

The “Survival Rules” Can Protect Your Child

1. Never ride out into a street without stopping first.

Nearly 33% of car-bike crashes involving a young child occur when the child rides a bicycle down a driveway or from a sidewalk into the street in front of a car. Kids must learn to stop, look left, look right, look left again and listen to be sure no cars are coming before entering a street. Look left that second time because cars coming from the left are on the child's side of the street and are closer. Use your driveway or sidewalk to demonstrate the safe way to enter a street. Have the child practice the entry, looking left, looking right and looking left again. Make sure that they understand that because they see a car, it does not mean the driver sees them. They must always assume that the driver has not seen them.

2. Obey stop signs.

Nearly 33% of the car-bike crashes with a young child occur when a child rides through a stop sign or red light without yielding to crossing traffic. Kids must learn to stop, look left, look right, then look left again at all stop signs, stop lights and intersections before crossing. Make sure they know the basics about stop signs and stop lights. Then take your child to a controlled intersection and practice crossing safely. Explain that when riding in a group, *each bicyclist* must stop and make sure it is clear before crossing. (see Rule 4) Teach young children to walk their bikes through busy intersections. Remind them that it is the law to obey traffic signals even when no one appears to be coming. This is also a great time to explain one-way streets to them.

3. Check behind before turning, swerving, or changing lanes.

Nearly 33% of the car-bike crashes involving children occur when a child turns suddenly into the path of faster moving traffic. Kids must learn to look behind them, signal and look behind again before swerving, turning, or, changing lanes. The best place to practice this is in a quiet parking lot or playground. Stand behind them while they ride along a straight painted line. Hold up numbered cards and have them practice looking back over their shoulder and telling you the number on the card -- without swerving off the painted line. Children should not be allowed to ride their bikes on the street alone until they have mastered this skill.

4. Never follow another rider without applying the rules.

Many fatalities occur when the first rider violates one of the three “*survival rules*” above and the second one just blindly follows. The statistics show that one of the three rules above caused the crash, but the real reason was following another rider. Running stop signs or red lights, riding out of driveways or zipping across lanes all seem natural to the second child in line because they are more focused on following the first rider than on the traffic or the rules. This will not be an easy lesson to absorb!

Before you get on your bike, put on a helmet!

Every year about 800 people die in the U.S. from bicycle crashes. Most of them die from head injuries. Many more suffer from brain damage and live for a long time or sometimes for the rest of their lives with the inability to some of the things they used to be able to do.

Brain damage can cause learning disabilities, personality changes and rob your child of the ability to think clearly. Hospital emergency room studies show that a helmet can prevent about 85% of these kinds of injuries. So you don't want your child riding a bike without one, even on your block, on the sidewalk or on a bike trail. The fall is from the same height regardless of where they ride!

Now, on to the back panel.

Any Questions? If parents need any assistance or have any questions on bicycle laws, or bicycle safety, please contact the Merrill Police Department!

Here are the steps:

- **First, teach them the four rules to avoid fatal crashes!**
- Then teach them to wear a helmet
- Then, help them learn to balance and ride according to the rules.



Some parents begin and end with teaching balance. But step one is the most important: teaching your child how to avoid the situations that cause hundreds of deaths to children every year. And you

probably are aware already that a helmet is essential when they make a mistake. Teaching them to balance is the easiest part for most kids. Then you have to practice the four basic safety rules in actual riding. It can take you an extra couple of hours, but the result is well worth the effort!

The Fun Part: Time to Ride

Gear: Start with a helmet, gloves to protect the skin on their hands and perhaps even skaters' knee and elbow pads for the first rides. Adjust the bicycle for them and be sure they can reach pedals, bars and brakes comfortably.

Brakes first! Show your child how to stop the bike. Hold them up and gently move them forward as they use the brakes to stop until you are sure they know how.

Balance: Run alongside the bike, holding it up by the seat with one hand on the handlebars to show how you turn them to keep the bike upright.

Riding: Nobody learns without practice. Riding with your child is probably the best way to practice the rules. Go over the rules, then ride, stopping occasionally to review what they have just done and praise their good performance. Notice that if they are behind you, your rule about not following automatically will be severely challenged, even if you ride through a red light or directly into the path of a car! As with almost any other skill, practice is necessary. More than one session will be needed. But the result is worth your time.

The Merrill Police Department

Wants to help you:

Teach Your Child to Ride

a Bicycle

More than just wearing a helmet

More than just keeping balance

Teach your child the

“SURVIVAL RULES”!

