the same way.

Adjust routines early

Start shifting sleep schedules about a week before school begins. **A good night's rest** can make those first mornings feel a lot easier.

Backpack safety

Heavy backpacks can lead to back and shoulder strain, especially for growing kids. Choosing the right backpack and packing it properly can make a big difference.

Look for a backpack with **wide, padded straps and back support**. It should weigh no more than **10 to 15 per cent** of your child's body weight.

Pack heavier items closest to the back and use **both straps** for even weight distribution. Multiple compartments help balance the load and keep things organized.



Riding a bike

Always wear a **helmet**, follow **road safety rules**, use **hand signals** and choose a safe, familiar route.

Walking to school

Stick to **sidewalks**, obey **traffic signals** and **walk with friends** when possible – there's safety in numbers.

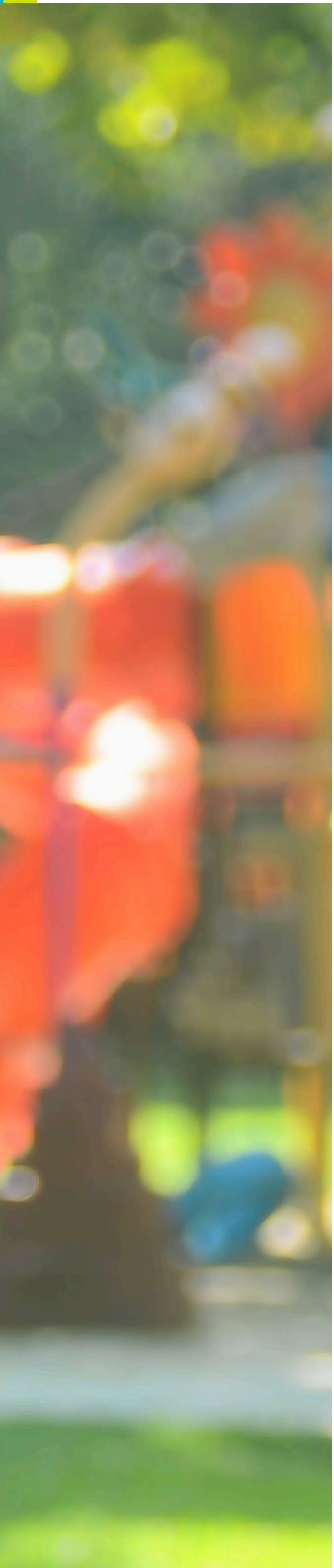
Taking the bus

Stay back from the curb until the bus stops completely. Follow the driver's instructions, **remain seated** and **never run or push** when getting on or off.



Getting to school

Help kids get to and from school **safely**, no matter how they travel.



Playground safety

Surface

Most injuries happen from falls. Safe surfaces include **wood chips, rubber or sand**, and should surround equipment by at least six feet. Avoid concrete, dirt and grass. **Check metal slides on hot days** to prevent burns.

Site

Check for **broken glass, nails or other hazards** before play. Make sure all parts are secure and safe.

Learn more about safety: Visit the [**Canada Safety Council website**](#).

Structure

Look for **splinters, sharp edges or gaps** where children can get stuck. Swing seats should be soft and spaced at least **two feet apart**. Swings should be in a separate area.

Crosswalk safety

Always follow the crossing guard's direction, even if traffic lights suggest otherwise. Their job is to protect children crossing the street.

Stop when signalled, even at a green light. If the guard says stop, wait until they give the go-ahead.

If the crossing guard isn't present, check carefully for children before driving through any crosswalk.

Stay alert behind the wheel. Children can step out unexpectedly from between parked cars or off the curb – your quick reaction can prevent an accident.



Lunch prep

Keep meals safe, healthy and stress-free for both you and your child.



1. **Use an insulated lunch bag** and include a **freezer pack** to keep food fresh and at a safe temperature.

2. **Plan ahead** to include a mix of fruits, veggies, proteins and whole grains.

3. **Need inspiration?** Check out **Canada's Food Guide** for balanced lunch ideas.

Follow speed limits

Always follow posted speed limits, especially in **school zones** where **lower speeds** help protect children.

Watch for kids

Be extra alert near schools, crosswalks and bus stops. Children may **cross unexpectedly**.

Stay focused

Avoid distractions while driving. A few extra seconds of caution can prevent serious accidents.

Be extra patient

Slow down around school buses and crossing guards. Their job is to keep kids safe – **help them do it**.

School zone awareness

Protect kids on the road by **staying alert** and following school zone rules.



Emergency kit

Help your child feel prepared with a small kit they can keep in their backpack or locker.

Pack essentials your child might need if there's an emergency and you're not nearby. Choose **compact, lightweight items** they can easily carry every day. Here are some **suggested** items to include:

- Water bottle
- Nut-free snacks
- Small flashlight
- Emergency whistle
- Cell phone (if allowed)
- Small first aid kit
- Emergency blanket
- Health-related items (e.g. inhaler, EpiPen)
- Comfort item (e.g. small stuffed animal)
- Family photo
- Hand wipes
- List of emergency contacts



Device safety

Help your child keep their devices safe and minimize risk at school.

- **Keep valuables out of sight** to avoid drawing attention.
- Choose a **designated safe storage spot**, like a locker or secure backpack pocket.
- Set a **private password** on all devices.
- **Leave unnecessary tech at home** when it's not needed.
- Encourage kids to **power down devices before bedtime** to support healthy routines.





Emergency contacts

In stressful situations, young kids may forget important details like their home address or your phone number.

If your child becomes separated during a class trip or needs emergency medical care while with someone else, not having access to a contact number or health information can delay help.

Tip:

Consider using a **wearable ID tag or medical bracelet** for young children. Include their **name, emergency contact information** and any **important health details** to keep them safe and supported in any situation.



Emergency procedures

Help your child understand what to expect during different emergency responses at school.

Hold and secure is used when there's a **potential threat in the surrounding area**, but not directly on or near school property. As a precaution, outer doors are locked, and no one enters or exits the building. Classes continue as usual inside.

Lockdown is used in a serious emergency where a threat is inside or very close to school property. **All outer and inner doors are locked**, and students stay in classrooms or designated safe areas. Any emergency personnel may enter or exit the building.

Important:

- **Cell phone use is restricted** to avoid spreading misinformation and to keep lines open for emergency use.
- **School phones will not be answered** during a lockdown, as staff are focused on managing the situation.
- **Students are asked not to use phones** until it's safe and cleared by school staff or emergency services.



[AlectraUtilities.com](https://www.alectrautilities.com)

Explore more of our free emergency resources, including the *Power Outage Preparedness Guide* and *72-Hour Emergency Kit*, at: [AlectraUtilities.com/Emergency-Preparedness](https://www.alectrautilities.com/emergency-preparedness)

For ways to save energy and money, get our how-to guide *The Power to Save* at: [AlectraUtilities.com/Tips-Resources](https://www.alectrautilities.com/tips-resources)

Electrical safety is fun! Download our activities for students grades K-18 at: [AlectraUtilities.com/Teacher-Resources](https://www.alectrautilities.com/teacher-resources)

Learn more about our AlectraCARES framework and community support at: [Alectra.com/Community](https://www.alectra.com/community).

To contact Customer Service, visit: [AlectraUtilities.com/ContactUs](https://www.alectrautilities.com/contact-us)

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