

## 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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## Walking to Work Independently

### 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. She 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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## Riding a Public Bus Independently

### Initial Steps

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

Ian used to ride a school bus when he went to school. He had to walk down to the end of his street at 7:30 each morning to meet the bus. The bus was usually on time except in poor weather, and in those cases, the school district would often call to let his parents know. Ian got to know the bus driver, Tony, very well because Tony was always very friendly. Ian also got to know many of the other students on the bus, and they would often laugh and joke on their way to school. Ian had been apprehensive about riding the bus to school at first, but it soon became an activity he looked forward to each morning.

Now Ian is out of school, with a job that requires him to take a public bus each day from his home. There are many differences between the two buses, so as the person helping to direct Ian's new situation, you may want to begin by taking him to a central bus station so he will be able to see the public buses come and go. You may also want to go on a bus ride to some destination in your town. You could use those opportunities to discuss the differences between the school and public buses.

#### SCHOOL BUSES VS. PUBLIC BUSES

Make sure Ian fully digests the following:

1. The bus driver may not be the same every day—even if the bus is taken at the same time.
2. The bus driver may not be particularly friendly. Many drivers will be friendly, but you cannot count on that.
3. The bus could run late. No one will call you to tell you this. It is important to be prepared for this, especially in poor weather.
4. You have to pay to ride the bus each time you ride, though you may decide to use a bus pass. See the planning section below for ideas on this.
5. The bus waits for no one. Just know that, in most cases, if you miss a bus, another one will come along—you just may have to wait a while.
6. There are rules on public buses:
  - a) No food.
  - b) No drinks.
  - c) No loud music.

You may want to impose additional rules depending on Ian's personal profile. If you think talking on a cell phone (non-emergency) or listening to a walkman would cause him not to pay attention,

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you may want to tell him that we are not going to use those things until he has more experience. Of course, you want to tell him that he can always use his cell phone in case of an emergency. Then again, an iPod or a Walkman may help Ian calm himself or offer just enough distraction for success; look at individual needs here.

7. The public bus will be much quieter. Many of the people on the bus will be going to work, so it is a much more serious environment.
8. There will be “strangers” on the bus. Most likely, everyone else on the bus will be a stranger to Ian, at least initially.
9. As with the bus driver, some of the passengers will be friendly, others will not. Saying “hi” or “good morning” could be the extent of communication with them. There is a chance that no one on the bus will say anything in response.
10. Ian will have to signal to the driver when he wants to get off, by using whatever method is on the bus—usually pulling a cord or pushing a button. Otherwise the driver will not stop.

#### PLANNING

Once you have reviewed the differences between a school bus and a public bus, it is time to plan the trip.

1. Look at the bus routes and schedules along with Ian. Determine the best route for him to take to work. Write the number of the bus on an index card for him to keep in his pocket. Index cards are good because they are stiff and do not crumple easily. You might also consider laminating the cards.
  2. Determine that Ian is always going to take his charged cell phone with him every time he gets on the bus. He should always let his care provider know when he is leaving the house. If he gets hurt, sick, or becomes afraid for any reason, he is to call his care provider or 911 (if it is “serious”). He should always call if his plans change—in any way—so no one worries about him. Ian’s care provider should be “speed dialed” into Ian’s cell so he can call if he gets scared, sick, or does not know what to do. Information under “ICE” (“in case of emergency”) should also be stored on Ian’s phone, in case he is unable to relate this information to another person.
  3. Figure out method of payment to be used each time. Is he going to use money or a bus pass? Whichever is chosen, he has to be ready when he gets on the bus. That means he either has to keep a lot of change at his house or keep track of where the bus pass is. Strategies: Have him keep the pass in his billfold or put it on a neck lanyard and then put it in the same place every time at both work and home. If he is paying daily, he should keep a bag of quarters at home for the bus and use a wallet or coin purse to hold the exact amount for each day. It should be prepared the night before as part of the night-time ritual.
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4. The bus could get crowded and people could bump into Ian. This could be very irritating to him, so he may want to practice his response if something like this happens. For example, he could put a thin briefcase, or a light jacket next to himself so there would at least be *something* between him and another rider. He may also want to practice deep breathing in case a situation like this cannot be avoided.
5. Ian may need to practice what to say to the bus driver. Set up chairs to serve as the bus, have someone role-play a bus driver, and have Ian practice what he would say in different situations. For example: "Is this bus number 2, going to Central Avenue?"
6. What if Ian misses his stop? Most likely, he will be able to get off at the next stop and either walk a little further or take a return bus back to his regular stop. You may want to practice this on one of the bus trips.

**SAFETY**

Review safety rules with Ian before he gets on the bus.

1. Do not give out personal information including last name, address, or phone number.
  2. Have Ian practice saying the following when he gets on the bus: "I am going to work. I have to get off at the Taco Bell" (or wherever he needs to get off). Hopefully, if he says this when he gets on the bus, the driver will keep an eye out for him.
  3. Teach Ian to talk to the bus driver if there is a problem.
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## Riding a Public Bus Independently

### THE FIVE PHASES

1. **Planning and Safety**—Review the previous information on the differences between a school bus and a public bus, and the planning and safety sections.
2. **Riding the Bus**—In this phase, the helper will stay at Ian's side and show him all the steps of riding the bus.
  - a. Before Ian gets on the bus, make sure he has taken care of his hygiene, is nicely dressed, and has his cell phone.
  - b. With Ian at the bus stop, point to the sign that shows the bus stops at this location.
  - c. When you both see the bus you want, step up by the sign so the driver knows you want to get on. You may wave to the bus, too.
  - d. Model saying "Good morning" to the bus driver and put your money in the box. Ian may add, "Hi, I am going to work. I have to get off by the Taco Bell."
  - e. Help Ian determine which seat is best for him. He should sit close to the driver, so Ian may have the choice of sitting sideways or facing front.
  - f. You may talk to Ian about appropriate manners while he is on the bus.
  - g. Show Ian the bell he is to ring when he wants the bus to stop. It is also good to find a landmark for Ian to watch out for that coincides with when he is to ring the bell.
  - h. Have Ian join you in saying "Thanks" to the driver when getting off the bus. The only caution here is that some buses stop on a sidewalk that can be very busy with pedestrians or bikes or both. Always look both ways when getting off the bus!
3. **Helper Fades Support**—You may start at Ian's side and not say anything, then adjust further by standing right behind him. As Ian becomes more confident, you can become just another person on the bus. This may take a couple of bus trips or it could take quite a few more—it just depends on how Ian does.

As you begin to fade your assistance, it is important to allow Ian to figure things out on his own and even make mistakes. You should not jump right in and fix things quickly, unless of course, Ian is in danger. Allowing this kind of problem solving will help Ian really handle the independence alone. A good example of this would be if Ian forgets to ring the bell at his stop. You may want to intervene only if a couple of stops have passed and it looks as if Ian does not intend to ring the bell.

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4. **Follow in a Car**—In this phase, Ian will ride the bus independently and you will follow along in a car.
5. **Be Available by Phone**—Finally, Ian will travel independently but will call you when he is leaving and after he arrives at his destination.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Different people will have to spend varying amounts of time in each phase. Let them take the lead on when they are ready to move on. Likewise, you may be able to skip some phases.

Ian was encouraged each step of the way with a reward. Coming up with a reward or incentive system may be a crucial component of successful bus training. Create a unique one for each person.

Being able to ride a bus independently is a great accomplishment. It opens a world of opportunity to Ian. He will probably want to take the bus home from work. He may want to try to take the bus to different places all over his community, such as the recreation center, a movie, or even a restaurant. The possibilities are endless. For each new location, Ian may require additional training using a similar process, though with experience, he may not take as long to achieve mastery.

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## Car/Plane Travel Ideas

By Jayne Dixon Weber

### WHEN GOING BY CAR

1. Involve your child in the planning as much as possible—let him or her help pick the route (show planning using a road atlas).
  2. Discuss the types and amounts of clothes that will be needed. About a week before the trip, find a place to start laying out clothes that will not be needed until the trip.
  3. If you pack his bag, encourage participation by asking him where he wants particular items (such as socks) packed.
  4. Encourage your child to pack her own bag of “fun stuff” (items she may want during the trip). You may throw some items in later that you think she may also want, such as a comfort pillow or stuffed animal.
  5. Let your child see you get your own items ready.
  6. Find as many ways for him to help as possible. Examples include carrying bags to the door, getting last minute items, asking him if he can think of anything that anyone forgot or might need.
  7. Have her help load the car.
  8. Say goodbye to the house.
  9. Have stops such as gas stations scheduled throughout the day, where he can pick out one treat. Also consider rest areas where you can all run around and get some fresh air.
  10. Keep a trip diary (tie some sheets of paper together with a piece of yarn), get a postcard from every stop, and keep mementoes from places you visit. Bring a glue stick for possible scrapbooking.
  11. Listen to a book on tape—Harry Potter books are great!
  12. Have little wrapped surprises along the way.
  13. Remember DVDs if you have a portable or car-mounted player.
  14. Try to eat healthy food, but have a few treats, too.
  15. Play games—car bingo, cards, and magnetic travel games.
  16. Sing songs—even if you do not have very good voices/harmony.
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17. Make the journey— not just the destination—important.
18. Read books about or find pictures of the place(s) you are going, including some of the activities you may be doing while you are there.
19. Create a picture schedule of your trip. You will most likely need one for while you are at your destination, too.
20. Consider driving part of the time at night when your child may sleep.
21. Check in with your child periodically to see how he is doing—“catch him” being good!

**PLANE TRAVEL**

Plane travel is in many ways similar to car travel, except you are exposed to the public during your travel time! In addition to the car travel information, the following notes may be helpful:

1. Try to travel during low traffic times, which is usually early in the morning or late at night. Hopefully, your child will end up sleeping for at least part of the trip.
2. Allow plenty of time to travel to the airport, to park, check in, and get to the gate, so it does not turn into a frantic “we’re running late” experience. Otherwise, you could be setting everyone up for failure.
3. Ask for bulkhead seating. You need to get to the airport early to have a chance of getting these seats, but the fact that you have a child with a developmental disability who does “better” with no one in front of him, often gets you at least a couple of these seats.
4. Do pre-board seating if you think your child needs it, no matter how old he is.
5. Make sure you bring your own food for the plane, and try to have a few options.
6. If you need something, do not hesitate to *ask*.

*NOTE: Many of these ideas can also be used or modified for train, subway, bus, and other forms of travel.*

**A TRUE STORY:**

At Denver International Airport, the “only” way to get from the terminal to the gates (and back) is on a train that is a sensory nightmare. My son rode it one time, got off and said quite clearly, “I don’t like that.” The next time we needed to take a trip, I called the airport information desk and told them I needed to talk to someone because my son would not ride the train. “Well, there is no other way out to the gates,” was the first thing I heard. My response: “There has to be.” Thirty minutes later, I had the “right” person on the phone. There is another way out to the gates—it is called the airport’s “Operations Manager.”

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**ANOTHER TRUE STORY:**

Our son does not like to do *anything* fast, and he knows airplanes can go at a good clip. He said he would go on an airplane if it did not go too fast. Pondering this, I realized that from the air, planes look to be keeping a leisurely pace, so I told Ian that our plane would be among the slow ones, and he would be able to look out the window and verify this.

Fortunately, I know a United Airlines flight attendant. She called her colleagues who were going to be on our flight, told them our son was going to be on their plane, and that if he asked whether the plane was going to be flying slowly, they should say yes. They greeted our son when he got on the plane and the scene played out exactly as scripted.

Since then, whenever our son needs to hear it from someone other than me, I will have talked to the person at the gate check-in, who has talked to the flight attendants, and everything has gone fine (especially when we have gotten the bulkhead seating mentioned above!).

The lesson from this is that people in the public service business—particularly in high profile situations such as the airlines—will happily accommodate your special needs and circumstances. Most always, the only requirement is that you ask.

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## Transportation References

1. **Bookstores**—Stores and websites can provide you with books about your particular mode of travel—car, plane, train, or bus—as well as activity books/games to do along the way. They can also provide books about your travel route and destination.

- [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)
- [www.borders.com](http://www.borders.com)
- [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)
- [www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com)
- [www.booksense.com](http://www.booksense.com)

Bookstores will have books on tape, and may also have maps that show walking/ bike paths/trails in your area.

2. **Libraries**—The information above applies, though you are subject to availability and due dates.
3. Make your own book of where you are going to go on your trip, including the areas you will travel through to get to your destination. Scrapbooking can make the time in the car seem shorter and create a lasting memory. Let your child or young adult take photos on a digital or Polaroid camera.
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