

## 'Reactions, Concentration, Distractions'

## Learning Outcomes

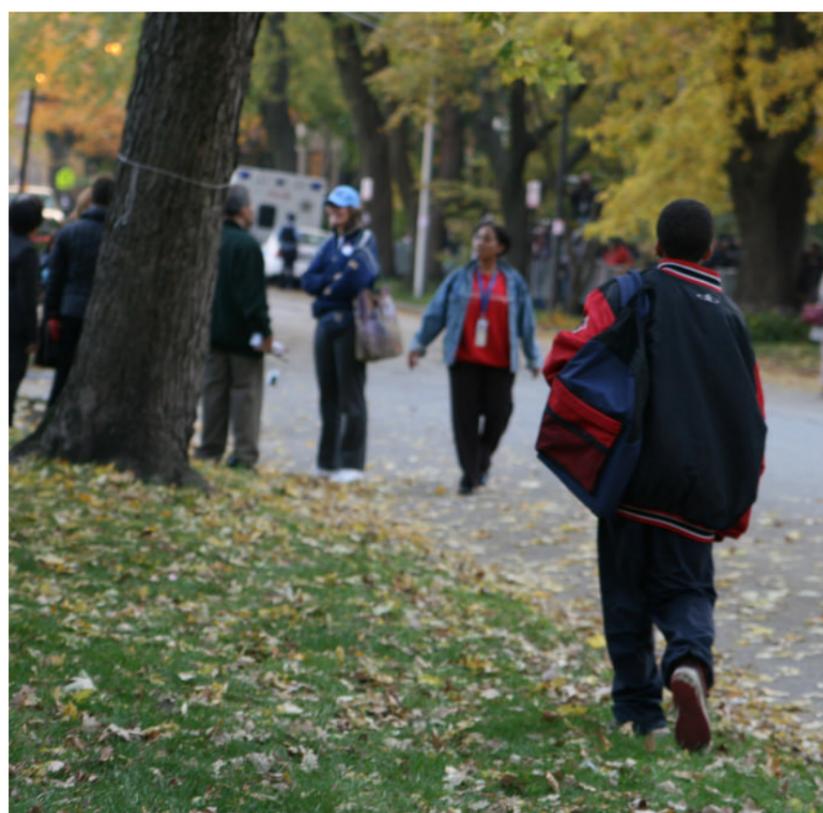
- Pupils will be aware of how unpredictable the road environment can be due to the behaviour of themselves and others and why we need to be able to react quickly.
- Pupils will be able to explain why we all need to concentrate when out and about on or near roads.
- Pupils will be able to recognise a variety of distractions.
- Pupils will be aware of both the immediate and possible long-term consequences of not paying attention when out in the road environment.

## Background Information

After the transfer to secondary school and throughout their first year, pupils will probably find a change in the degree of trust and freedom allowed by adults. Certainly, pupils are less likely to be taken to school by parents (unless given a lift in the car) and most will feel uncomfortable about walking to school accompanied by an adult.

Road crashes are the biggest cause of accidental death for children between the ages of 11 – 16. One of the problems is that an 'accident' may not be the result of a teenager behaving in a dangerous way, but because other road users they share the road space with might not behave appropriately, such as drivers not sticking to the rules.

Most teenagers think they know everything there is to know about crossing the road, but travelling safely is all about anticipating hazards, making decisions and reacting quickly and correctly to situations. Quite often decisions aren't as straightforward as we would like them to be and what we decide to do is usually based on previous experience. As they get older, our teenagers will increasingly be making independent decisions, so experience counts. The adults in their lives (parents, teachers etc) need to get a balance between 'keeping them safe' and 'letting them go'.



Unfortunately, we adults also tend to give them very mixed messages! On the one hand we are always nagging them to be careful, stay safe and look out for themselves and each other; then on the other hand we don't practice what we preach – they will see many drivers paying little attention to their own safety or the safety of others and many adult pedestrians taking chances when crossing the road!

It is always best practice in any road safety lesson to start from the students' own ideas about risk on the road, to give them a meaningful starting point for their approach to road safety education. They will be far more engaged in the lesson if you can relate it to their personal circumstances and listen to their views than if you preach safe behaviour and dictate rules! For teenagers, the words 'road safety' mean 'boring'!!

The activities in this lesson plan are designed to encourage students to be aware of this; to spot the potential hazards by paying attention, avoiding distractions and making good decisions based on their knowledge of what other road users might do.

## 'Reactions, Concentration, Distractions'

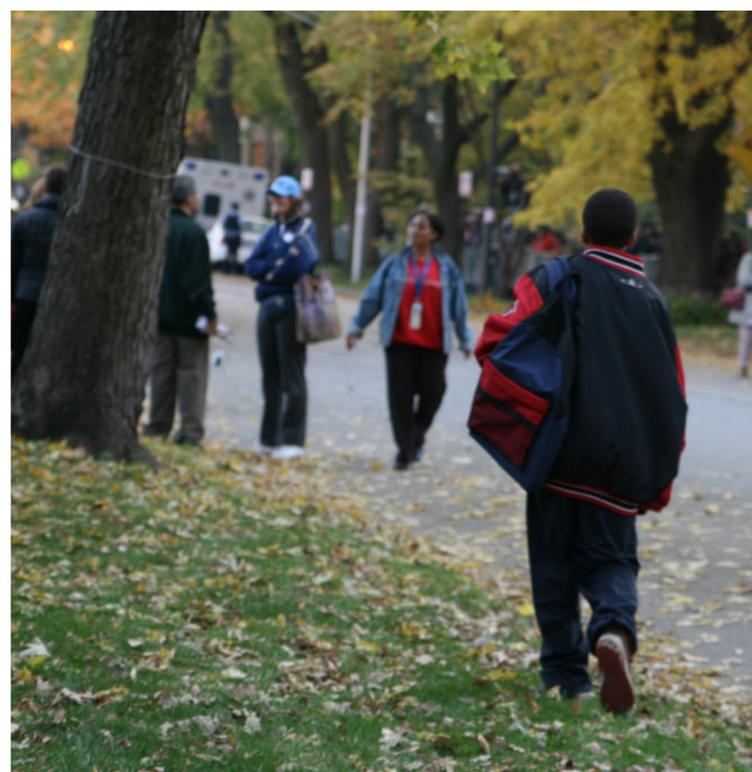
**Part 1: Reactions**

Road safety is something your pupils will consider they 'did' at primary school – you could ask them if they remember their Green Cross Code – the chances are that all they will remember about it is 'Stop, Look, Listen, Think' without much further detail - except with a lot of prompting! They will have developed their own variations of it for crossing the road in their real world anyway – they now need to know how to do this safely.

Those who have experienced some sort of 'near hit' will probably realise they survived it by their own, or someone else's sharp reactions.

So WHY is traffic the single biggest killer of 11 – 16-year olds?

- Experience counts – of all pedestrian casualties 40% are under 15.
- Lack of protection – pedestrians involved in a road crash are likely to be more seriously injured than someone in a car.
- Being hidden – about 30% of pedestrians are injured trying to cross near parked cars – and hi-vis jackets aren't exactly hi-fashion.
- Where they cross – more young people get injured crossing away from a pedestrian crossing than on a formal crossing – 'finding a safe place to cross' as in the Green Cross Code isn't the coolest thing for a teenager to do.
- Urban areas – more pedestrians are involved in road crashes in towns and cities than rural areas – so even if teenagers live in a rural area their school is likely to be in town, and their social life is likely to revolve around there as well.
- Distractions – teenagers are far more likely to get involved in something else – talking with friends, texting, listening to music etc and forget to concentrate on the traffic.



It is time for them to move on from the basic Green Cross Code now they are travelling independently more often. The Highway Code now becomes much more important as they need to know all the rules that apply to them as pedestrians, cyclists and passengers – after all, you must know the rules in order to keep them!

There aren't quite as many laws and rules for non-drivers as there are for drivers, but it's surprising how many people don't know them.

It will be worth having a few copies of the Highway Code in the classroom and letting the pupils browse through them – encourage them to look up the rules that apply to their own main mode of transport – pedestrians, cyclists, passengers (in cars, taxis and buses).

## ‘Reactions, Concentration, Distractions’

Here are some examples you could use to get them started:

### Pedestrians

- You **must not** loiter on zebra, pelican or puffin crossings.
- You **must not** walk on motorways or slip roads except in an emergency.
- You **must not** get on to or hold on to a moving vehicle.

### Cyclists

- You **must** have a red rear reflector and amber pedal reflectors.
- You **must** have front and rear lights lit at night.
- You **must not** cycle on a pavement.
- You **must not** ride in a dangerous, careless or inconsiderate manner.
- You **must not** carry a passenger unless your cycle has been built or adapted to carry one.

A cyclist must obey all traffic signals and signs in the same way a car-driver has to.

### Passengers

- All children over 12 years old or over 135cms in height **must** wear a seat-belt in both the front or rear seat, if fitted (for those pupils still under 12 years old, if they are also under 135cms then they must use the ‘correct child restraint’ – this will usually be a booster seat or booster cushion (There are exceptions, such as in a taxi where the adult seat-belt must be worn if the correct child restraint isn’t available).

Ask your pupils if they think they have ever broken any of these laws?

Did they know there are penalties if they are caught breaking traffic law?

### For example:

#### Cyclists:

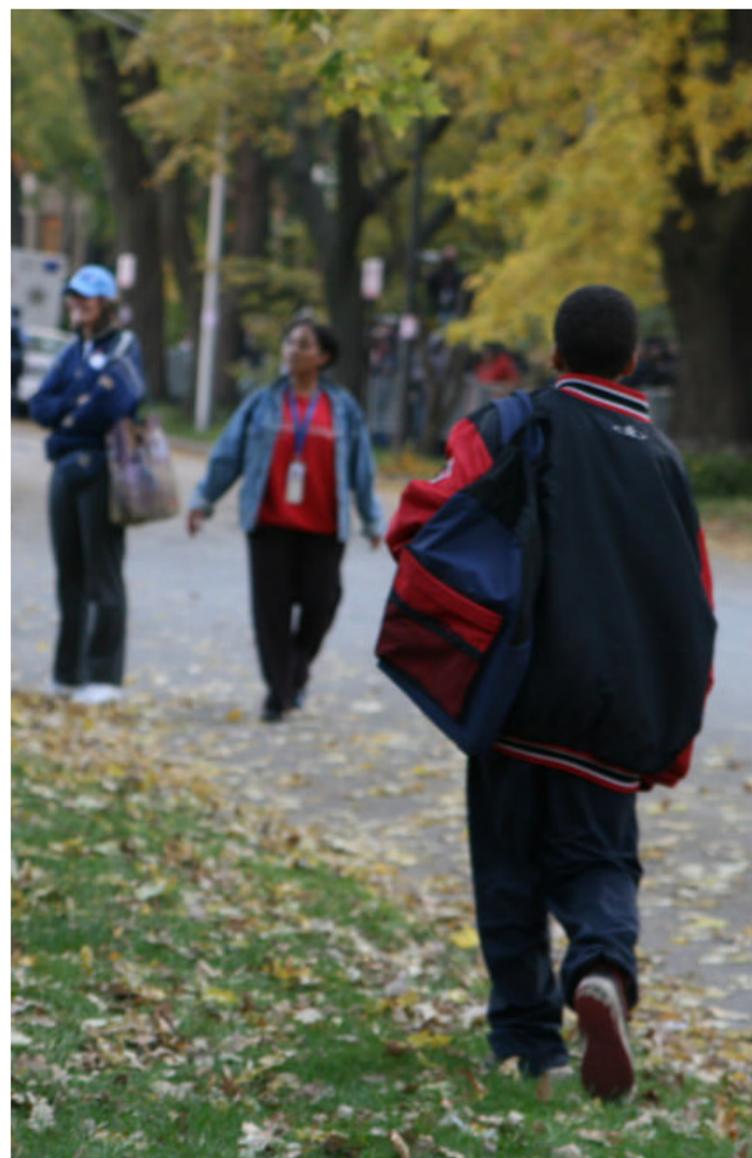
Careless or dangerous cycling Maximum fine £2,500.  
Cycling on the pavement: Maximum fine of £500.

#### Passengers:

Seat-belt offences: fine of £100 for anyone over the age of 14 years old, driver liable before this age.

### Here are some other laws that Drivers commonly break:

Speeding  
Parking on ‘double-yellows’  
Using mobile phone  
Running red lights  
Illegal tyres  
Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs



## 'Reactions, Concentration, Distractions'

**Part 2: Concentration****Examples of what we should be looking out for:**

**Drivers:** Road layout; lanes; signs; traffic lights; crossings; other vehicles pulling out; cyclists; pedestrians stepping out in front of them; what speed they are doing; emergency vehicles; not getting too close to the vehicle in front; what is happening in their mirrors; any potential hazards.

**Cyclists:** Speed and distance away of other vehicles; vehicles turning left across them; pedestrians stepping out in front of them; potholes, puddles and drains; people not hearing them coming; lorries not seeing them; turning right across the traffic; using roundabouts safely.

**Pedestrians:** Speed and distance away of passing traffic; vehicles turning without signalling; vehicles not stopping at crossings; being seen by other road-users; finding safe places to cross; vehicles crossing the pavement – e.g. to get into driveways; 'silent' vehicles – e.g. electric cars/bicycles.

**Decision-making examples:**

- Riding a bike to school, even though tyres are not pumped up properly or lights/brakes are not working – concentrate should have remembered to fix it over the weekend.
- Not wearing seat-belt – concentrate – too busy talking to friend to remember to buckle-up.
- Starting to cross before the green man lights up concentrate – too busy texting.
- Stepping out in front of traffic – concentrate – in world of their own, listening to music on their mobile phone.
- Crossing between parked cars – concentrate – there is a puffin crossing just a little bit further up.
- Stepping into road as a car turns into the junction concentrate – OK so he wasn't signalling, but the car obviously slowed down and moved slightly to the left – should have spotted that!

Try to be led by your pupils' personal experiences, but the above examples will get them started if necessary!

**Part 3: Distractions**

Once again, try to be led by your pupils' own experiences – but think about mobile phones, i-pods, talking to friends, passengers, larking about.

## 'Reactions, Concentration, Distractions'

**Part 4: Reaction / Distraction Test**

This is designed to demonstrate how much slower we may react if distracted.

Using the template [Reaction test], make a larger version, maybe on flip-chart paper, drawing around plates for the circles. Make a second sheet with the numbers in a different order. Have a blank sheet to cover the numbered sheets until you say 'go'.

Using sheet 1, ask one volunteer to tap on the jumbled numbers in order (1-12) when you say 'go' and ask another pupil to time them with a stopwatch. Don't let the 'tapper' see the numbers until everyone is ready to start. Have 3 or 4 children surrounding the 'tapper' but standing still and quietly.

Repeat the exercise with sheet 2 – but this time have some distractions typical of car passengers – maybe play some music, have 2 children arguing loudly and another asking the 'tapper' questions whilst they are trying to tap out the numbers. In most cases you should find that it takes longer with distractions.

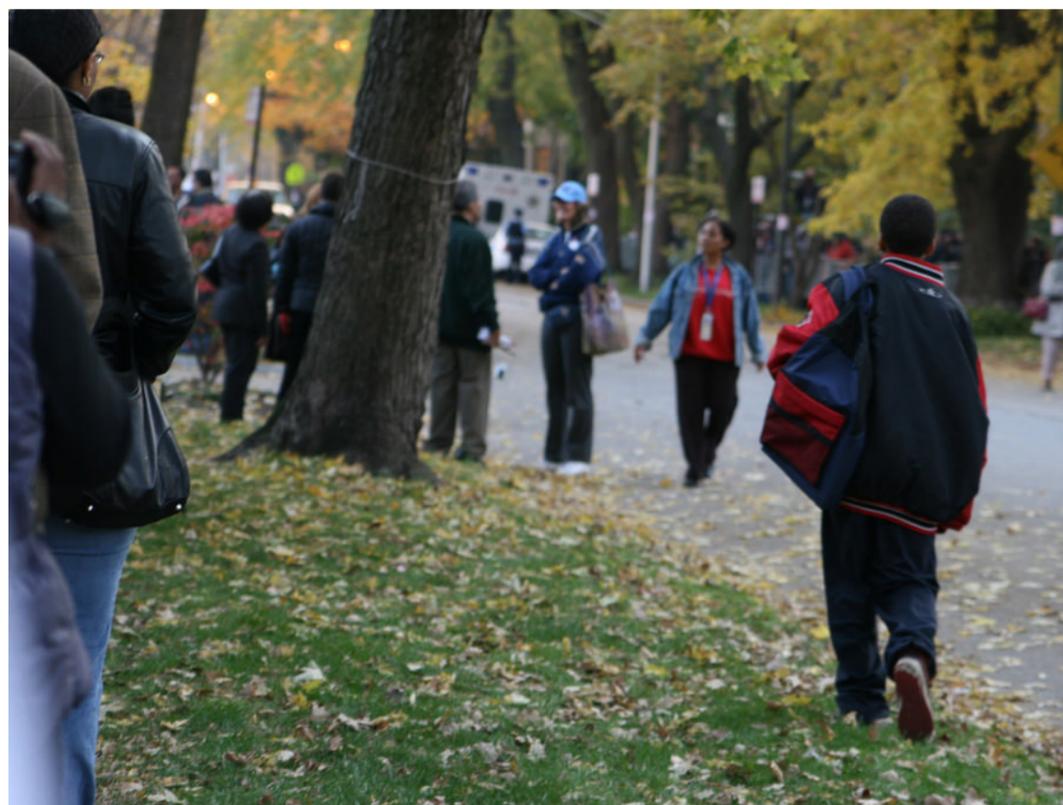
With an 'accident' only taking a second to happen, distracting the driver can be **very** dangerous.

**Part 5: Consequences**

Teenagers tend to only think of the short-term or immediate consequences of their actions, if they think about the consequences at all! But there can be far-reaching, long-term, life changing consequences to what seems to be a very small error, made often through a momentary lapse in concentration.

Use the 'Consequences' worksheets [Discussion sheet] to focus on the possible longer term effects of making mistakes in the road environment.

**Practical difficulties:** Steps/stairs; using public transport; access to buildings; personal mobility.

**Effects on family and friends:**

Emotional – anger, blame, guilt, stress, embarrassment.

Financial – trips to hospital, time off work, adaptation of home/car, equipment such as wheelchair, cost of full-time carer, parent gives up job/career to become carer, travel to different school Time – everything taking longer, caring for you.

**School and social life:** Change school, loss of friends, loneliness, ability to go to cinema, bowling, swimming, parties, participating in sports.

**Prospects:** Job opportunities restricted, prejudices (employers and other employees), mobility (including driving a car), self-esteem.

**Remember:** Much of what happens in the road environment is out of our control – we just have to follow the rules ourselves, avoid taking unnecessary risks, behave sensibly, keep alert, concentrate, avoid distractions and be ready to react quickly to keep ourselves as safe as possible.