

This information has been endorsed by the TrackSAFE Education Reference Group.

Overview

TrackSAFE Education provides curriculum learning resources for primary and high schools so teachers can teach their students about rail safety in class. Research tells us this is the best way of ensuring students learn rail safety messages thoroughly, because students are able to think deeply and broadly in a context relevant to them.

We recommend if you are considering a visit to a school, that you encourage the school or class to do a TrackSAFE Education unit of work in conjunction with your visit.

While there is no evidence to suggest a one-off school visit is effective in changing behaviour, a school visit can be a wonderful opportunity for rail industry staff to be active in the school community and engage with students at a personal level. Students can benefit most from a visit by a subject matter expert when it is combined with in-class lessons over a longer period of time.

School visits

Schools invite rail staff with speak to students in their classes for a variety of reasons, such as:

- the class is learning about safety around trains, train tracks and level crossings;
- a special event, such as Rail Safety Week;
- the class learning about 'transport', 'careers' or 'people in the community';
- a student in the class has a relative or friend in the rail industry; or
- after a rail safety incident involving one or more of their students.

This can be a daunting experience, particularly if you are not used to public speaking or being around large groups of young people.

Many states have dedicated teams who are trained to visit schools and teach students about rail safety. They can tailor their visit to the needs of the local community. You can contact your employer or a rail operator in your state for school visits. A full list is available [here](#).

If you would still like to visit a school on behalf of your organisation, these guidelines have been developed by TrackSAFE Education to help you know what to say; what you should avoid saying; how to be effective in delivering rail safety messages; and how to engage students during your school visit.

What should and shouldn't I say and do?

1. It is very important to plan your visit beforehand. Stick to the topic and avoid going off on 'tangents' about your experiences – students, especially those in primary school, won't be able understand the point of your visit if you tell them stories about the past which don't clearly relate to the reason you are there.
2. Regardless of the topic (e.g. jobs, transport, community), encourage students to practice safe skills around trains, train tracks and level crossings – this should be a major focus of any school visit. Ideas for activities are provided in the [sample session](#).
3. It is very important to NOT discuss any fatalities or other traumatic events that you or colleagues may have experienced with primary school or early high school students (as a guide, students up to 13 years old).
4. If, after consulting the teacher, you both agree that discussing fatalities or other traumatic events with a high school group (of 14 years or over) is appropriate, it is important that you choose your words carefully. You should limit what you say when describing your reaction to a traumatic event you have experienced, and the personal consequences to you and/or your family.
5. Positively reinforcing safety messages is the key to improving rail safety skills for students. Some examples are provided.
6. Don't try to 'scare' or 'shock' students into staying off tracks by discussing details of what you have seen or heard, or graphic consequences of train collisions. Showing photos or video clips of shocking scenarios or people doing unsafe acts can also have a negative impact. There is a lot of evidence showing that this approach will not influence the behaviours of young people who take risks, and can actually increase risk taking behaviour.

Tips for engaging students

- Speak directly and with the students about your experiences, rather than 'at or 'down to' students; through their teacher or in the third person. Create a two way dialogue if you can.
- Students need to create meaning for themselves, but presentations are generally passive for students and don't allow this process. Involve the students in your visit by asking them open-ended questions (not questions with a yes/no answer); ask them to act out a scenario to demonstrate a point; do an activity with them; leave them with an activity or task; and ask for their opinions on topics.
- Stick to the topic!
- You can use visual aids such as pictures showing safe actions, or acting out a scene yourself to demonstrate a point. There are photos available on our website for use, or you can use your own.
- Be honest! Students usually see through people, and lose interest, if they do not come across as genuine.

Appropriate language for the classroom

- Use the term 'students' rather than 'kids' or 'children'.
- Keep your language 'G' rated!
- Turn 'don't', 'can't' or 'shouldn't' statements into 'do', 'can' or 'should' statements – this is a more effective way to reach students and leave them with a positive impression.
- Be clear, concise and use appropriate vocabulary for the age of the students. Avoid jargon and explain any tricky train environment words (such as “pedestrian level crossing”) if students are not familiar with the terminology.
- Choose positive action words.
- Speak to students in a respectful tone of voice – they are people too! Avoid babyish language or using a higher pitch.



Preparing for your school visit

Step 1: It is important to check with your employer that you have permission to attend a school and speak with students on their behalf, particularly if you are wearing a uniform.

Step 2: Speak to the teacher about the topic and focus of your visit. Find out the time period allocated and aim to stick to it! Remember to allow some time at the end for questions.

Step 3: Plan for your visit by writing a few main points down (but make sure you don't read from a script!). Included are some content ideas to plan a session for primary school. Aim to leave students with a positive impression of travelling by train and the rail industry.

Step 4: Prepare your uniform and make sure you are well-groomed – remember you are representing your employer and the rail industry!

Use of positive action words

Ways of reinforcing rail safety messages using positive statements with positive action words:

- 'At a train station platform, we must walk and stand behind the yellow line. We must only cross the yellow line to get onto the train, when the train is stopped at the platform and the doors open.'
- 'We must always use a railway bridge, underpass or level crossing to cross to the other side of train tracks.'
- 'At a pedestrian level crossing, we must STOP at the line or gate, LOOK both ways, LISTEN for trains, THINK "Are the train tracks clear? Is it safe to cross?" If it is clear and safe, cross to the other side.'
- 'When we are a passenger in a car, we should tell the driver to "STOP, LOOK, LISTEN, THINK!"'
- 'We must never go onto the tracks. If we drop something onto the tracks, we must ask rail staff for help to get it.'

In summary...



- ✓ **Speak to the teacher and get a clear focus for your visit**
- ✓ **Plan your visit, including what you will say and do**
- ✓ **Include rail safety messages in any school visit**
- ✓ **Stick to the topic**
- ✓ **Use positive messages with positive action words**
- ✓ **Actively involve students in the session**
- ✓ **Keep language 'G' rated**
- ✓ **Keep the content relevant and appropriate to the students, their context and their age**
- ✓ **Make sure students will be left feeling positive about rail**



- × **Use 'shock' or 'fear' to get your point across**
- × **Tell 'war stories'**
- × **Talk about fatalities or other traumatic events**
- × **Show images or video clips showing shocking images or unsafe actions**
- × **Go off topic**
- × **Discuss things which are not within your job role or authority**
- × **Discuss things which are not within your employer's ethical guidelines or standard operating procedures**
- × **Talk 'at' or 'down to' students**

Further information and resources

Any school visit is much more effective when it is accompanied with pre- and post-visit learning activities. TrackSAFE Education has primary and high school rail safety teacher resources, and rail safety resources and information for parents, members of the community and rail staff on this website. Children of all ages can also access the [primary](#) and [high school](#) student sections of our website, which contain information and an extensive media library to complement the lessons.

Sample Session Plan: Primary school visit

Introduction

Your name, job title, who you work for, and a *brief* overview of what you do in your job each day.

Body

(you can combine these ideas and add your own – choose ideas appropriate to the topic)

Topic: **Rail Safety**

What kinds of responsibilities you have to keep people safe; what kinds of responsibilities students have to keep themselves and others safe; how heavy and fast trains are (comparing to something that makes sense to the students at their age e.g. 'one passenger train weighs the same as 85 African elephants, and goes as fast as a car on the highway'); how long trains take to stop (e.g. passenger trains 250m = two and a half football fields or freight trains up to 2km = 20 football fields); what the signs mean at pedestrian level crossings; what safe actions they should do to stay safe and why, combined with pictures/video clips showing appropriate behaviours around trains, tracks and platforms.

Get students to practice those safe actions in the classroom (choose an appropriate activity for the location and the students' ages e.g. walking and standing behind a yellow line; STOP LOOK LISTEN THINK at a pedestrian level crossing; walking over a bridge or through an underpass); ask students what they will do to keep themselves and others safe.

Topic: **Transport**

How trains move; how many people or goods your employer moves each day (comparing it to something that makes sense to the students at their age, e.g. 'one million' might be 2000 times the amount of students at their school); how trains have changed through time; what would the consequences be if trains weren't able to move around; rules that apply to using or being around transport.

Topic: **Careers**

Your typical work hours; your responsibilities; what kind of equipment you use; how you use technology in your work; typical situations in which you do your work; the people you work with; why you do your role; how students can make your role easier or more enjoyable. Always include rail safety as part of any session! See above for some ideas.

Topic: **People in the community**

How your job contributes to keeping the environment healthy; how your job contributes to peoples' needs and wants (e.g. getting goods or people from one place to another place).

Conclusion

Create a quiz on the things you taught them! Ask students if they have any questions. Give honest answers within these guidelines, and try to keep questions and answers on topic (you can take cues from the teacher). Thank the students (for being so interested, asking well thought out questions, etc.).