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# *Use Your Head Before Your Feet*

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**LEVEL:** K-1-2-3-4-5-6

**SUBJECT AREA(S):** Health, Social Studies, Language Arts, Art

**OBJECTIVE:** (1) Students will learn a smart procedure for crossing streets without traffic-control devices. (2) Students will recognize and interpret pedestrian signs.

For Your Information

- None of the lessons about crossing streets fully address traffic signals because of their complexity.
- Safety patrol students could instruct a class with this objective.

**TIME:** 60 to 90 minutes

## **MATERIALS**

Figure 7-1: Parent/Guardian Letter  
Figure 7-2: Use Your Head Before Your Feet  
Figure 7-3: Signs and Signals for Walkers  
Figure 7-4: Answer Key to Figure 7-3  
Figure 7-5: WALK Placard  
Figure 7-6: DON'T WALK Placard  
Figure 7-7: Safety Checklist  
Crayons

## **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

1. Discuss street crossing:

- Q: Do you ever go on walks with your parents, guardians, or siblings?
- Q: Where do you go?
- Q: What have you learned about crossing streets from older family members or friends?
- Q: Are there sidewalks everywhere? (*No. Some streets and paths have no sidewalks, no curbs, and no shoulders.*)

- Q: Is it smart (safe) to walk on the curb or near the curb? *(Always walk as far away from the street as possible. If there is no sidewalk, walk facing traffic.)*
- Q: Where should a person stand while waiting to cross the street? *(A foot or two back from the edge of the street, never in the street.)*
- Q: Where is it smart (safe) to cross the street? *(Only at corners and on marked crosswalks.)*
- Q: Is it smart (safe) to start walking the minute the traffic signal changes to WALK? *(No. Often a car will zoom by after the signal changes.)*
- Q: What should one always do before crossing? *(Stop. Wait. Look around carefully. Be sure no cars are moving through a red traffic signal. **In dangerous areas and if crossing time allows, kids can count to 10.**)*
- Q: What does scanning mean? *(Looking around.)*
- Q: When should a walker scan? *(Before and during crossing.)*
- Q: What does a blinking DON'T WALK sign mean? *(Do not start to walk. If you have already started, hurry across. Cars will be moving again soon.)*
- Q: Why are alleys and driveways a problem? *(Cars might drive across the sidewalk where you are walking.)*
- Q: What should a walker do when crossing an alley or driveway? *(Scan carefully. Yield the right-of-way.)*

2. Set up a pretend street crossing, using desks or other boundary lines to indicate a street's edges.

Demonstrate the following rhyme:

**Use Your Head Before Your Feet**

**Stop every time at the edge of the street.**

*(Hold your hand up to signal "Stop.")*

**Use your head before your feet.**

*(Point to your head and feet as words are said.)*

**Make sure you hear every sound.**

*(Cup your hands behind your ears and turn your head from side to side.)*

**Look left and right and all around.**

*(Cup your hands above your eyes and turn your head slowly left to right, right to left, and look over your shoulders.)*

Have students stand and go through the rhyme with you, repeating the words and actions after you several times. Ask the following types of questions:

- What might you see at the edge of the street?
- What might you hear?
- Why is it important to use your head before you use your feet?

For Your Information

- It would be appropriate during this lesson to talk to students about (1) watching out for cars in the street and cars pulling away from the curb, and (2) about safely retrieving an object that has gone into the street.

- Students will also benefit from using this rhyme to cross streets when they are riding their bikes.
3. Discuss with students what kinds of traffic signs and signals they have seen, and where they have seen them. What signs and signals might they see at a marked crosswalk to help them cross the street?

Distribute Figure 7-3: Signs and Signals for Walkers, and discuss each sign's meaning and color.

#### For Your Information

- Traffic "signs" can be stationary or hand-held.
  - Traffic "signals" are always stationary electronic devices.
  - In all kinds of traffic signs and signals, red always means stop.
4. Have younger students play "The Walk Game." You (or an older student) will be a Traffic Safety Officer (TSO) and will use the WALK and DON'T WALK placards to direct the game. Display the placards alternately as the students walk slowly around the room, following the mandate of the placards and doing what is advised in the "Use Your Head Before You Use Your Feet" rhyme.

#### For Your Information

To add challenge to the game, move the DON'T WALK sign back and forth to indicate a flashing sign. A flashing DON'T WALK sign means "Don't Start."

5. Take students to a nearby marked crosswalk with pedestrian signals. Have them work with partners, preferably younger students with an older student, parent, guardian or teacher aide. Practice crossing the street while following pedestrian signals.

#### For Your Information

Stress the following:

- Hold hands with your partner.
- Keep at least two feet away from the edge of the street while waiting for the signal to change.
- Look all around and over your shoulders before crossing.
- Continue to look and listen while crossing the street.

Using Figure 7-7: Safety Checklist, have partners observe, discuss, and practice safety rules. Older students can check off items on the figure when younger students demonstrate that they do follow safety rules. They can also list any traffic signs or signals they observe.

## **ASSESSMENT**

1. Have students pair up. Instruct them to hold hands and repeat the rhyme together with you as they cross a pretend street couple by couple. Tell them to continue to look all around and hear every sound, even as they are crossing.
2. Using the WALK/DON'T WALK placards, call on students to tell you what each one means. Discuss the specific behavior each sign calls for:
  - Where to stand
  - Where and how to walk
  - With whom to walk
  - Where to look
  - What to look and listen for

## **EXTENSIONS**

1. Have students draw and color the things they might see and/or hear when crossing a street.
2. Distribute Figure 7-1: Parent/Guardian Letter and Figure 7-2: Use Your Head Before Your Feet. Have the students take the figures home to demonstrate to their parents/guardians what a person should do at the edge of a street before crossing.
3. Discuss with students how they should behave while waiting to cross a street.
4. Have students write articles about the crossing rhyme for the class newsletter.
5. Have each pair of partners write a short book or story about their walk, including safety rules and traffic signs/signals observed.
6. Have students take home Figure 7-4: Answer Key to Figure 7-3: Signs and Signals for Walkers and discuss it with their parents/guardians.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Please refer to the Iowa Safe Routes to School Encouragement and Education Program Web site for additional resources ([www.iowasaferoutes.org](http://www.iowasaferoutes.org)).

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(date)

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child is learning smart (safe) behavior near traffic. The attached worksheet illustrates one of several pedestrian-safety lessons in Iowa Kids on the Move, a traffic safety program developed by the Iowa Safe Routes to School Program. Other pedestrian lessons include choosing smart places to cross, understanding traffic signs and signals, riding sidewalk vehicles safely, and wearing visible clothing.

Approximately 1,500 children in kindergarten and first through third grades are hit by vehicles every year; more than half of these crashes involve crossing between intersections in residential neighborhoods. Please encourage your child to cross only at intersections; we recommend that children six years old or younger do not cross without the assistance of an adult.

Ask your child to demonstrate the rhyme called "Use Your Head Before Your Feet." Please review this with him or her and reinforce this lesson whenever you cross the street with your child.

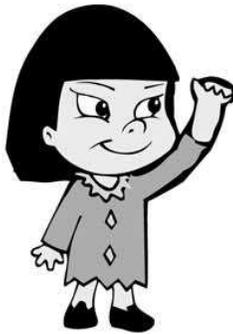
Thank you for your help in teaching your child this important lesson.

Sincerely,

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(teacher's signature)

*Figure 7-1*



## Look left and right

Look left and right and all around.  
(Cup your hands above your eyes and turn your head slowly left to right, right to left, and look over your shoulders.)



## Hear every sound

Make sure you hear every sound.  
(Cup your hands behind your ears and turn your head from side to side.)



## Stop at the street

Stop every time at the edge of the street.  
(Hold your hand up to signal "Stop".)



## Use your head

Use your head before your feet.  
(Point to your head and feet as words are said.)

Figure 7-2



Figure 7-3



DON'T WALK



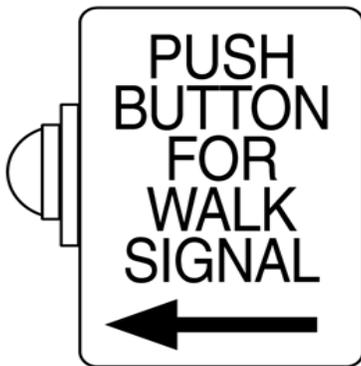
WALK



WAIT/DON'T WALK



WALK



PEDESTRIAN PUSH BUTTON



PEDESTRIAN CROSSING



SCHOOL CROSSING



PEDESTRIANS PROHIBITED

Figure 7-4

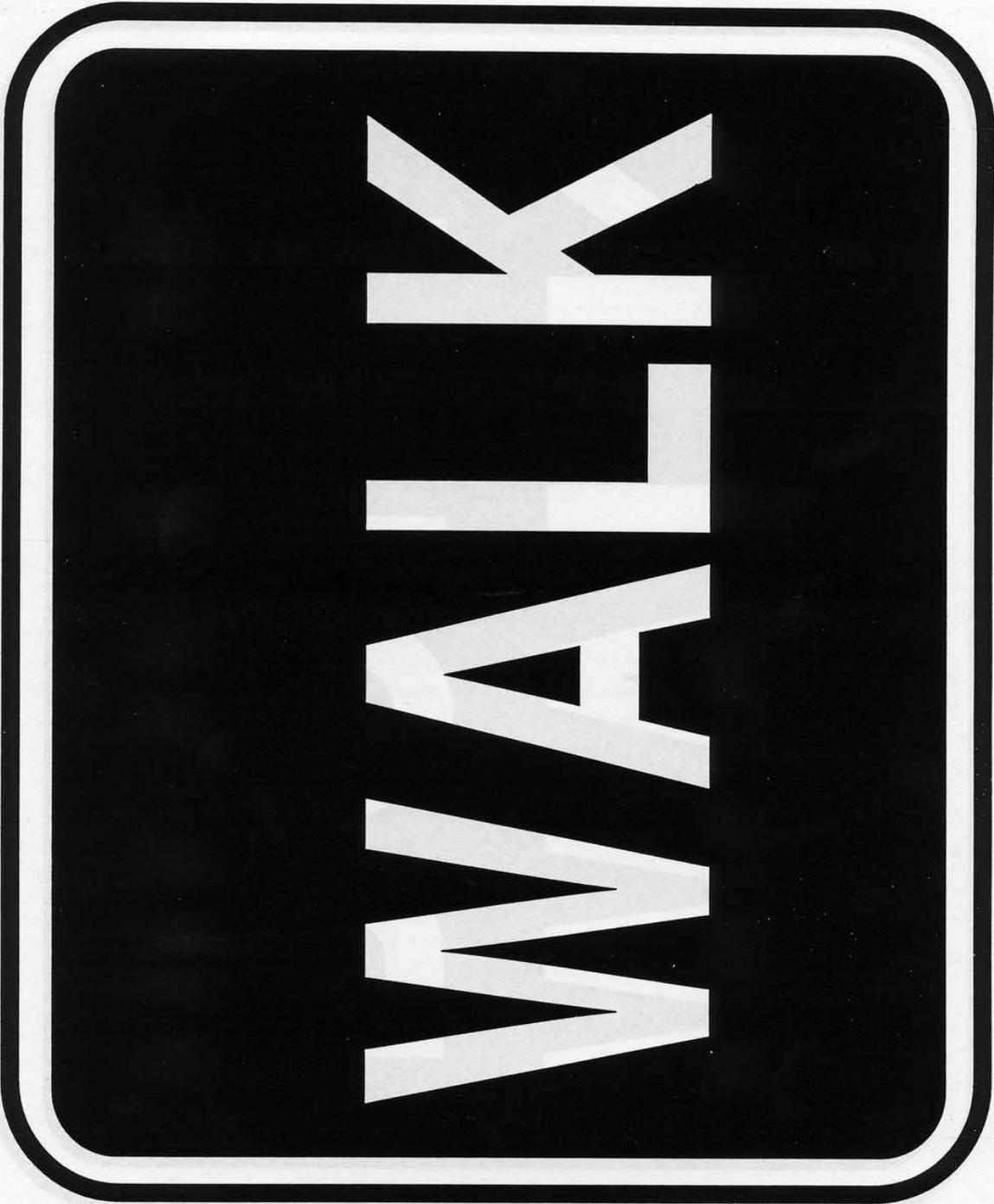


Figure 7-5

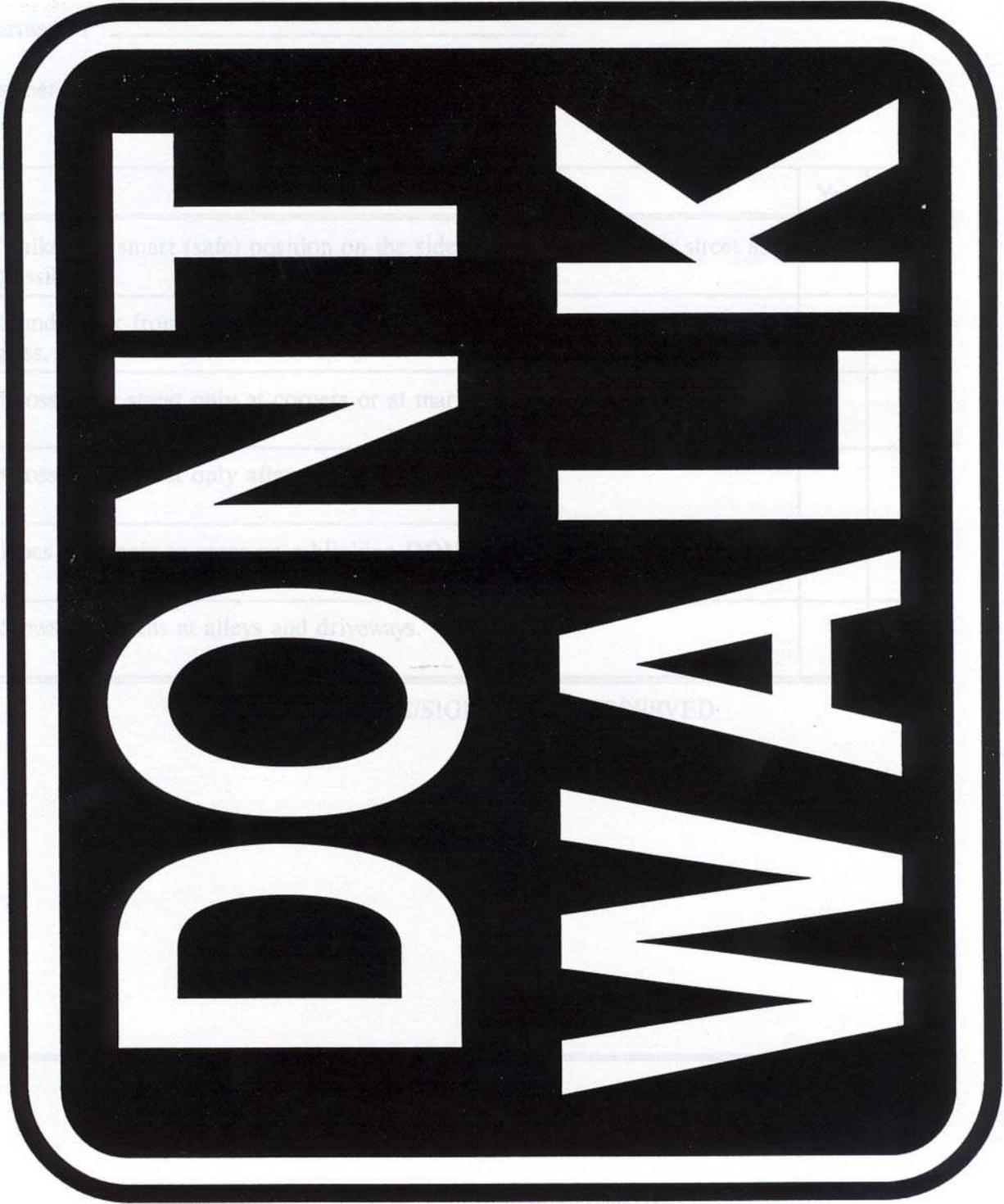


Figure 7-6

# Safety Checklist

Partner #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Partner #2 \_\_\_\_\_

<b>SMART (SAFE) BEHAVIOR</b>	Yes	No
Walks in a smart (safe) position on the sidewalk, as far from the street as possible.		
Stands back from the curb while waiting for signal to change or cars to pass.		
Crosses the street only at corners or at marked crosswalks.		
Crosses the street only after careful scanning.		
Does not begin to cross on a blinking DON'T WALK signal.		
Slows and scans at alleys and driveways.		
<b>TRAFFIC SIGNS/SIGNALS WE OBSERVED</b>		

Figure 7-7