

What is a safe vehicle?

Find out more about some of the amazing ways that safe vehicles can help us make safe and healthy journeys.

SAFE
VEHICLES 
SAVE LIVES.

Road **Safety** Week 

Why do we need safe vehicles?

- More than 1.3 million people die on roads every year.¹
- Road crashes are the leading cause of death for children and young people worldwide.²
- More than six children are killed or seriously injured on roads every day in the UK.³
- Road crashes have a devastating effect on families and communities.
- Pollution from traffic causes respiratory illnesses and other diseases.
- Safe vehicles are essential to save lives and prevent life-changing injuries.

The good news is that death and serious injury from road collisions and pollution are preventable, if people who design, build and use roads all share responsibility for road safety.⁴ This is known as the 'safe system' approach to road safety. Safe vehicles are an important part of the safe system.

What is a safe vehicle?

Safe vehicles are designed to prevent road crashes and protect people inside and outside the vehicle if a crash does happen.

Here are some of the ways they do this:

Safe vehicles prevent crashes

Modern vehicle technology helps drivers keep to speed limits and in the right lane. Automated systems brake in an emergency.



Note: You cannot tell from looking at a vehicle what safety technology it has. Brake research reveals that many drivers switch off important safety features in their vehicles, either because they find them annoying or they don't understand how they will keep them safer.⁵

Safe vehicles protect people

Child-seats, seat belts and airbags help stop people hitting the inside of a vehicle during a crash. Seat belts also stop someone from being thrown out of a vehicle during a crash. Head rests help prevent head and neck injury.



Safe vehicles are roadworthy

Vehicles need to be well-maintained to keep them safe. Drivers and riders should carry out safety checks before every journey.



Safe vehicles also help **manage driver safety**, for example by noticing when a driver is tired and reminding drivers to take breaks. They also **record what happens in a crash** and can **call emergency services** immediately.

Why is it important to keep to speed limits?

Speed is a critical issue for the safety of our roads as one in four fatal crashes involve someone driving too fast.⁶



The faster a vehicle is travelling, the longer it takes to stop, the harder it crashes and the greater the risk of death and serious injury. A crash at 30mph is twice as likely to cause severe injury than a crash at 20mph.⁷ Vehicle technology that helps drivers keep within speed limits and brakes automatically in an emergency means fewer crashes, less impact if a crash happens and a lower risk of death and injury.

1. World Health Organisation (2023) Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023. www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/safety-and-mobility/global-status-report-on-road-safety-2023

2. ibid

3. Department for Transport (2025) Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain: 2024 Annual Report and associated data sets. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2024

4. Tingvall and Haworth. 1999. Vision Zero: An Ethical Approach to Safety and Mobility. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264873849_Vision_Zero_An_ethical_approach_to_safety_and_mobility/link/549922a80c22eeefc30fa409/download

5. Brake (2025) Vehicle safety technology research report. www.brake.org.uk/vehicle-safety-technology-report

6. Department for Transport (2025) Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain: 2024 Annual Report and associated data sets. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2024

7. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (2011) Impact speed and a pedestrian's risk of severe injury or death. <https://aaafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2011-PedestrianRiskVsSpeedReport.pdf>

Everyone can help make sure we have safe vehicles on our roads

We all have a responsibility to use roads safely to protect ourselves and others. We can choose safe ways to travel using safe vehicles, obey road rules, travel at safe speeds and educate people about safe road use.

Schools

Schools can help keep children safe by:

- Running cycle training programmes to help children learn how to control their bikes and use roads safely.
- Teaching children about new vehicle technology that can help stop crashes and prevent road harm.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers can help keep children safe by:

- Choosing the safest vehicles they can afford
- Keeping vehicles well-maintained
- Carrying out essential checks before every journey
- Helping children and young people learn how to check and maintain their bicycle
- Making sure children wear a helmet when cycling to protect their head if they fall off
- Making sure children sit in a well-fitted, appropriately sized child seat if travelling by car.

Parent and carers can also set a good example by driving slowly in places where people live and always looking out for cyclists, never using a phone while driving, always wearing a seat belt and never driving after drinking or taking drugs. All parents and carers can help children use roads safely and choose active ways to travel or public transport where possible.

Children

Children can help stay safe by:

- Wearing a helmet when cycling to protect their head if they fall off
- Making sure tyres are pumped up correctly and brakes are working
- Wearing brightly coloured clothes to make it easier for people to see them
- Using lights when cycling in the dark.

Brake recommends that children under 10 always cycle with a grown up, on safe cycle paths away from traffic.

Find out more

Watch short films by Brake to find out more about safe vehicles and the safe system approach to road safety.

For teachers, parents and carers

- **Safe system is child's play** – Find out how the design of cities and towns, roads, public transport systems and vehicles can deliver safe and healthy mobility for all. Watch at <https://youtu.be/tiJfVzRqwUU?si=m4Pjbg3gn9xFDe42>
- **Child seat animation** – Learn about the importance of using correctly-fitted child seats for children up to the height of 150cm. Watch at <https://youtu.be/tQyAbN6Xza4?si=HiUSfhR4kd6KE1VI>
- **Bicycle checks** – Find out how to carry out a simple M check to make sure your bicycle is fit for the road. Watch at <https://youtu.be/21scaFMPpA4?si=Al6hZ3xCKv73G93m>

For primary schoolchildren

- **We love to cycle** – Learn about the benefits of cycling and how to stay as safe as possible when riding a bike. Watch at <https://youtu.be/0HTi8Zl6l04?si=4xiLJkM4q26Shjmi>
- **Our future journeys: Safer by design** – Modern vehicles are equipped with technology to keep people inside and outside the vehicle safe. Watch at <https://youtu.be/rX4Etb5TgRs?si=Mn2xOT-IX42zKB5T>



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