

How child-friendly is your street?



Did you enjoy walking and playing in your neighbourhood as a child? Your children, or those you care for, would love to have the same opportunity.

The suggestions here will help you to better understand how suitable your street or neighbourhood is for children to walk and play.



1. Think about your street

Many families today feel that their street or neighbourhood is an unsuitable place for children to walk or play. Ask yourself why you think your street or neighbourhood is or isn't suitable for children walking.



2. Identify places to walk

With your children, talk about places or spaces in your neighbourhood they find interesting, useful or appealing. It could include a shop, playground, friend's house, school, bus stop, old tree, nice view or pretty garden.

Estimate how far each place is from home and identify the ones within walking distance.

For each place within walking distance, consider why you don't allow older children to walk there independently, or why you don't walk there with younger children.



3. Do a walkability check

A walkability check can help you find out how the routes to places and spaces you identified could be better for children walking and playing. Have fun doing it as a family, or with your neighbours.

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You will need:

- [Walkability check sheet \(p.3\)](#)
- pen and spare paper for taking notes
- camera
- comfortable shoes and suitable clothing
- water, and nibbles or a picnic
- map (optional) for marking observations
- [Smart Steps: for Families – Activity Sheet](#) (optional, but helpful to encourage children's participation)

Before you go:

- Talk to your children about the walkability check and encourage them to join you. Children are great observers, plus they will learn about their neighbourhood.
- Consider inviting your neighbours to join you in the check.
- Decide on a walk that includes some or all of the places and spaces you identified earlier. You might walk a section of a route, such as the route to school, or walk only your own street.
- Choose a good time for the check, considering the days and times your children are likely to use the routes or places. The check could be repeated at different times of the day.
- Print the *Walkability check sheet* and refer to the You Will Need list. Add to the sheet any other questions you can think of.

During the walk:

- Observe the area along your chosen street or route. Identify things that could make the area better for walking, using the questions on the *Walkability check sheet* to prompt you.
- Observe and reflect on the social as well as the physical environment, for example how welcoming it feels.
- Remember to identify good as well as bad points.
- Talk to the people you are walking with and to people you meet about what they observe and think.
- Write down all of the things that you observe or think. Think of it as a wish list for your ideal street.
- Take photos of key points, to remind you of your observations and to share with others.

At home:

- Think again: what could make the street or route better for children to walk?
- Look over your notes with your children, and write down any extra points while the check is still fresh in your minds.
- Compile your observations, photos and notes.
- Share your *Walkability check sheet* and photos with interested neighbours.

Congratulations! You have taken a step toward making your neighbourhood better for children to walk and play. Now see our guide to [making your street more child-friendly](#).

Useful links

[How to do a walking audit](#)

[How to assess walkability](#)

Need more advice? Contact Victoria Walks - We are here to help you make streets and neighbourhoods better for walking.



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Walkability check sheet



Use this sheet during your 'walkability' check to identify things that could make your neighbourhood better for children walking.

Footpaths

- Do I have enough room to walk with my children on the footpath?
- Are objects blocking my way (e.g. parked cars)?
- Will my children be safe if they walk on the footpath, or are there risks (e.g. overgrown bushes, trip hazards)?

Notes: _____

Facilities

- Would it be comfortable to walk here on a hot day, and would there be shelter during a storm?
- Are signs, seats or shelters suitable and in good condition?

Notes: _____

Crossing roads

- Do I feel safe crossing the roads? Do my children feel safe?
- Is there a place to stop in the middle of a busy road?
- If a crossing exists, could changes make it better?
- Can I see drivers, and can they see me?

Notes: _____

Traffic

- Are cars affecting my or my children's ability to walk in this street?
- Do cars make me feel uncomfortable or unsafe?
- Do I think the speed of cars in the area is too fast or about right?
- How do cyclists affect my or my children's ability to walk?

Notes: _____

Safety

- Do I feel safe walking in this street? Do my children feel safe?
- Are there other people around to make me feel more comfortable?
- Are there people, animals or places on this street that make me or my children feel unsafe?
- Do drivers look for walkers when leaving or entering driveways?
- Can children be seen easily by people in the neighbourhood?

Notes: _____

Social environment/attractiveness

- Do I find the street enjoyable to walk in – is it attractive, pleasant and interesting?
- Do I find people here friendly and welcoming?
- Are homes and businesses well kept? Do they feel inviting?
- Are there colourful mailboxes, appealing nature strip plantings, or decorative signage?

Notes: _____