Walkability Checklist

How walkable is your community?

Take a walk with a child and decide for yourselves.

Everyone benefits from walking. These benefits include: improved fitness, cleaner air, reduced risks of certain health problems, and a greater sense of community. But walking needs to be safe and easy. Take a walk with your child and use this checklist to decide if your neighborhood is a friendly place to walk. Take heart if you find problems, there are ways you can make things better.

Getting started:

First, you'll need to pick a place to walk, like the route to school, a friend's house or just somewhere fun to go.

The second step involves the checklist. Read over the checklist before you go, and as you walk, note the locations of things you would like to change. At the end of your walk, give each question a rating. Then add up the numbers to see how you rated your walk overall.

After you've rated your walk and identified any problem areas, the next step is to figure out what you can do to improve your community's score. You'll find both immediate answers and long-term solutions under "Improving Your Community's Score..." on the third page.
Take a walk and use this checklist to rate your neighborhood’s walkability.

How walkable is your community?

Location of walk ___________________________

Rating Scale:  
1 2 3 4 5 6  
awful  many problems  some problems  good  very good  excellent

1. Did you have room to walk?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Some problems:
☐ Sidewalks or paths started and stopped
☐ Sidewalks were broken or cracked
☐ Sidewalks were blocked with poles, signs, shrubbery, dumpsters, etc.
☐ No sidewalks, paths, or shoulders
☐ Too much traffic
☐ Something else _______________________

Locations of problems: _______________

Rating: (circle one) __________________________

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. Was it easy to cross streets?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Some problems:
☐ Road was too wide
☐ Traffic signals made us wait too long or did not give us enough time to cross
☐ Needed striped crosswalks or traffic signals
☐ Parked cars blocked our view of traffic
☐ Trees or plants blocked our view of traffic
☐ Needed curb ramps or ramps needed repair
☐ Something else _______________________

Locations of problems: _______________

Rating: (circle one) __________________________

1 2 3 4 5 6

3. Did drivers behave well?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Some problems: Drivers...
☐ Backed out of driveways without looking
☐ Did not yield to people crossing the street
☐ Turned into people crossing the street
☐ Drove too fast
☐ Sped up to make it through traffic lights or drove through traffic lights?
☐ Something else _______________________

Locations of problems: _______________

Rating: (circle one) __________________________

1 2 3 4 5 6

4. Was it easy to follow safety rules?

Could you and your child...

☐ Yes  ☐ No  Cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen by drivers?
☐ Yes  ☐ No  Stop and look left, right and then left again before crossing streets?
☐ Yes  ☐ No  Walk on sidewalks or shoulders facing traffic where there were no sidewalks?
☐ Yes  ☐ No  Cross with the light?

Locations of problems: _______________

Rating: (circle one) __________________________

1 2 3 4 5 6

5. Was your walk pleasant?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Some unpleasant things:
☐ Needed more grass, flowers, or trees
☐ Scary dogs
☐ Scary people
☐ Not well lighted
☐ Dirty, lots of litter or trash
☐ Dirty air due to automobile exhaust
☐ Something else _______________________

Locations of problems: _______________

Rating: (circle one) __________________________

1 2 3 4 5 6

How does your neighborhood stack up?
Add up your ratings and decide.

1. _____  26-30  Celebrate! You have a great neighborhood for walking.
2. _____  21-25  Celebrate a little. Your neighborhood is pretty good.
3. _____  16-20  Okay, but it needs work.
4. _____  11-15  It needs lots of work. You deserve better than that.
5. _____  5-10  It’s a disaster for walking!

Total _____

Now that you’ve identified the problems, go to the next page to find out how to fix them.
Now that you know the problems, you can find the answers.

Improving your community’s score...

1. **Did you have room to walk?**

   **What you and your child can do immediately**
   - pick another route for now
   - tell local traffic engineering or public works department about specific problems and provide a copy of the checklist

   **What you and your community can do with more time**
   - speak up at board meetings
   - write or petition city for walkways and gather neighborhood signatures
   - make media aware of problem
   - work with a local transportation engineer to develop a plan for a safe walking route

   **Room too narrow**
   - Side: sidewalks or paths started and stopped
   - Sidewalks broken or cracked
   - Sidewalks blocked
   - No sidewalks, paths or shoulders
   - Too much traffic

   **What you and your child can do immediately**
   - pick another route for now
   - tell local traffic engineering or public works department about specific problems and provide a copy of the checklist

   **What you and your community can do with more time**
   - speak up at board meetings
   - write or petition city for walkways and gather neighborhood signatures
   - make media aware of problem
   - work with a local transportation engineer to develop a plan for a safe walking route

2. **Was it easy to cross streets?**

   **Road too wide**
   - Traffic signals made us wait too long or did not give us enough time to cross
   - Crosswalks/traffic signals needed
   - View of traffic blocked by parked cars, trees, or plants
   - Needed curb ramps or ramps needed repair

   **What you and your child can do immediately**
   - pick another route for now
   - share problems and checklist with local traffic engineering or public works department
   - trim your trees or bushes that block the street and ask your neighbors to do the same
   - leave nice notes on problem cars asking owners not to park there

   **What you and your community can do with more time**
   - push for crosswalks/signals/parking changes/curb ramps at city meetings
   - report to traffic engineer where parked cars are safety hazards
   - report illegally parked cars to the police
   - request that the public works department trim trees or plants
   - make media aware of problem

3. **Did drivers behave well?**

   **Backed without looking**
   - Did not yield
   - Turned into walkers
   - Drove too fast
   - Sped up to make traffic lights or drove through red lights

   **What you and your child can do immediately**
   - pick another route for now
   - set an example: slow down and be considerate of others
   - encourage your neighbors to do the same
   - report unsafe driving to the police

   **What you and your community can do with more time**
   - petition for more enforcement
   - request protected turns
   - ask city planners and traffic engineers for traffic calming ideas
   - ask schools about getting crossing guards at key locations
   - organize a neighborhood speed watch program

4. **Could you follow safety rules?**

   **Cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen**
   - Stop and look left, right, left before crossing
   - Walk on sidewalks or shoulders facing traffic
   - Cross with the light

   **What you and your child can do immediately**
   - educate yourself and your child about safe walking
   - organize parents in your neighborhood to walk children to school

   **What you and your community can do with more time**
   - encourage schools to teach walking safely
   - help schools start safe walking programs
   - encourage corporate support for flex schedules so parents can walk children to school

5. **Was your walk pleasant?**

   **Needs grass, flowers, trees**
   - Scary dogs
   - Scary people
   - Not well lit
   - Dirty, litter
   - Lots of traffic

   **What you and your child can do immediately**
   - point out areas to avoid to your child; agree on safe routes
   - ask neighbors to keep dogs leashed or fenced
   - report scary dogs to the animal control department
   - report scary people to the police
   - report lighting needs to the police or appropriate public works department
   - take a walk with a trash bag
   - plant trees, flowers in your yard
   - select alternative route with less traffic

   **What you and your community can do with more time**
   - request increased police enforcement
   - start a crime watch program in your neighborhood
   - organize a community clean-up day
   - sponsor a neighborhood beautification or tree-planting day
   - begin an adopt-a-street program
   - initiate support to provide routes with less traffic to schools in your community (reduced traffic during am and pm school commute times)

**A Quick Health Check**

**Could not go as far or as fast as we wanted**
- Were tired, short of breath or had sore feet or muscles
- Was the sun really hot?
- Was it hot and hazy?

**What you and your child can do immediately**
- start with short walks and work up to 30 minutes of walking most days
- invite a friend or child along
- walk along shaded routes where possible
- use sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher, wear a hat and sunglasses
- try not to walk during the hottest time of day

**What you and your community can do with more time**
- get media to do a story about the health benefits of walking
- call parks and recreation department about community walks
- encourage corporate support for employee walking programs
- plant shade trees along routes
- have a sun safety seminar for kids
- have kids learn about unhealthy ozone days and the Air Quality Index (AQI)
Great Resources

WALKING INFORMATION
Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC)
UNC Highway Safety Research Center
730 Airport Road, Suite 300
Campus Box 3430
Chapel Hill, NC
27599-3430
Phone: (919) 962-2202
www.pedbikeinfo.org
www.walkinginfo.org

National Center for Safe Routes to School
730 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Suite 300
Campus Box 3430
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3430
Toll-free 1-866-610-SRTS
www.saferoutesinfo.org

Walk to School Day Web Sites
USA event: www.walktoschool-usa.org
International: www.walktoschool.org

STREET DESIGN AND TRAFFIC CALMING
Federal Highway Administration
Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Research Program
HSR - 20
6300 Georgetown Pike
McLean, VA 22101
www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/index.htm

Institute of Transportation Engineers
www.ite.org

Surface Transportation Policy Project
www.transact.org

Transportation for Livable Communities
www.tlcnetwork.org

WALKING COALITIONS
America Walks
P.O. Box 29103
Portland, Oregon 97210
Phone: (503) 222-1077
www.americawalks.org

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Traffic Safety Programs
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590
Phone: (202) 662-0600
www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/ped

SAFE KIDS Worldwide
1301 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20004
Phone: (202) 662-0600
Fax: (202) 393-2072
www.safekids.org

WALKING AND HEALTH
US Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Children's Health Protection (MC 1107A)
Washington, DC 20460
Phone: 202-564-2188
Fax: 202-564-2733
www.epa.gov/children/
www.epa.gov/air/urbanair/ozone/what.html
www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html
www.epa.gov/otaq/transp/comchoic/ccweb.htm

President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children
www.childrenshealth.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity
Phone: (888) 232-4674
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/readyset
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/index.htm

Prevention Magazine
33 East Minor Street
Emmaus, PA 18098
www.itsallaboutprevention.com

Shape Up America!
6707 Democracy Boulevard
Suite 306
Bethesda, MD 20817
www.shapeup.org

ACCESSIBLE SIDEWALKS
US Access Board
1331 F Street, NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20004-1111
Phone: (800) 872-2253; (800) 993-2822 (TTY)
www.access-board.gov