



Walk to School Planning



Walk to School Day is held every year; this year it is on October 4, 2017. This high energy event reminds adults and students alike of the simple joy of walking or bicycling to school. For many communities, the event leads to more walking and bicycling all year long. It also builds support for creating or improving safer walking and bicycling routes.

Who can be a Walk to School event organizer? A Walk to School event organizer can be anyone who wants to champion holding an event at a local school, as long as the principal gives the green light. Organizers are often PTA members, other parents, school nurses, PE teachers, or school principals.

Walk to school events can be simple or complex. This fact sheet is to give ideas and inspiration for a range of situations and resources. Maybe you don't have a lot of time. Go the simple route this time. Just take that first step. Who knows where it will lead? Perhaps the greatest tip for success is for the event to tie back to something a community really cares about, whether that's promoting an active lifestyle, safety, the benefits of community or some other reason.

Simple Event: When there's no time to spare an event can be simple! In fact, it's possible to plan a Walk or Bike to School event in one week. Here's how it can work:

First: • Obtain the school principal's approval for a Walk or Bike to School Day event. • Register the event at www.walkbiketoschool.org to be counted among the millions of participants. Registering your event will also give you free access to extra resources and promotional materials. [For more information about resources that may be available for your school, contact Elaine Clegg at Idaho Smart Growth (elaine "at" idahosmartgrowth.org) or visit www.idahosmartgrowth.org or www.walkbiketoschool.org] • Decide how the event will be organized. One easy option is for families to walk from their own homes, with other families joining along the way. For schools that can ramp up quickly, another possibility is for students to meet at a pre-determined site or sites and walk as a group with adult invitees and volunteers to school.

Second: • Invite students and parents to participate. Invite the Mayor and City Council, invite the School Board, if there is a local legislator invite them. • Use regular school communication methods, such as email blasts, send home fliers, etc. to announce your event. Download fliers that can easily be printed on a home or school computer at <http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/plan/downloadable-materials/> • Address safety along the route if needed. Talk to your school resource officer or local police if needed. Ask them to come along.

Third: • Find local businesses that can donate snacks and other incentives • Recruit volunteers. The volunteers can help distribute fliers, invite local leaders, walk along on the day to provide for safety, and set up at the school to greet walkers and bicyclists on the big day.

Fourth: • Make announcements, remind kids to participate, get people to commit to come along. • Plan for tables and other items needed for set up at arrival at the school, plan for incentives to be picked up or dropped off.

Fifth: The Big day is here! • Have fun walking to school! Take photos of walkers and riders and post them on media (if allowed by the school). • As students arrive, greet them and give them incentives, ask them to help with a list such as Top 10 reasons to walk and bike to school and/or Top 10 things that need improvement to make walking and biking to school easier and safer. Save the students' lists for safety evaluations and to get ideas for next year's event.

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Walk to School Day Tips

Other event organizers have offered 10 tips to help in the planning process.

1. Start Small

It's okay to start small. Or big. You can always build on your successes with more components next year. Or, if the school's enthusiastic and partners are ready to help, aim high; start with an initial flier that you follow with other promotional materials and planned activities.

2. Plan Early (if you can)

When time is on your side, plan as early as you can. Depending on how your school operates, it might be a good idea to get the ball rolling two months before your event date. Many organizers get approval from the school in the previous school year (or if the organizer is the school principal). They don't take any other steps at that point besides getting the date on the school calendar.

3. Get the Principal On Board

Get the principal's approval before moving forward on tasks. Approach the principal with an outline of your ideas for the event as early as possible. While at minimum the principal's approval is needed, he or she can also be what makes the event really shine.

4. Register Your Event

Register your event. Thousands of schools and communities around the country register their events. Make sure your event is counted by registering.

5. Recruit Help

There's no need to go it alone. Don't try to plan and carry out the event all by yourself. Recruit other adults and students to help.

6. Include All Students

Include everyone at the school. Explore ways to participate and learn about how to provide access for all students. For instance: arrange for buses to drop off at a remote site and let the kids walk in to the school that day. Arrange a remote drop-off site for parents who drive students. Or arrange to have a walk "at" school the morning of the event for kids who arrive in a vehicle.

7. Provide Incentives (if you can)

Give out healthy snacks, incentive items or coupons if you can. Print stickers and certificates, or order prizes such as pencils, badges or reflective gear. Download stickers and more [here](#).

8. Communicate with Parents

Communicate with parents early and often about the event. Distribute fliers two weeks before the event, and send out reminders the week and day before the event. Include your contact information in the promotional materials in case parents have questions or concerns. Find fliers and templates to use and adapt [here](#). Intercom announcements are another good way to get the word out and reinforce safety tips.

9. Get the Word Out

Get the word out beyond the school. Promote the event to the community, elected officials and students. Think strategically. For example, if speeding is a problem, you may want to involve local law enforcement. If sidewalks are missing or in bad repair, you may want to invite your local public works department. Browse ideas for promoting your event.

10. Review the Getting Started Guide

Review the Getting Started Guide at www.walkbiketoschool.org for step-by-step guidance