



Muoversi. Con intelligenza

SAFE BY CHOICE. MOVE. WITH INTELLIGENCE

ON THE ROAD OF YES AND NO 3/4/5 years old

progetto promosso da



con il patrocinio di



Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito
Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per il Piemonte
Ufficio VI - Ambito territoriale di Cuneo

in collaborazione con





INDEX

- Children, traffic, sustainable mobility
- A habitual road route
- Children and the perception of danger in urban traffic
- Everyday experiences of an accompanied child pedestrian
- The behaviour of adults
- The orientation towards sustainable mobility

Children, traffic, sustainable mobility

From big cities to small towns everyone's daily routine is punctuated by movement, whether it through urban or extra-urban space to get to school, work or back home. A routine made up of unavoidable rules for moving around safely, but also of habits and small carelessness that can make us forget the importance of prudence and rules.

The project "Sicuri per Scelta. Muoversi. Con intelligenza" 'Safe by Choice. Move. With intelligence' is an initiative dedicated to **road safety education and sustainable mobility**, which has the following objectives: to make all road users aware of the rules, to promote a correct perception of risk, to orientate towards environmentally sustainable choices.

This leaflet covers some of the behaviours to be adopted on the road to ensure the safety of three, four and five year old children.

Through the stories of the Ricci friends, the actions of the **accompanied pedestrian** on habitual routes such as, for example, the home-school-home route are examined.

A habitual road route

For every child, the journey from home to school combines two affectively significant places. Adults generally pay a lot of attention to making environments in which children spend a lot of time cosy and safe, but tend to attach less importance to the child's progressive autonomy in the street. Just as the home and the school are the 'environment', so are the street, the pavement, the step and the slide, pedestrian crossing, the signposts, the traffic lights, the crossroads, the bridges, the buildings, the vehicles, the people, any animals (domestic or wild), the public parks and any other element that makes up a city, a village, a hamlet.

Getting to school by car, or on foot, or by bicycle or school bus allows the child to familiarise himself with the elements of this 'everyone's environment' with which he has to deal.

The daily home-school-home route can be an opportunity for important learning for his personal safety and the adult can effectively accompany this progress.



The children and the perception of danger in urban traffic

First of all, it must be remembered that a child cannot be compared to a small adult: their way of seeing, knowing and learning is very different from our ways. Moreover, the street environment is full of symbologies to decipher, which are not immediately comprehensible.

What can we do so that they become a source of orientation and security instead of generating a sense of inadequacy and consequently being rejected as confusing?

The great complexity of urban traffic initially creates surprise in the child, followed by difficulties in interpretation, with uncertainties that can lead to fearful reactions or, on the contrary, too much bravado. These reactions are due to the way the child perceives the road environment:

- his stature affects his still narrow field of vision;
- the understanding of complex noises and their localisation are maturing;
- some spatial concepts are difficult to project with respect to objects and space, e.g. how to attribute left and right to the origin of vehicles in a pedestrian crossing;
- traffic presents a large number of simultaneous perceptual stimuli, but a child's reduced ability to concentrate does little to help him perceive the road as a whole;
- motor skills are being consolidated: a child, for example, can still stumble;
- the ability to tell the difference between a stationary vehicle and one in motion has yet to stabilise.



These are factors that affect the assessment of the speed of an approaching vehicle: on city streets people move at different speeds and it is complicated for the child to understand what is happening around him.

Moreover, a child tends to act spontaneously without thinking about the consequences: his spontaneous reactions may be unpredictable and constitute an unintentional source of danger, himself and others, e.g. he may be attracted to something and suddenly start running.

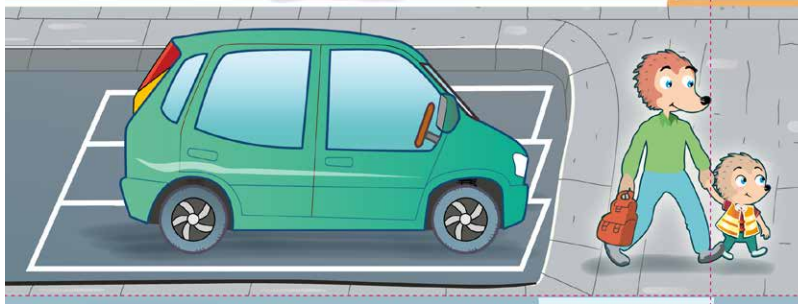


In the family and at school, children are in a protected situation and, even if they learn the list of correct behaviour, the real difficulty is then being able to apply them in the road context in which the behaviour is acted out: moving vehicles can give the child a feeling of disorientation.

When the home-school distance allows, it would be very useful to accompany the child on foot, for a number of important reasons, we list a few:

- Through the experience of walking in urban traffic and by virtue of dialogue with reference adults, the child gradually learns to recognise dangers until becoming aware of them and, later, as he or she grows up, to assess them correctly, until acquiring the ability to foresee and avoid them. Recognising and assessing a danger in a known environment is easier than facing it in a new and sudden situation;
- Gradually the child becomes aware of distances and travel times;
- walking from home to school becomes a daily outdoor exercise that is good for children, improves their motor performance, helps relieve tension and trains their ability to concentrate;
- Walking helps to reduce the number of cars around the school, which also increases the safety of young pedestrians.

Daily experiences for an accompanied pedestrian child



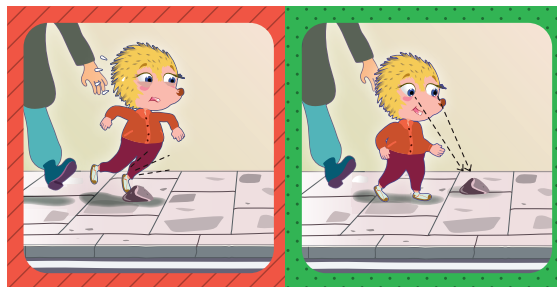
Travelling the same stretch of road at the same times every day becomes an opportunity to learn in a natural and concrete way to recognise certain recurring dangers and to understand the meaning of the main rules of behaviour. Especially if this stretch of road is travelled on foot.

Along a known route, one can point out to the child the most dangerous points for pedestrians, using simple explanations to explain why and demonstrating the most prudent behaviour for that stretch.

Through the repetition of correct behaviour and imitating the positive example of adults, children gradually acquire the necessary experience to move independently and safely, familiarising themselves with the road environment.

It may happen that an impetuous movement causes the child to fall (walking, cycling, getting out of the car): how many things can be learned from a scraped knee! With patience, a balance is sought between the protection of family members and the need to explore the environment independently.

Beware, however, of one's own behaviour: sometimes, out of haste, an adult pedestrian accompanying a child tends to 'pull' the child along, perhaps crossing on foot at a red light, perhaps talking on a mobile phone while crossing, distracting himself from the context and losing full control over the child's actions.



The behaviour of adults

The child, already at an early age, begins to develop his or her own experiences of dealing with road danger and it is the adult's job to reassure him or her, continuing to watch over his or her safety.

Some tricks make it easier the child to adapt to the road environment, e.g. leaving the house time to avoid the hassle of arriving late; it is also good to talk to the child both on foot and in the car.

We don't always realise it, but children observe us: in order to acquire the habit of respecting traffic signs, the example of the adult is worth more than any lesson, even when the adult pedestrian points out the incorrect behaviour of the driver who does not stop in front of the pedestrian crossing.

Possible consequences of misbehaviour can be explained in simple words, but it would be better to focus on positive behaviour and praise the child when it behaves appropriately.

Attention also needs to be paid to the child pedestrian's clothing: a badly laced shoe, a scarf in the wind, a jacket inconsistent with the temperature of the period can impede movement and create discomfort, causing distraction to the outside environment.

Walking down the street is a demanding action, requiring concentration and readiness to self-protect, sometimes a child struggles to separate himself from a cherished object, but walking in traffic while holding a favourite toy can be another potential distraction.

Even in these situations, it is the adult who can guide the child towards self-regulation of his or her behaviour.





A fundamental rule in traffic: **see and be seen**. What does that mean?

For us as adult drivers, it means special care when we pass a vulnerable person, remembering also that a badly parked vehicle can obstruct the view to cross the carriageway or get in the way on the pavement.

When driving at night, we tend to focus mainly on illuminated objects: remember that a pedestrian wearing dark clothes and without reflective elements is visible from about 25 metres, while light-coloured, high-visibility clothes make him visible from a distance of about 140 metres.

For children who are pedestrians, this means learning to make themselves visible in traffic, always and especially on bad-weather days, for example by wearing a high-visibility bib and light-coloured clothing, or by adding a reflective element to their rucksack, or cap, or shoes. A flashing light added to the rucksack may also be appreciated by the child: but in practice it does not replace the reflective element as it does not give off enough light for safety on the road.

Orientation towards sustainable mobility

In a playful form, together with the child, during any journey along an urban street, it is, for example, useful to observe the different ways of travelling in the city, in the village, in the hamlet, and to evaluate their characteristics, both positive and negative. At the same time, it should be remembered that in this age group children are struck by the conspicuous aspects of objects (e.g. the size of a bus) and direct their attention to one object at a time, as they are still developing the ability to compare.

First it is good to examine each element of the street environment individually, considering it from every perceptive point of view (sight, hearing, smell, for some elements also touch). This skill (called discrimination) may seem very simple, but it is the basis for subsequent developments and must be acquired perfectly in order to be executed immediately.



Beware also that children tend to regard some vehicles (e.g. bicycles and push scooters) as toys, and pay little attention to traffic when riding them.

For those who live in the hamlet of a village, it is difficult to reduce the use of the car to take the child to school; however, situations can be created to allow the child the experience of accompanied walking, e.g. parking at a certain distance from the school building. In some localities, e.g. small hamlets, children experience playing in the courtyard or in private streets with little traffic, so that the child can run, cycle, play in freedom: everyone goes to the concentric or town it is good to

Finally, a journey to a more distant location may involve the use of alternative means such as the ship, or the plane, or the train: this is opportunity to initiate the child into thinking about the transport system as a whole and the different impacts on the environment.

motor vehicles: what they are, how many wheels they have; they produce noise and pollution, they are fast and can be dangerous; a bus is very big and carries many people; a bus carries more people than a car; bicycles: they travel on cycle paths; they take up less space on the road; they are quiet; they produce no stench; the helmet protects the head; pedestrians: walk on the pavement without running; the pavement has a step to protect the pedestrian from vehicles; sometimes some pedestrians occupy all the space and other pedestrians cannot pass; in my day, I can be a pedestrian accompanied to ... (school, to visit a friend, the park, shopping, to the gym, to the theatre/music workshop ...)

on the road: everyone has a place to move, with respect for others.

