



Safe  
Crossing  
Program

# Safety at Railway Crossings

Injuries are the number one cause of death and disability among children and youth in Canada.



Each year, on average, close to **100 people are killed** and about **75 seriously injured** in collisions with trains.

Research tells us that up to **90 per cent of injuries are predictable**, therefore, **most railway injuries and deaths can be prevented.**

[www.parachutecanada.org](http://www.parachutecanada.org)

## THE SITUATION

Each year, on average, close to 100 people are killed and about 75 seriously injured in collisions with trains. The collisions are either between trains and motor vehicles or trains and people.

According to statistics, young men, aged 18-24 years old, are most likely to be injured or killed either in a crossing collision or a trespassing incident.

## WHY

As with other types of injuries, the reasons for the collisions vary. Anecdotal information tells part of the story for children and youth. Sometimes they wait for one train to pass and are hit by another train coming from either direction. Sometimes they climb over a stationary train into the path of an oncoming train or fall as they are climbing on it and it begins to move. Sometimes they just simply are unaware that a train is coming as they walk on or beside the tracks. These causes tell us that these incidents are preventable.

Just as you teach your children how to navigate through traffic, children must be taught the rules for staying safe around trains and at railway crossings.

This rail safety resource will help parents and caregivers teach their children how to be safe around trains, tracks and at railway crossings.

## SAFETY RULES

- Always cross at a railway crossing. Most crossings have a sign, lights, bells, and/or gates.
- Just like crossing the street – stop and look both ways before crossing train tracks. Listen for the train coming and for warning bells. If there are lights, watch for them to flash.
- If a train is going by, stand at least 5 metres or 16 feet (that's about 10 giant steps) back from the tracks.
- Never try to cross the tracks if a train is coming. It is too dangerous.
- If a train goes by, look both ways again before crossing. Make sure another train is not coming. Many crossings have more than one track, which means there could be more than one train at the same time.
- Always walk your bike across the tracks to make sure your tires do not get caught.
- Never play on or near train tracks. It is dangerous and illegal.



# Safety at Railway Crossings

Just as you teach your children to cross streets at traffic lights or crosswalks, teach your children to cross only at railway crossings.

**A train can't stop as quickly as a car.** It can take up to 2 kilometres for a train to come to a complete stop — that's about 20 football fields.

Because of their size, **trains look like they are moving slower than they really are.** You notice the same thing when you see a large airplane coming in to land.



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Visit the Web site to see the Safe Crossing Toolkit, filled with information to help parents and educators teach kids about railway safety.

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## AS A PEDESTRIAN

- If the lights are flashing and the gates are down, stop and do not cross. Stand back from the track at least 5 metres or 16 feet. Never go around or under the gates at a crossing.
- Once the warning signals begin, there can be as little as 20 seconds before the train is at the crossing, not enough time to try to get across. Trains cannot stop quickly nor can they swerve to avoid hitting a person or an object.
- If you must cross the tracks at a crossing where there are no lights or gates, stop and look in both directions. Listen for approaching trains. If no train is coming, cross the tracks carefully and quickly. Always step over the metal rail, because you could slip and fall by stepping on it.
- If one train has gone by, look for a second train coming in the same or opposite direction. They can and they do. It means that pedestrians and drivers must be vigilant at all railway crossings. Often a train can hide the approach of another train, so it is critical to check both directions before crossing.
- Remove your headphones when walking near traffic and railway tracks.

## AS A CYCLIST

- Always walk your bike across the tracks. If you ride across the tracks, your tire can get caught and you could fall. Always be aware of other traffic going across the crossing at the same time.
- Do not ride alongside the tracks. Trains are wider than the tracks and could hit you. In fact, the land right beside tracks is private property, and it is illegal to be on it.

## AS A DRIVER

- Never drive around the gates if they are down or if they are closing. Trains look like they are moving slowly because of their size. Never try to beat a train. If the gates begin to lower as you are crossing the tracks, keep going forward and clear the tracks as quickly as possible.
- If there are no gates or lights, stop and look for an approaching train. Listen to see if you can hear a train. Pay particular attention at these types of crossings at night or in bad weather.
- There have been cases where children have been injured as passengers in cars. Young drivers have also been struck or killed. Drivers need to obey the rules around trains and railway tracks.