

## 4. Transportation

### Walking to Work Independently

By Jayne Dixon Weber

*(Note: There is a vignette on the DVD based on this material.●)*

#### INITIAL STEPS

Olivia recently got a job that is within walking distance of her house. She is very interested in learning to walk to work, because she sees it as a way to stay fit. Olivia and her helper reviewed the types of road signs and marks that she may see on her way to work, as well as the safety rules that apply to walking.

Olivia and her helper walked around their neighborhood on several occasions and took pictures of the various road signs and marks, including a stop sign, a stoplight, the box showing the various walk signals, and intersections with stop signs both with and without crosswalk signs. What follows is the sequential “lesson planning” for Olivia to master this critical skill.

#### ITEMS TO TEACH

1. Stop sign intersections. Look for painted crosswalk marks when crossing a street that does not have a stop light, because drivers are supposed to stop for pedestrians. However, because drivers do not always stop and there are a lot of intersections that are not marked, follow these simple rules:
    - If a car is coming, wait for the driver to motion you to cross.
    - If there are no cars close, then look both ways, first left, then right, then left again, before crossing the street.
  2. Stoplight intersections. Review the different signals Olivia will see in your area when she crosses the street at a stoplight. When it is okay to walk, she may see a figure that appears to be walking or the word, “WALK.” The caution signs may be a flashing person, a flashing hand, a flashing “DON’T WALK,” or the word, “CAUTION.” Be sure to tell Olivia that if she sees these signs when she is already in the intersection that she should hurry to cross the street. The signs she may see when she is not to walk may be the above figure with an “X” through it or a constant “DON’T WALK.” The lights for cars may or may not coincide with these lights, so she always needs to be aware of the cars, regardless of the lights.
  3. Crossing in the middle of streets. Olivia should never cross in the middle of streets or enter the street from between parked cars, because it can be very difficult for cars to see her.
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4. Walking in business areas. When walking in a business area, Olivia should walk on the sidewalk, close to the buildings, and away from the street. In a neighborhood, Olivia should use the sidewalk if there is one. If there is not a sidewalk, the helper should determine whether it is safe to teach Olivia to walk “against” the traffic.
5. Any other aspects that apply in your area.

### **SAFETY RULES**

Make sure you review safety rules before you leave the house, and depending on how well Olivia does, it may be something you want to do on a regular basis, until it is clear that she understands and remembers all the rules.

1. Do not talk to strangers. This rule applies now and will for the rest of your life.
2. Never take rides from people, even if you know them, unless you call your care provider first. Teach Olivia to say, “I need the exercise.”
3. Do not give out personal information other than your first name to anyone (other than uniformed law enforcement, fire or rescue personnel). That includes your last name, your phone number, and your address.

### **PLANNING**

Sit down with Olivia and plan the trip to work.

1. Look at maps to figure out possible walking routes to work. You may also want to go on several walks to figure out the best way to accomplish this.
2. Determine that Olivia is always going to take her (charged) cell phone with her whenever she goes out. She should always let her care provider know when she is leaving the house. If she gets hurt, sick, or becomes afraid for any reason, she is to call her care provider or 911 if it is “serious.” She should always call if her plans change in any way, so that no one worries about her. Her care provider should be “speed dialed” into Olivia’s cell so she can call easily if she gets scared, sick, or does not know what to do. Information under “ICE” (in case of emergency) should also be stored on Olivia’s phone, in case she is unable to relate this information to another person.

When you think Olivia is ready, move on to the “Five Phases” listed on the following page.

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### The Five Phases

Move from one phase to the next when you think Olivia has safely mastered the relevant skills.

1. **Planning and Safety**—Review the previous information to make sure she has internalized the initial knowledge and skills.
2. **Walk Together**—Walk with Olivia so you can point out the details of what you had reviewed earlier.
  - a. Before Olivia leaves the house, make sure she has taken care of her hygiene, is nicely dressed, and has her charged phone.
  - b. Point out that you have found a way to walk on a sidewalk all the way to work.
  - c. Show Olivia what a crosswalk looks like. He has to look both ways before she crosses or if there is a car, wait for the person to motion her across even if there is a stop sign. If there are no crosswalk marks at the intersection, make sure she waits for the driver to signal you her to cross, especially if there are no stop signs.
  - d. At a stoplight, show Olivia the button to push, and to wait for the “Walk” sign before beginning to cross the street.
  - e. Show Olivia how to walk away from the street, but encourage not doing too much window shopping on her way to work!
3. **Helper Fades Support**—Fade your support as Olivia becomes more confident. This may take a couple of walks or it could take several—it just depends on her understanding and performance. Because crossing streets can be so dangerous, you will have to use your judgment as to how quickly support is faded. You can allow Olivia to figure things out on her own as long as her safety is not an issue.
4. **Helper Fades Further**—Meet Olivia at about the halfway point to check in on how she is doing.
5. **Independent Walk**—Now, Olivia will walk to work independently but will call you when she leaves the house and after she arrives at work.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. Different people will spend varying amounts of time in each phase. Let them take the lead on when they are ready to move on.
  2. Be on the lookout for special circumstances. For example, if Olivia is afraid of dogs, consider that factor as she learns to walk to work. Teach her to step into a driveway when a dog passes, or move onto a lawn if she needs to. Teach her to tell the owner, “I do not like dogs.”
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3. Remind Olivia that it is okay to watch emergency vehicles pass, but it is not okay to follow them.
4. As in the bus training, Olivia was encouraged each step of the way with a reward. Coming up with a reward system or an incentive system may be a crucial component of successful walk training. Create a unique one for each person.

Learning how to walk the streets independently opens up a whole world of self-confidence for a person. The possibilities are endless. For each new location, Olivia may require additional training, but it may not take as long as it did initially. However, the same process should be followed.

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## Biking to Work Independently

*(Note: There is a vignette on the DVD based on this material.●)*

Whether biking is a way to get to work, get some exercise or just to have fun, it is a great tool for building self-confidence and independence.

### SAFETY ITEMS

1. First review all of the guidelines and rules that apply to walking.
2. Make sure that Olivia has a helmet that fits appropriately. If there is any doubt, consult bike shop personnel.
3. Emphasize that Olivia should always ride on the right side of the road—no exceptions.
4. Rules that apply to cars also apply to bike riders—meaning stopping at stop signs and stoplights, signaling turns, and all other traffic laws.
5. If she ends up walking her bike for any reason, the “walking” instructions described earlier apply.
6. It is illegal to ride a bike on some sidewalks, so it is important to know what the sign looks like. It often is a picture of a person on a bike with a line through it.
7. It is important when passing people who are walking to slow down and ring your bell to let them know you are close. This prevents people from being surprised and suddenly jumping out in front of you. When 10-20 yards behind them, it is also good to say, “On your left” (or right) in a normal voice so they are not startled.

### THE FIVE PHASES

When you teach a person to ride to work, follow the same phases as described for walking. Move from one phase to the next when you think the person has safely mastered the skills.

Review the safety material, ride with the person the first time, ride behind the next, be staged somewhere in-between, and then when you think the person is ready, let him or her go independently.

Being able to maneuver independently and safely in the community on a bike is an invaluable skill, with potential carryover to many other areas of a person's life. Encourage this healthy and liberating form of transportation whenever possible.

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