



Helmet Safety

Grade level: 4th grade

Introduction: This is the first lesson of two, in-classroom bike and pedestrian safety lessons. In this lesson we demonstrate the importance of wearing a helmet, hear the story of a boy who was seriously injured in a bike accident and conduct a sharing activity on the topic of student's own experiences. Whole class discussion will allow students to make the connection between wearing a helmet and not getting hurt.

Objective: Following the video, the explanation and the demonstration, the students will share their favorite experiences biking and walking; then share stories about accidents and close calls. This will demonstrate that while walking and biking are a lot of fun there is risk involved and they are responsible for their own behavior.

Set Up: This is a regular classroom activity.

Materials:

- newspaper
- cardboard box, with six inches of styrofoam pellets
- a bicycle helmet
- a bicycle helmet with the shell removed
- 1/2 dozen raw eggs
- video: "Travis's Story" excerpted from Jello in a Jar (distributed by the National Safe Kids Coalition)
- VCR and monitor

Preparation:

- draw faces on the eggs
- spread newspaper on the floor

Instruction/Modeling: see sample script

Discussion points:

- classroom management/respect (raise your hand if you have something to say, do not call out)
- the four most fantastic reason's to walk and ride (It's fun, It's healthy, less pollution, less traffic)
- community (the problem in the community of Marin is traffic and pollution, kids can really do something to help)

video:

- the importance of always wearing a helmet when riding a bike

demonstration:

- helmet fit
 - snug
 - level
 - chin strap secure (no more than two fingers between the strap and your chin)
- helmet composition
 - Styrofoam
 - external shell
- egg drop
- It's **your** job to stay safe
- how kids are getting hurt: not doing what they **know** they are supposed to do

Closing: Explain that we will be playing Safety Jeopardy, a game which tests their knowledge of traffic safety.

Sample Script:

Good morning class, my name is Chris, and I am a teacher, but I don't have a regular classroom like your teacher, I go around to lots of different classrooms in schools all over Marin County and I teach kids about why it's important to walk and ride our bikes to get places, instead of always driving like we tend to do, and I teach kids about how to walk and ride safely.

(If children start raising their hands ask them to please put their hands down, tell them we will have time at the end for questions and comments)

I'm Chris and this is T3, I want to remember T3 too, because T3 helps me to get kid's attention (squeak T3 at a kid, look for one who is not paying attention). T3 helps me to work with kids. We are going to ask you to do a few simple things to help us all work better together; I'm sure this is what you already do.

- I am going to ask you to raise your hand if you have something to say.
- Please do not call out.
- Do not talk when I am talking and do not talk when another student is talking.

Do you study about respect at (name of school)? Raise your hand if you know what I mean by respect. I should see every hand raised because I need you to show respect for me as the teacher and to one another because that's the only way I'm going to be able to hear from everybody, and I want to hear what everybody has to say.

Right now I want to hear what you have to say about why it's important to walk and bike sometimes instead of always driving. I have what I call the four most fantastic reasons to walk and bike sometimes instead of always driving. Who can tell me a really fantastic reason?

Call on kids until they give these answers, provide feedback.

° less pollution

Have you studied about pollution in school yet? Do you know what pollution is? pollution is the black smoke that comes out of the backs of cars and trucks. Pollution is bad for kids, it's bad for animals and it's bad for teachers.

° It's healthy

You know how important it is for kids to get plenty of exercise, You learn that in PE, We know that kids need at least 30 minutes of exercise a day, raise your hand if you get at least 30 minutes of good exercise a day. An excellent way to get that exercise is walking or biking to school.

° less traffic (If they need a hint on this one ask them what happens first thing in the morning, when everybody has to get to work or to school and we get in our cars all at once and then we just sit there.)

Can you believe how bad the traffic is around here in the morning? Most of the time it's faster to ride a bike or even walk.

° It's fun! (If they need a hint ask them what they would rather do, sit in traffic or get together with their friends or their mom or dad and walk to school?)

And that is the most fantastic reason for anything!

I want you to think about it this way, we did something great for the whole world, by cutting down on pollution and something good for our community by cutting down on traffic.

Have you studied about community yet in school? (most schools study community in the second grade) Who can tell me what we mean by community? (call on a student) A community is a group of people in a place. This class is a community and the town we live in is our community and we all live in the community of Marin, The problem in the community of Marin is too much traffic! It cause pollution, it's a big waste of time and makes people really angry but kids can really do something about it!

We also did something excellent for ourselves by getting some exercise and we had lot's of fun doing it! And all we did was walk or ride instead of driving.

What is not fantastic at all is when kids get into accidents. That's why we call this **Safe Routes to School**. We want to make sure you guys know how to be safe out there.

I want to show you a video clip; this is a very short segment of a video I can loan your PE teacher, this might be something you could do during PE on a rainy day. I want you to see this because I think it's going to mean more to you coming from another kid rather than a teacher or a parent or some other adult.

play the video "Travis's Story" excerpted from Jello in a Jar

This is a true story about a kid who was hit riding his bike, was not wearing a helmet and is very lucky to be alive today but you hear him asking himself if he's ever going to be the same, if he's ever going to get completely better.

Let's talk about how this (hold up a helmet) and how it's supposed to fit. (put the helmet on your head but do not connect the chin strap) I have noticed that it is quite the fashion trend, particularly among kids who wear their skateboard helmets when they ride their bikes, to ride around with their chin straps undone. How effective do you think that's going to be? (call on a student) That's right, not very effective at all. If you fall and the helmet is not secure, you could land on your head over here and your helmet is over there. (point)

Another thing I see is kids riding around with their chin straps connected but hanging way down here. (model) How effective do you think that's going to be? (call on a student) That's right, not very effective at all. If you fall and the helmet is not secure, it could slip off to the side and leave your head exposed.

In order for the helmet to do it's job it has to be on right. It has to be level (model) not off to one side because what if you land over here (tip the helmet to one side and point to the exposed side of your head). If it's tipped too far back (tip helmet back on your head) and you land like this (smack your forehead). I see kids riding around with their helmets too far forward (slide the helmet down over your eyes) and I know they're going to crash because they can't even see where they're going!

So it wants to be snug, not so tight that it cut's off the circulation to your brain, level and secured by the chin strap. Not sooo tight that it's choking you but not too loose. The way you tell is by putting two fingers under the strap, you should not be able to fit more than two fingers between your chin and the strap (demonstrate).

The helmet has two pieces, a hard plastic shell (knock on the helmet) but what really protects you is the Styrofoam. (hold up the helmet with the loose shell and remove the shell to expose the Styrofoam)

The hard plastic shell is not what really protects your head, it's not really even that hard (remove the shell and demonstrate how flexible it is) it's the Styrofoam that does the job. The shell is important though because if you landed on your head the Styrofoam would catch on the pavement and you wouldn't have such a bad head injury but you might have a neck injury because what the hard plastic shell does is allow you to skid, or slide along the ground. (demonstrate using the helmet across a surface such as a desk)

So, you need both pieces. If the plastic comes off of your helmet it's time for a new helmet. If the Styrofoam is cracked it's time for a new helmet.

I want to do a little demonstration. May I have two volunteers please. (call on two students, a boy and a girl) First I am going to drop this egg from the same height as my head, which is about as far as it would have to go if I fell off my bike. (drop the egg onto the newspaper, you can paint faces on the eggs for fun)

I am going to give you this egg and I want you to drop it onto the newspaper. (have the kid drop the egg from head height) See what happened? (have the other student do the same thing) Thank you very much, you may return to your seats. If I gave each of you an egg, well that would get very expensive, but do you think all of your eggs would break? (call on a student)

I've been doing this demonstration with lots of kids and **every time** this is what happens (point to the mess) and every time that's what's going to happen to your head.

Now I will demonstrate the power of Styrofoam! (hold up the box and show the class that it's full of Styrofoam pellets. Drop an egg into the box, then reach in and retrieve the unharmed egg. Do this several times, even throwing it as hard as you can into the box. Every time, this egg is going to be OK. Helmets work!

How many people here ride a bike? Or a scooter, skateboard, rollerblades? (all hands will probably be raised) Who here owns a helmet? I should see all the same hands raised. What do you wear every time you ride a bike? (call on a student) That's right, we always wear a helmet. (hold up the helmet) It is a **law** in the state of California that anybody under the age of 18 must wear a helmet. I think everybody should wear a helmet but it's very important for kids because your skull and your brains are still growing so they need total protection.

I want to hear from you now, I want to know some of the places you like to ride or walk or hike. (have several students share)

OK it sounds like you guys know how to have fun out there, but has anything scary or bad ever happened, ever had a close call? (have several students share)

(most stories will relate to bike crashes, ask the student if they were wearing their helmet, and could they have been hurt or hurt much worse if they were not wearing their helmet. Listen

to their anecdotes for the likely cause of the crash, such as going too fast and ask them if this caused the accident and if they learned something from the experience)

It's your job to make sure that you stay safe out there, because here's what we know about how kids are getting hurt by cars: We know that you kids know what you are supposed to do, that you are supposed to wear your helmets.

Kids are getting hurt because they aren't doing what they *know* they are supposed to do. You forget, or you think that you don't *always* have to wear a helmet, *you just don't do what you know you're supposed to do.*

I also know that parents and teachers are always telling kids what to do; eat your vegetables, clean up that mess, go to bed, do your homework, don't call out, raise your hand ...

Has anybody ever gotten into trouble for not doing something they know they were supposed to do? Maybe just once or twice? Raise your hands, come on admit it. This time you're not just going to get yelled at or grounded or have your allowance taken away, *you could get really hurt.* Do you think Travis knew about helmets? Do you think he wishes today that he were wearing a helmet?

We want you to be able to get around on your own. We have to know that you're going to do what you know you're supposed to do. Next time we work together I'm going to want to see what else you know about how to stay safe when you're walking and riding and scooting and skateboarding, so we're going to play a game I call safety Jeopardy. All of the questions are about laws and rules of the road and we're going to see just what you know and I'll teach you what you don't.

I want to thank you all for being so attentive, I have really enjoyed working with you and I look forward to working together again very soon. Thank you (name of teacher), you have a great class.