

Back to School? What's the Plan?



See Also:
[Let's Talk About... COVID-19: Back to School Safely](#)

A big question facing parents right now is, "Can my child go back to school safely during COVID-19?" The latest American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [advice](#) says children learn best when they are in school. However, returning to school in person needs careful steps in place to keep students and staff safe.

You can read Utah's plan in the [Covid-19 School Manual](#). This 102 page document is easy to read and contains policies regarding how to keep schools open safely. It was a combined effort involving many health care professionals, administrators, teachers, parents, classified workers and others.

Each district has posted their own plan based on [requirements](#) for all schools such as:

- Have an option in place for alternative learning for high risk individuals.
- Increase cleansing and hygiene regimens.
- All individuals must wear face masks (with some exceptions).
- Develop protocols for symptom monitoring.

Some recommendations include:

- Maximizing distance between desks.
- Providing sack lunches in the classroom.
- Using auditoriums for better air flow and outdoor locations when possible.

For more information about your child's school plan, visit the district website or go to [Utah Education Network PreK-12](#) and click on Find a School for current district information. KSL also has a [link](#) to Utah's school districts.

Lookin' Good in That Mask

Getting a child to wear a face mask may be tricky. They may be afraid, feel self-conscious, or feel a mask is too uncomfortable. Here are a few ideas from the American Academy of Pediatrics that may help.



- Practice wearing a mask at home for longer periods every day until school starts to help with the adjustment. Wearing a mask all day is much different than a quick trip to the store.
- Look in the mirror with the mask on and talk about it. Find pictures of other kids in masks.
- Put a mask on a loved stuffed animal or draw one on a favorite book character.
- Let your kids decorate masks to be personalized and fun. If homemade, let kids choose the fabrics.
- Be sure to send an extra mask in their backpack.
- Label masks with names.
- Clip a lanyard to their mask so it doesn't get lost.
- Soft, pleated face coverings with elastic are likely to work best for kids.
- Find the right size for your child's face and show them how to adjust it for a secure fit.

If you have a child with special needs, talk to your school about your child's situation and your concerns. For deaf and hard of hearing children who lip read, a [custom mask](#) worn by the teacher or aides may help.

Going back to school raises a lot of concerns and district plans will most likely evolve as time passes. In the meantime, teach your kids to wear that mask, [wash those hands correctly](#), avoid touching their cute face, and don't forget those elbow bumps instead of hugs.




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Hold On To Dear Life



Another question parents have is how will my children get to school safely? Will it be ok to ride the bus? Is riding a bike safe? What about all the extra traffic from parents driving their kids to school?

Riding the Bus:

The Covid-19 School Manual also has requirements for how to safely bus students during the school year. These include:

- Assign seats on the bus to support contact tracing.
- Place markers in the bus 6 feet apart for students to stand when they enter or exit the bus.
- Wear masks and have clean, spare masks for student who forget theirs.
- Consider seating children one student per row, facing forward and skip rows between students, if possible.
- Students who live in the same home can sit together if they need to.
- Clean and disinfect seats and other high-touch surfaces often.
- Consider staggered pick up and drop off times for students who ride the bus.
- Open bus windows to increase circulation of outdoor air. Make sure windows do not open far enough to be a safety hazard.

Remind children to avoid touching surfaces when possible and to wash or sanitize their hands after they get off the bus. Have your kids carry a small hand sanitizer in their backpack. Of course, children who are sick should not be getting on a bus or even considering going to school.

Riding a Bike:

The usual safety tips apply when riding a bike whether we are in a pandemic or not. Always wear an ANSI or SNELL labeled helmet and make sure you are wearing it correctly.

1. Place a snug-fitting helmet on the child's head.
2. Adjust the helmet straps over the ears so the helmet cannot be moved from side to side or back and forth.
3. There should be about one finger width between the chin strap and the child's chin.



Other Safety Tips:

- Stop and look both ways for cars before entering the street from a driveway, parking lot or sidewalk. This is especially important with extra traffic in school zones.
- Move with traffic - ride on the right-hand side of the street.
- Ride single-file and never carry any passengers on bicycles built for one.
- Obey all traffic laws, signs and signals.
- Children should walk their bikes across busy intersections and streets. Don't assume drivers will give you the right-of-way.
- Always watch for potential hazards like loose gravel, potholes, wet leaves or other things that may cause you to crash.
- Keep your bicycle under control. No stunts.
- Give cars and pedestrians the right-of-way and always pass them on the left.
- Make sure your bike is a safe bike and the right size for you.

No matter how your child gets to school, they should practice [physical distancing](#) once there. This doesn't mean they can't be social. Kids needs to know is OK to talk, laugh together, and care for each other.

