

# Drivers from both directions must stop when buses unloading

*Back to school is time to remind motorists, parents and children how to stay safe around school buses*

Certain phrases instantly bring certain times of year to mind. “Wishing you the best of the holiday season” is one. I imagine that here in Winnipeg, “Hon, have you seen my balaclava?” is another.

At this time of year, it’s got to be “Back to School Sale on Now.”

That phrase defines a different reality for different people.

Older kids are struggling to nail down that all-important outfit for the first day of school. This used to be a primarily female thing, but don’t kid yourself. Take a look down your high school hallway today, and you’ll see that Mom and Dad’s credit cards have been given a workout by both sexes.

Younger students have more basic concerns, like whether they’ll like their new teacher and remember where the bathroom is.

Most parents welcome those crisp September mornings with silent shouts of joy. No more summer activity and summer daycare hassles. No more choruses of “I’m bored!”



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And let’s not forget the commuters, gnashing their teeth and cursing the inevitable increase in traffic. There’s more of everything on the roads; literally overnight, pedestrians, bicycles, cars, and school buses are now all jockeying for position on what were once quiet roadways.

That big yellow bus ushers in a whole new season. Oh yes, and a whole new set of safety rules, too.

## **You play a role in bus safety**

Children, motorists and parents all have a role to play in making sure everyone gets to school and home again in one piece.

## **What part do you play?**

Motorists, for one, must remember the rules of the road as they relate to school buses.

Here’s a refresher course. Yellow flashing lights on the bus means it’s getting ready to stop and load or unload. That means you must slow down and get ready to stop. Red flashing lights indicate that the bus has stopped and that children are getting on or off. It is illegal to pass a school bus on either side once it’s stopped and has its warning lights on, unless there is a physical barrier (such as a median) between your vehicle and the bus.

Some think it’s OK to pass a school bus when it’s stopped on the other side of the road. Not true. As soon as the bus driver turns on the warning lights, you must stop, wait for the children to get off or on, and stay stopped until the bus driver turns the lights off. (Many buses also have a little stop sign arm that gives very clear indicator

of what you should do.) It makes no difference whether you are traveling behind the bus or traveling toward it.

## **What else can drivers do?**

Obviously, be extremely cautious about moving ahead, even after the bus driver has turned off the flashers. Make sure all children are safely away from the roadway before accelerating, and watch for children dashing back on to the road to pick up dropped books or other items.

## **Teach your children**

Parents, you can teach your children proper “bus manners,” which go a long way toward preventing accidents.

Bus drivers can’t see children, especially smaller children, if they walk within the ten-foot radius around the bus. Most school buses in the province have safety arms to prevent children from walking in this area, but make sure your child knows about the danger zones in front of, beside, and behind the bus, just in case.

Instruct your children to take three giant steps away from the bus door once they get off, and to make sure they stay that far away from the bus until it moves on. If they must cross the street in front of the bus, teach them to take five giant steps past the front of the bus before they turn to cross. That takes them out of the “danger zone” in front. And finally, teach them to never cross the street behind the school bus.

While other motorists are required to follow certain rules around school buses, not all of them do. Teach your kids to watch traffic very carefully.

That’s it for this week. Until next week, stay **RoadWise**.

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