Dealing with traffic
a guide for young people
Why do we need this book?

Because traffic has changed.

Most of us can remember a time, just a few years ago, when traffic was calmer. Roads were smaller, and vehicles were fewer and slower. We did not need so many traffic lights. And children felt safe going about on their bicycles, or walking, and parents felt safe sending their children onto the streets.

Traffic is much heavier and faster now. Roads are wider. In big cities there are flyovers to handle this heavy fast traffic. And vehicles wait, in long lines at red lights, ready to rush off as soon as they turn green. It is not a pedestrian's world anymore.

Today, the biggest killer of children is not infectious disease. It is accidents.

Parents are now afraid to send children onto the roads. Children on bicycles are nervous when changing lanes or making turns. And children don't like crossing big roads.

We are no longer in a simple world where common sense is enough to see us through. We are now in a large and complex world that has to run by people following rules. Rules are not designed to stop you from doing things. They are actually meant to help you when things are complex. Just as you can add up small numbers in your head, but you must write down large numbers to add them up correctly, you need formal rules to see that everyone is taken care of when traffic is no longer simple.

This book contains the most important rules to help children handle modern traffic, rules that have evolved through years of research on traffic and accidents. We cannot turn back the clock and make traffic simple again. So, instead, we learn the rules of this new game we must play and safely keep our place, as pedestrians, cyclists, and as passengers in cars, buses and three wheelers.
This book is meant for....

....Children over eight
Research around the world has shown that only children over eight are able to think responsibly about road traffic and are all set to go out on the roads by themselves.

This means that children over eight may actually be the best people to talk to about better ways of dealing with traffic. When people are doing something for the first time they are usually very open to ways of doing it better. And they have no bad habits which are hard to change.

This book will also be useful for parents, teachers, and others concerned with children's safety on our roads. It would give them a sense of how children think and what problems they face when they go on the roads.
This book is not meant for ...

Children under eight ...

We do not teach children under eight how to go out on the roads by themselves. Studies show that they are too young to be able to deal safely with traffic. They cannot recognise danger, judge speeds and react accordingly. And drivers often do not notice them on the roads.

We must simply not allow children under eight to go on the roads alone.

Children under eight think ...

... that cars are friendly living things.

... that if they can see the driver, the driver can see them

... that cars can stop at once.
Children under eight can't ...

... judge how fast traffic is moving.

... make out where a sound is coming from.

Their field of vision is only one-third that of an adult.

Children under eight must always have someone older with them on the roads, holding them by the hand.
When you look after younger pedestrians ...

- Hold them by the hand at all times when you are on the road.
- Don’t leave them by themselves, and don’t let them follow you, or run ahead.
- Small children have a tendency to dart out suddenly into traffic.
- Talk to them when you are on the road together, talk about what you are doing as you deal with traffic.

Since children love to hear stories, and love to ask questions so that they can hear things again, you might even find them steering the conversation towards "how to be safe" when you are on the roads together. So you may get lots of chances to tell them again how to play it safe on the roads.
Protecting yourself as a pedestrian

Did you know that boys are four times as likely to be in a traffic accident as girls? This is partly because there are more boys on the roads than girls. But it is also because boys tend to be more impulsive, and take more risks than girls.

However, here are some ways you can make yourself safer:

■ Walk on pavements, not on the road.
■ Walk facing the oncoming traffic, when there are no pavements, so that you can see what is coming towards you.
■ Make sure you are easy for drivers to see, especially at night. Wear something bright. Yellow and orange are best.
■ Follow the six-stop crossing code whenever you have to cross the road
■ Think ahead and plan the safest route to school, to the market, or to your friends homes, before you go out.

It isn’t only fast traffic that causes accidents and injuries. Even a slow-speed accident with a car or a three-wheeler can make you fall and break a bone. And even if a bicycle hits you, you can get bad cuts that will need stitches.
The Six Step Crossing Code

All over the world, more than half the children involved in accidents had crossed the road without looking. Many had also not chosen a safe place to cross.

1 Think
What is a safe place to cross?
Where can I see all the traffic properly?
Make sure you are not hidden behind a parked car.

2 Stop
At the edge of the road where you have decided to cross.

3 Look & listen
Look both ways, many times to see if there is any traffic coming.
4 Wait
For all the traffic to pass, and for the road to be clear.

5 Cross
Walk straight across the road.

6 Keep looking and listening
Keep looking in all directions as you cross the road, until you get to the other side.
Can drivers see you?

In many countries, motorcycles have to keep their headlights on whenever they go on the roads, even during the day. These lights are not to help riders see better in daylight. They are to make sure that all the other traffic can see these motorcycles more easily, because they are small.

You, too, are small when you walk or cycle on the roads. And at night it can be hard to see you. Many accidents take place because drivers have simply not noticed a person walking or cycling.

- **Yellow, orange and white**
The easiest way to be seen on the roads at night is to wear bright coloured clothes. Yellow, orange and white are the easiest colours to see at night. Even a belt or a sash in these colours would help.

- **Reflectors**
You could also pin reflectors onto your clothes. The reflection from these will help drivers to know you are there.

- **Cycling vests**
If you are on a bicycle, you could wear a cycling vest made of shiny yellow polythene. You can make one of these yourself. Take a large yellow plastic bag. Cut a hole for your head on the bottom, and holes for your arms on the sides and turn it upside down. The bag will become a yellow plastic t-shirt.
If you are disabled

If you are handicapped and can walk but cannot run, make sure you carry a bright coloured walking stick when you cross the road. This is not to help you walk but to make you more visible to the drivers so that they know they have to slow down and be very careful.

A school in Delhi for handicapped children had organised a day of traffic training for its students. Some students who could walk, but not run, decided not to use a cane. The drivers did not see the children were handicapped and one child nearly got hurt.
Cycling on the Roads

Are you ready to start cycling on the roads?

See if you can:
- Ride in a straight line for 10 metres.
- Stop suddenly without falling.
- Give signals with one hand while riding.
- Look back over your shoulder and make a right turn without any trouble.

Before you go out on the road with your bicycle, make sure that...

- The bicycle is easy to see. It should be painted yellow, orange or white.
- There are reflectors on the spokes of the wheels, on the pedals, and on the front and rear mudguard.
- Both brakes are working properly.
- The bell rings properly.
- The seat is adjusted so that your feet can touch the ground.
When you go on the roads with your bicycle:

- Wear a cycling helmet: they are made of light thermocole, and must be strapped on like motorcycle helmets. A cycling helmet will protect you if you have an accident, where you fall or where you hit your head against something hard.
- Try to avoid going on big roads with fast traffic. Use routes which have less traffic.
- Stop before you enter traffic, from a driveway, a parking lot, a minor road, or from behind a parked car or bus: only when the way is clear, go ahead.
- Ride on the left, with the other traffic.
- If you are passing a stopped car, be careful: a door may suddenly open.
- Obey stop signs and traffic lights, like the rest of the traffic.
- Before turning right at crossings, look back over your shoulder, and give way to traffic coming from behind.

It isn't only big accidents that can hurt you. Even with just a fall you can end up breaking a bone, or getting bad cuts.

Stay alert.
Passengers

On a scooter
Scooters are not a very safe form of transport. They can fall over, they are open and exposed to traffic on all sides, and they can go fast.
If you are riding on the pillion you should wear a motorcycle helmet just like the driver does, because you face the same dangers. Motorcycle helmets will protect you in accidents where you may fall and hit your head.

In a bus
Buses are definitely the safest form of transport for children. Very few accidents take place in buses.
Still, children should be careful when:
- Crossing the road to catch a bus.
- Crossing the road behind a bus after getting off, since you cannot see the oncoming traffic from behind a bus.

If your school bus has a door that can close, ensure it is closed while the bus is moving.
In a car

When a car going at 40 kmph has an accident it's body gets crushed and it comes to a sudden stop. Everything inside that is not tied down continues to go forward at 40 kmph until it hits something that will stop it. This may be the dashboard, the glass windscreen, or the backs of the front seats, which are softer.

Children must always sit in the back seat of a car, so that you won't hit the dashboard or a broken windscreen in a crash.

You should wear a seat belt, because it will keep you from tumbling forward and hitting your head in a crash.

Babies should be kept in the back, preferably in child seats. Child seats are held in place by ordinary seat belts, and a belt inside keeps the baby safely in place. Babies should never sit in their parents' laps in the front seat. In a crash, the baby would move forward and hit the dashboard and then the adult would fall forward and crush the baby from behind also.

In many countries children are not allowed to sit in the front seat, and babies have to be buckled into child seats.
First Aid for traffic accidents

If you see a traffic accident where people have been injured:

- Organise the bystanders to warn approaching traffic at least 200 metres before the accident. They can set up warning signs or direct the traffic. Other bystanders can keep back the crowd that will collect around the accident.
- Don’t shift accident victims unless they are in danger staying where they are. Moving injured people can sometimes make injuries worse, especially injuries to the backbone. If you must shift them, then make sure you support any injured areas properly and that it doesn’t hurt while you are moving them.
- Check breathing. If necessary, clear the injured person’s airway: there may be loose broken teeth or vomit blocking the airway so that the injured person can’t breathe. Turn the person’s head to the side, and quickly clean out the inside of the mouth with two fingers. Make sure you do not push anything down the throat. If there are no broken bones turn the injured person over gently so that the tongue cannot fall backwards into the throat and block breathing.
Stay calm and keep the patient calm. If the patient can talk, try to find out what exactly happened, and where it hurts.

Stop the bleeding. If it is a small cut or bruise, press down with your hands or with a wad of cloth until bleeding stops. This closes the cut. If it is a large cut or wound, wrap it loosely with a clean cloth, and keep the injured limb raised so that less blood goes into it.

Wash small cuts with mild soap and water to remove dirt and germs.

Use ice on sprains to reduce swelling, and don’t massage.

Don’t give anything to eat or drink as it may cause vomiting, and choke the injured person.

Help get the patient to a hospital, if necessary. Flag down a passing car or three-wheeler.

Phone the patient’s family, if possible, so that someone can go to the hospital to look after everything or take the patient home.

Anything more than this you should leave to a doctor.

Look after yourself and keep safe.
Last word

The idea for this book came about at the International Conference on Traffic safety held in Delhi in 1991. At the Conference, Shriram Honda Power Equipment Limited had sponsored an art exhibition. These artists donated a percentage of the sales of their paintings to the Sanchal Foundation.

The Sanchal Foundation sponsored Shirsendu Ghosh from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad to do his final year project at Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. Shirsendu was asked to develop educational material on traffic safety for children.

Shirsendu reviewed all the latest material on the subject, worldwide, and then interviewed many children and teachers in schools to get their reactions. He then developed a special package suitable for Indian conditions. This report was used by Mr. G.V. Soumitri and Dr. Peggy Mohan to produce this book.

We thank all these people who made this book possible. We are sure that this book will make your life safer on Indian roads.

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