



# Preventing Danger Zone Accidents

## Driver's Study Guide



The students are most at risk before they board the bus and after they leave it – when they are in danger zones around the bus. This aid is to help you remember and follow all the safe practices to reduce the danger zone hazards and risks to make the kids safer.



## Training That Changes Drivers' Behaviors

5611 Hudson Drive, Ste 100, Hudson, Ohio 44236  
1-866-275-7272 [www.schoolbussafetyco.com](http://www.schoolbussafetyco.com)

**We recommend the following additions to reduce the risks in the Danger Zones.**

### Crossing Gates



It is estimated that around 50% of the school buses in the USA use crossing gates. The crossing gate is required by regulation in 25 states and in Canada. In the last ten years, there were 9 danger zone fatalities at the front of the bus. In the prior decade there were 26 front of the bus fatalities. Crossing gates do reduce front of the bus tragedies.

### Extended Stop Arms



The extended stop arm does reduce the number of vehicles that illegally pass stopped school buses.

If the vehicle does not stop and hits the extended stop arm, the arm swings loose, as it uses a weak sheer pin to reduce the damage to the illegal passing vehicle.

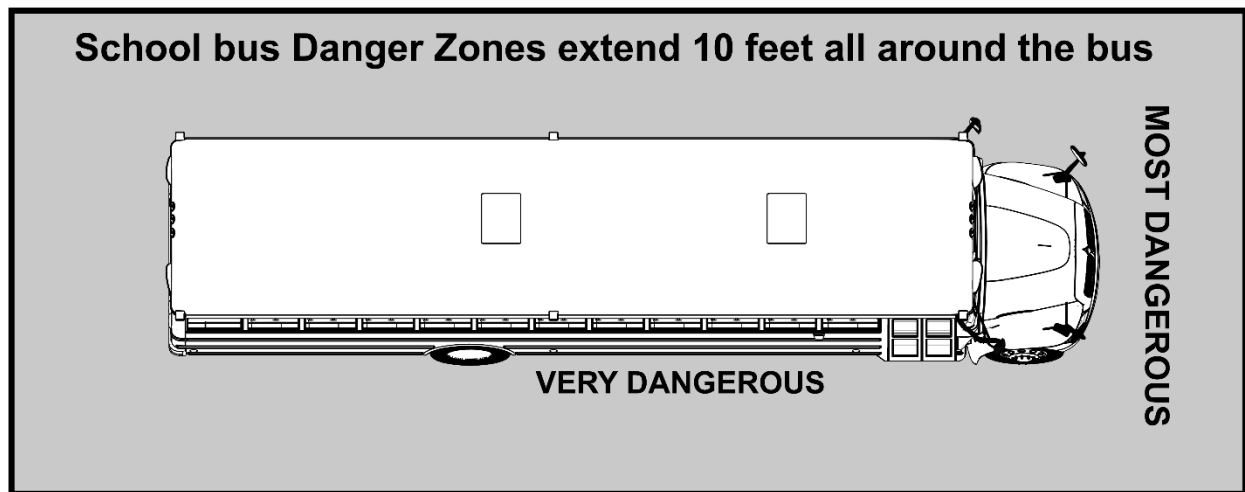


## Danger Zones

The Danger Zones are the areas around the bus where students are most at risk from being injured or killed by their own bus or by a passing vehicle. Most cities and states designate the Danger Zones as being the areas up to 10 feet around the bus.

However, New York designates the Danger Zones as being up to 15 feet and California designates 12 feet. All other states and provinces designate 10 feet.

Many students cannot identify what 10 feet is, so we describe this as five giant child sized steps. This is easier to understand and put into practice.



Children are most at risk before they board the bus and after they leave the bus when they may be in the danger zones around the bus. In the US, over the past 10 years, 55 students were killed in the danger zones by their own bus or by other vehicles passing the bus. That is 55 lives lost over the decade.

This program teaches the proper procedures to keep the students safe before they board and after they leave the bus.

It is important to clearly tell the students about the danger zones at the start of the year and then reinforce these points throughout the year.

### COUNT THE KIDS AWAY

An important practice to ensure that students are not in the danger zones is to “Count the kids away”. As the students exit the bus, count them, so you know how many students have exited the bus. Then, before you pull away, look around and identify the same number of students who exited the bus. When you do this, you know no students are in the Danger Zones. If the number does not tally, do not move the bus until you identify any missing student who exited the bus.

# Danger Zones

The younger children, in K thru Grade 2, are far more at risk. Three times as many younger children are killed in the danger zones than students in grade 3 and above.

These younger students may be carefree and do not know the dangers with the big bus. Pay closest attention to keeping these younger children safe.

## Crossing the Street

By far the most dangerous practice is crossing the street. In the last ten years there were 55 student fatalities in the danger zones and 33 were while crossing the street – 60%.

In the last two years there were 8 student fatalities and 4 were while crossing the street - 50%.

How to avoid crossover accidents:

1. If at all possible, students should be picked up and dropped off on the side of the street where they live. If we can avoid crossovers, there cannot be a crossing accident. If you see any opportunity to avoid crossovers, bring this to the attention of your supervisor.
2. Make sure the students follow the correct crossing procedure. This includes stopping at the end of the bumper and checking for traffic.
3. Utilize an extended stop arm as shown.



## Why Children Enter Danger Zones

- Having to cross the street.
- Dropping something and trying to retrieve it.
- Taking a shortcut close to the front of the bus.
- Trying to cut between parked buses.
- Running after the bus, hitting the side. (when late)
- Interacting with kids still on the bus.
- Walking away from bus, then coming back. (VERY DANGEROUS)

## Safe Stops

If a stop is unsafe, bring this to the attention of your supervisor. Never drop a child anywhere other than their approved stop. If you experience any challenges or issues with this, contact dispatch for direction.

## Recovering From Distractions

A driver may lose sight of a child if they are distracted, and that child may move into a danger zone. Counting the kids away will reduce this risk. If any child is unaccounted for, secure the bus and get out and look.

# Danger Zones

## Safe Pick Up Procedures:

1. If you think a stop is in an unsafe place, tell your supervisor.
2. Activate the amber warning lights 300 feet before the stop. If your state or province requires a different distance, follow your locations policy.
3. Approach the stop cautiously at a slow speed.
4. If possible, bring the bus to a stop at least 10 feet before where the students are waiting, so you have a clear view of the students and what they are doing.
5. Put the transmission in park and set the parking brake.
6. Open the door to activate the red lights and check for any passing vehicles.
7. If all safe, direct the students to board the bus.
8. If any students need to cross the street, the students should stop at the edge of the road and look at the driver for the driver to signal them to cross the street. The driver should ensure there are no passing vehicles and give a clear signal to cross the street. The students should check the road is clear themselves and should then walk across the street, not run.
9. Never back the bus when children are nearby.

## Safe Drop Off Procedures:

1. Become familiar with the drop off points and know which students have to cross the street.
2. Activate the amber warning lights 300 feet before the stop. If your state or province requires a different distance, follow your locations policy.
3. Approach the stop cautiously at a slow speed.
4. Bring the bus to a full stop.
5. Put the transmission in park and set the parking brake.
6. Open the door to activate the red lights and check for any passing vehicles.
7. If all safe, direct the students to exit the bus.
8. If any students need to cross the street, make sure there are no passing vehicles and signal them to cross. The students should stop at the end of the bumper and check is all clear. They should then look back at the driver for the driver to signal them to finish crossing.
9. Count the kids as they exit the bus and count them again, before you pull away.
10. If there are too many students to count away, allow a little more time before pulling away. Toot your horn, move a few inches and toot again, before pulling away.
11. Never back the bus when children are nearby.

# Danger Zones

## Teaching the Students

At the start of each school year, explain to the students about the Danger Zones.

Present to the students the 8 safe practices as detailed on the next page.

In addition to instructing the students the safe practices at the start of the school year, they are more likely to remember and follow the safe practices if these are reinforced by presenting the student safety practices two or three times a year. Student Safety Programs are available that can be presented by a teacher in a classroom setting, or by parents from a home computer.

As the driver, you get to watch the students exit the bus every school day and if they must cross the street, you watch them do this, every day. If you see any unsafe practices such as running across the street, staying close to the bus or running after the bus. Take action every time to correct these unsafe behaviors.

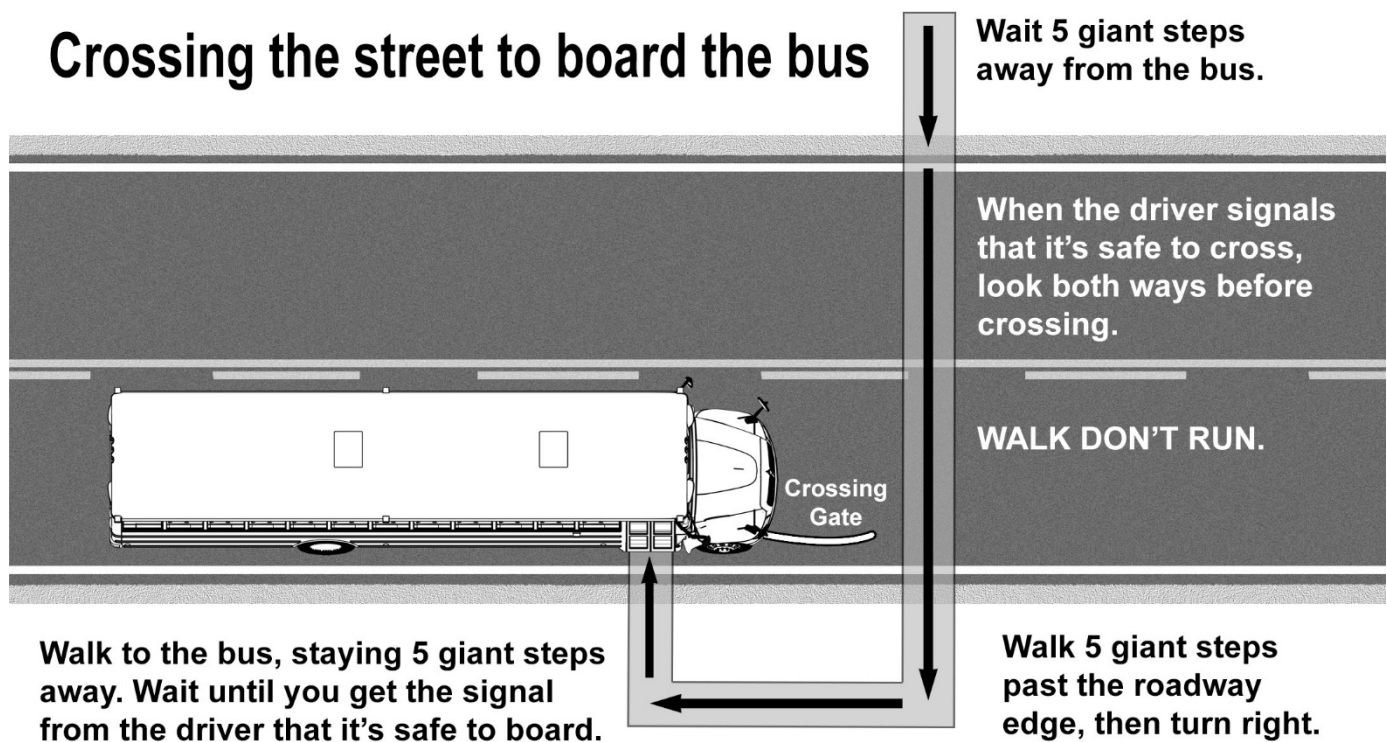
Here are the safe practices you should explain to the students.

1. Say this to the students: “NEVER, repeat NEVER pick up anything you drop near the wheels, under the bus or in front of the bus. Tell your driver and they will instruct you what to do, or they will pick the object, paper, or money up for you. This is very important.
2. Say this to the students: “NEVER run after the bus, this is very dangerous. NEVER bang on the side of the bus. If you are late, go home. Do not run after the bus. If the driver sees you running after the bus, they will stop and allow you to board, but the unsafe behavior will be reported to your supervisor, then to the school and the parents. In the past 10 years there were seven children killed while running after the bus. Don’t run after the bus.”
3. Tell the students that there should be NO horseplay, pushing, shoving, or running when the bus is arriving, waiting, or leaving.
4. Tell the students to avoid clothing with strings hanging from jackets and backpacks. Ask parents to remove them, if necessary.
5. Instruct children to walk five giant steps straight away from the bus when they exit, then they can turn in the direction they wish to go.
6. Make sure students understand that when they wait for the bus, they should stay at least five giant steps away from where they board the bus.
7. The students are NEVER to go behind the bus or cross between buses.
8. If none of the students you transport need to cross the street, you do not need to explain how to safely cross the street. If any students do need to cross the street, explain the following safe practices to cross the street:

## Danger Zones

For When the Students Need to Cross the Street in the Morning

1. Tell the students to wait on their side of the street, at least five giant steps away from the edge of the road.
2. There should be NO pushing, running or other horseplay.
3. After the bus has stopped, with its red lights flashing, the students should look at the driver for the signal to cross the street. Make sure the students know the signal you will use to direct them to cross, and they know the signal to stop and wait where they are.
4. Explain that if you toot your horn, they should return to the sidewalk as quickly as possible.
5. Once the driver signals them to cross, the students should walk to the edge of the road, look, left, right and left again and if safe walk across the street, do not run.



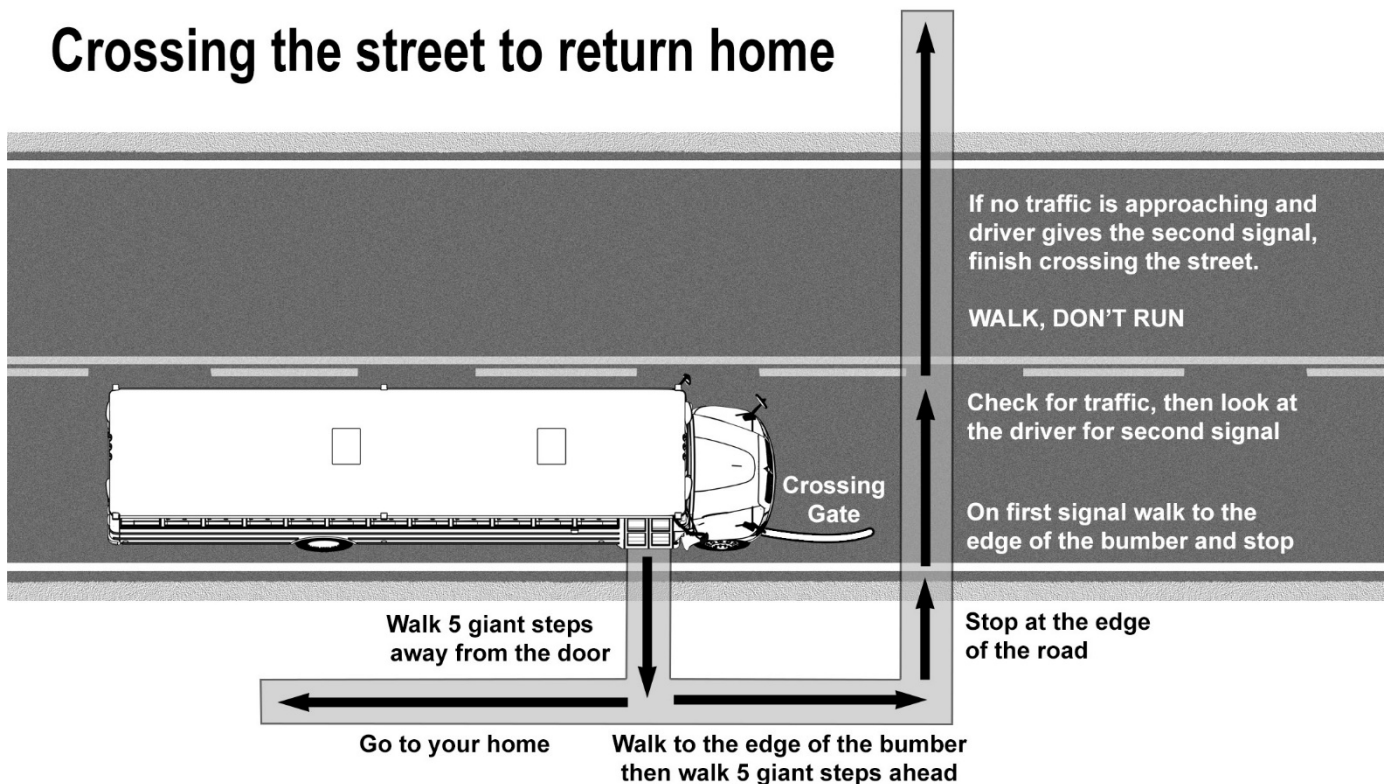
In The Afternoon

1. Students should only exit the bus when the driver signals them to do so.
2. Students should walk down the steps using the handrails with three-point contact.
3. Students should walk five giant steps away from the bus then turn the direction they wish to go.

## Danger Zones

4. If the students need to cross the street, they should walk five giant steps away from the bus, then turn left and walk to the end of the bumper on the front of the bus. Then, walk five giant steps further forward to the end of the crossing gate if there is one.
5. Look at the driver and wait for the signal to cross the street.
6. The students should now walk to the end of the bumper and stop. They should look left, right, and left again and if no traffic, look at the driver again for the signal to complete the crossing.
7. Students should walk, not run.

## Crossing the street to return home



## Learning From Past Accidents:

1. By far the most dangerous practice is crossing the street. In the last 10 years, there were 55 student fatalities and 33 of these (60%) were while crossing the street.
2. The second cause of danger zone tragedies is when a student gets close to the front of the bus. In the past 10 years there were 9 students killed at the front of the bus. Ideally, all school buses should have crossing gates to prevent these tragedies.
3. There were 7 fatalities from students running after the bus. If any student runs after the bus, you should stop and transport them. However, remind them how unsafe it is, and that you'll be reporting their behavior to your supervisor for action to be taken.
4. Draw cords should be removed from clothing or backpacks to prevent these getting caught in the doors and the student being potentially dragged.



# Danger Zones

## Review

1. It's important to check your Danger Zones, not just at bus stops but anytime you're stopped around pedestrians, children, or adults.
2. Count the kids away. Count how any students exit the bus and identify this number of students, before you pull away. If the number does not tally, do not pull away until you have identified all the students who exited the bus.
3. Remind the children of the safe steps to use when they get on and off the bus. Don't tolerate horseplay on the bus or at the stop.
4. Know where all the students are before you move the bus. Count each child and know where they are.
5. Tell the students to be at the stop 5 minutes before the bus is supposed to come.
6. If they are late, tell them they are NEVER to run after the bus, they should return home. They are NEVER to bang on the side of the bus, EVER. If you see a student running after the bus, stop and allow them to board, but report their behavior to your supervisor.
7. If a child drops anything, they are to alert the driver for help or advice on how and when to retrieve the item.
8. Finally, crossing the street is the most dangerous practice. Clearly explain and follow the safe practices and make sure the students follow them.
9. If you see a student not following the safe practices, take action.
10. Draw cords should be removed from clothing or back packs to prevent these getting caught in the doors and the student being potentially dragged.

## Danger Zones

**Q1:** Students should walk \_\_\_\_\_ giant steps away from the bus after exiting.

- a) 5 in all states except California – 6 giant steps and New York 7 giant steps
- b) 10
- c) 15

**Q2:** If you see a student running after the bus, what should you do?

- a) Stop but don't allow them to board.
- b) Don't stop, they should have been on time.
- c) Call dispatch to pick up the child.
- d) Stop, and allow them to board, but report their behavior to your supervisor.

**Q3:** \_\_\_\_\_ the kids as they leave the bus and again as they walk away from the bus.

- a) Greet
- b) Count
- c) Signal

**Q4:** Why should you seek to know which students have to cross the street?

- a) So this can be done quickly
- b) So they can get off the bus first.
- c) So you can watch out for them each day and make sure they do cross safely.

**Q5:** To prevent a student being dragged:

- a) Remove drawstrings from clothing.
- b) Remove drawstrings from back packs.
- c) Both of the above.

**Q6:** As you approach a pickup area, you should:

- a) scan the entire area and take note of where the students are.
- b) scan the entire area directly in front of and behind the bus.
- c) look straight ahead.

**Q7:** When you stop to pick up the students, the bus should be:

- a) 10 feet before where the students are waiting.
- b) In line with the students.
- c) Just past the students, so the door is in line with them.

**Q8:** You should tell the students that if they drop anything anywhere near the bus, they should:

- a) Carefully pick it up
- b) Tell the driver and ask for their help.
- c) Just abandon it.

**Q9:** What is the best way to avoid crossing the street accidents?

- a) Avoid cross overs.
- b) Count the kids away
- c) Take extra care in watching for passing cars.

**Q10:** You see a student run across the street after you have dropped them, what should you do?

- a) Shout at them out of the window.
- b) Talk to them the next day and direct them not to do this. If they do it again, tell your supervisor.
- c) Give them a note next day

## DISCLAIMER

The School Bus Safety Company (SBSC) has created this driver training program to help improve the quality of training provided to your drivers.

This course is fairly comprehensive but is not exhaustive in covering every facet or issue possible with respect to driving a school bus or the training process. It is the responsibility of the school district or contractor to ensure that they agree with the practices being taught and that all issues are correctly trained to deliver the safe service required, in your state or province.

Further, SBSC has no involvement or control over the delivery of the training with respect to time, thoroughness, understanding and the application of the training. All these facets are under the control of the school district or contractor, not SBSC. As such, SBSC will not be liable for any actions, accidents or occurrences resulting from using this training course.

The school district or contractor should review the program and be satisfied they agree with the practices being taught and the manner they are taught. The school district or contractor is responsible for the actions and results following the use of this training program.



# Safety Management System

## Mission

## Vision

## Values

Remove or Reduce Risk

Do it Right the First Time,  
Every Time

No Unsafe Behaviors

### Hazard Mitigation

### Hazard Identification

#### Remove or Reduce Risk

Leave room. Always stay back at least four seconds

Look ahead

Look around

Communicate

Stay within posted speed limits

Count the kids away

Avoid backing the bus or use a spotter or GOAL

Check for sleeping children

Rock & roll for turns

Use your reference points

Drop students only at approved stops

Adjust your mirrors

Do a thorough Pre & Post Trip and only operate a safe vehicle

OT 0821384 If late, stay late

Focus on the driving

Always stop completely at stop signs

Learn the students' names, smile and greet them

Courtesy is contagious

Slow down and pull back for rain, snow, ice or fog

Get enough sleep, always be alert and awake

Always keep your balance, no rushing, use three point contact

Never be under the influence of drugs or alcohol

#### Unsafe Behaviors

1 Following too closely

2 Unprepared for what is coming

3 Not being prepared for what is around you

4 Not communicating with other drivers or pedestrians

5 Speeding

6 Being unaware a student is still in the danger zones when you pull away

7 Backing without a spotter or GOAL

8 Leaving a sleeping child on a bus

9 Not rocking & rolling to see around blind spots

10 Turning without using your reference points

11 Dropping students at unauthorized stops

12 Not adjusting your mirrors to minimize blind spots

13 Operating unsafe equipment

14 Rushing to make up time

15 Distractions – texting, dialing, or reading maps

16 Rolling through stop signs

17 Not being able to identify students and having no communication with them

18 Developing a bad attitude

19 Driving too fast for conditions

20 Driver fatigue

21 Slips, trips & falls

22 Use of drugs & alcohol