



# Teaching Crossing the Road Skills

For most adults, crossing the road is automatic behaviour, we do it without thinking and we don't consider how complex a skill crossing the road is. Nor do we consider how our life might be curtailed if we couldn't successfully negotiate our way around roads.



Some of the skills required for crossing the road include:

- determining when it is safe to cross. This requires the ability to observe your environment.
- identifying moving cars, as different from stationary vehicles
- identifying signals at crossings that let you know it is safe to cross.

In some cases even more advanced problem solving is required. For example, if the traffic light signals say it is safe to cross and a motorist continues through the intersection, we need to be able to identify the car is not stopping and decide to wait for it to pass before crossing.

Traffic-related mishaps account for a large number of deaths and injuries amongst our society's children and youth. For youngsters with special needs, the risks can increase dramatically due to:

- lack of awareness of danger
- heightened distractibility
- difficulty or inability to filter out background stimuli
- higher levels of impulsivity
- higher levels of restlessness, and lower levels of patience (e.g. being able to 'wait')
- greater cognitive and learning challenges
- visual impairment affecting ability to judge speed or distance



Acquiring these skills is important for our independence and quality of life. For those of us with special needs, who struggle to learn road skills easily, this can be a big barrier to independence.

Parents, educators and support workers need to work much harder to teach young people with special needs about street and traffic safety and employ strategies to help compensate for the challenges they may face. The first step is to break the skill down into its separate skills and teach each of these skills step by step.



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If you are struggling to teach a young adult to cross the road and would like some help our friendly Occupational Therapists at Therapy Professionals Ltd can help.

**Just contact us [Phone: 03 377 5280](tel:033775280) [Email: admin@tpl.nz](mailto:admin@tpl.nz)**