



Montgomery County Public Schools
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org



Riding the School Bus

What You Should Know

Who rides the bus?

The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) provides bus service for:

- ◆ Elementary school students living more than 1.0 mile of walking distance from school*
- ◆ Middle school students living more than 1.5 miles of walking distance from school*
- ◆ High school students living more than 2.0 miles of walking distance from school*
- ◆ Morning and afternoon kindergarten students at the noon hour
- ◆ Students who face hazardous walking conditions regardless of distance from school (multilane highways, construction areas, etc.) as determined by the MCPS Department of Transportation
- ◆ Eligible students in special education, magnet, gifted/talented, and some vocational/education programs that are not offered at the student's home school

WALKING DISTANCE FROM SCHOOL*	
Elementary	More than 1 mile
Middle	More than 1.5 miles
High	More than 2 miles

Bus safety: A team effort

Students

Students are responsible for their behavior and self-control on the bus and at the bus stop at all times. Disorderly students can threaten the safety of all riders by

distracting the bus operator, making the bus ride to and from school an unpleasant and even intimidating experience for other students. School buses are an extension of school, and students are expected to adhere to the same standards of behavior on a school bus as in the classroom. Students are expected to obey the instructions of the bus operator just as they would follow the instructions of teachers and school administrators. Students must also remember that riding the school bus is a privilege for most students, not a right, and can be revoked if the student fails to observe basic standards of conduct and safety.

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Parents

Parents can help further the safety of all students by making sure their children know the bus rules and etiquette that help ensure safe, orderly, and pleasant bus trips. Parents also should make sure their children know their bus route number, located in windows on both the right and left side of the bus, near the front (see "Route number" section). The number that is painted on the bus, usually on the body and bumpers, is not used for bus route identification.

For elementary and middle school students, it is recommended that a parent or other adult wait at the bus stop with the students to monitor and supervise their

*A tenth of a mile may be added to establish a reasonable boundary.

behavior and help with any problems, such as a late bus. Both students and adults should stand not more than 150 feet away from the bus stop, where they can observe the bus as it arrives.

Bus stops are selected to provide safety and convenience for most students and to economize on fuel and time that students spend on the bus. Parents should not request bus drivers to make additional stops. Regulations prohibit bus operators from stopping between designated bus stops.

Many routes are designed so that students do not need to cross a major roadway to use the bus. This is indicated on route descriptions by “RSO” (right side only) next to the bus stop notation. Parents should not allow their children to circumvent this safety measure by crossing the road to use a different bus stop if there is one on their side of the street.

The school system

To ensure safe, efficient service for students, MCPS follows these procedures:

- ◆ No bus may cross a mainline railroad track at grade level in Montgomery County.
- ◆ No students are scheduled to cross a divided highway to board a bus, and the number of students who must cross a main artery is kept to an absolute minimum.
- ◆ Standees are not allowed on buses, except during the first few weeks of the new school year when schedules and routes are being adjusted or occasionally during the year when breakdowns occur or temporary needs arise.
- ◆ All roads and bridges must be able to sustain the weight of the bus.
- ◆ Turn-around and turning areas are held to an absolute minimum and must be wide enough to allow safe maneuvering of the bus.
- ◆ Buses are routed along “through” roadways, as much as possible. Dead ends or cul-de-sacs are not traveled, unless no other safe alternative is available.
- ◆ Each bus undergoes a regular maintenance program that includes daily checks by bus operators, monthly safety inspections, and three state-required annual inspections.
- ◆ All bus operators must have a thorough background check and physical, less than two points on their driving record, and be highly trained.
- ◆ Every school bus has closely spaced, high-back padded seats that keep passengers within the seating compartment in the event of a collision. This is the safest system for children riding in buses and far safer than seat belts. Research shows that seat belts **are not** the best way to protect students in school buses. Studies have shown that lap belts can cause serious injuries to children, including pelvic injury and hyperextension of the neck and upper spinal cord. Restraints are provided for some preschoolers and students with disabilities.
- ◆ Buses may be equipped with both an audio and a visual recording device.

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The community

All motorists are required **by law** to stop when the red lights on buses are flashing. Passing a bus when the red lights are flashing is the biggest threat to student safety. Failure to stop for a school bus when the flashing red lights are operational can result in a traffic ticket and a fine of up to \$1,000.



In addition, motorists should be forewarned that the red flashing lights and the stop sign may be engaged shortly after the amber lights are on. All traffic should slow and prepare to stop when motorists see a school bus beginning to slow down and when students are present at the roadside.

In some neighborhoods, residents of houses near the bus stop permit students to stand in a carport or garage in bad weather. This is acceptable as long as the resident agrees to such an arrangement, it does not create an additional stop or delay, and substitute bus operators can easily locate the students.

School bus rules

At the bus stop, students are expected to:

- ◆ Arrive five minutes before the scheduled time
- ◆ Maintain an orderly line in preparation to board the bus promptly, without shoving or pushing
- ◆ Stay out of the roadway
- ◆ Be considerate of nearby yards, driveways, houses, buildings, and private property
- ◆ Move toward the bus only after it stops and the driver has signaled that it is safe

On the bus, students are expected to:

- ◆ Behave appropriately, just as if they were in a classroom
- ◆ Keep the aisle and emergency door clear of obstructions
- ◆ Keep their arms, feet, and head inside the bus at all times
- ◆ Be seated and make room for others to sit as well. Once ridership has been adjusted at the beginning of the school year, standing is not permitted.
- ◆ Sit in an assigned seat at the direction of the bus operator or attendant
- ◆ Discard trash in appropriate containers
- ◆ Report bullying or other inappropriate behavior to the bus operator or school administrator

On returning home, students are expected to:

- ◆ Walk 10 feet in front of the stopped bus, if they must cross the road, and cross only after the bus operator has indicated that it is safe
- ◆ Refrain from trying to direct traffic upon leaving the bus
- ◆ Go straight home, unless they have parent permission to go elsewhere



At all times, students may not:

- ◆ Bring animals, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, weapons, glass containers, or explosives on the bus
- ◆ Use vulgar language or gestures, fight, or engage in sexual harassment or other improper and/or illegal conduct
- ◆ Throw any papers or objects in the bus or out the windows
- ◆ Operate the emergency door without permission
- ◆ Smoke, drink, eat, or play radios or loud video games without headphones
- ◆ Damage or deface any part of the bus
- ◆ Ride a different bus than the one they have been assigned to, unless they have written permission from a parent and permission from the principal
- ◆ Transport large objects that cannot be held on a student's lap, such as some musical instruments, class projects, etc. Parents should make other arrangements to transport such items to and from school.



Consequences of misconduct

The bus operator notifies the principal of details pertaining to a disciplinary problem with a student on the school bus. A bus operator may return a student to the school, or call the police, if the student poses a serious threat to the safety and health of other riders.

Students who violate the behavior and safety rules may have bus-riding privileges denied temporarily or permanently by the school principal, in accordance with the following procedures:

- ◆ The principal will warn the student of the possibility of denial of bus-riding privileges.
- ◆ If the disciplinary problems continue, the principal will confer with the parent/guardian and student prior to the suspension of riding privileges or, depending on the severity and nature of the behavior problem, suspend riding privileges immediately. The principal will notify the parent/guardian in writing of complaints received and the suspension of the student's riding privileges.
- ◆ The student's riding privileges may be restored by the principal after a conference with the student and/or parent and consultation with the transportation supervisor. The principal will notify the bus operator in writing of the reinstatement of the student's riding privileges.
- ◆ In addition, students may be suspended from school as a result of misconduct on buses or receive lengthy bus-riding suspensions for serious infractions.

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What if the bus is late?

Buses follow a routine schedule and typically arrive at their stops within a few minutes of the schedule. Except for snowy or icy mornings, parents and students should wait at the bus stop for at least 20 minutes past the scheduled arrival time before calling the appropriate bus depot (see “For more information” section). On days of inclement weather, students and parents should expect some delays due to road and traffic conditions.

It is recommended that only one student or parent at a bus stop call the transportation office to determine the length of the delay. Students should not leave the bus stop unless advised by the transportation office that there will be no bus.

What about snow days?

During snowy or icy weather conditions, school officials may close school all day, delay opening by two hours, or close early. Parents should have contingency plans in place to take care of children on such days.

These decisions are announced on local radio and television stations, MCPS Cable TV Channel 34, and on the MCPS Web site at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org or on www.schools-out.com. A recorded announcement also may be heard by dialing 301-279-3673. Direct notifications can be received by registering your e-mail address on either Web site, above.

Delayed opening

If the opening of school is delayed, buses will pick up students at their normal stops two hours later than usual. Typically, such decisions are announced by 6 a.m. on that day. Morning kindergarten, prekindergarten (pre-K), Head Start, other early childhood programs, and field trips will be canceled, as well as other activities and programs that begin at 10:30 a.m. or earlier. Afternoon kindergarten, pre-K, and other programs are held as usual unless otherwise announced.

Because weather or road conditions may deteriorate further after a delay is announced, parents and students should continue to monitor media announcements for a possible change from a delay to a closure.

Early closing

When a snow storm or other weather-related emergency begins in the morning after students arrive at school, the school system may find it necessary to close schools early. This ensures that students will arrive home safely in a reasonable amount of time. Typically, schools are closed 2.5 hours early, and the announcement is made around 11 a.m. Afternoon kindergarten, pre-K, and Head Start classes will not be held on these days.

Typically, day care centers in elementary schools remain open until about 6 p.m.; however, parents should check with their center for its inclement weather policy. When schools close early, buses will drop students at the regular bus stops. Morning kindergarten students will stay at the school for lunch and ride home with upper-grade elementary students. Typically, kindergarten students will not

be dropped off at their usual midday stop locations. Instead, all students will be dropped at regularly scheduled afternoon stops. Head Start and pre-K students will be dismissed at 10:30 a.m. and taken to their regular drop-off locations.

Route numbers

Each bus displays a sign that shows the four-digit route number in side windows near the front of the bus. The first digit indicates the depot number of the bus, and the second digit indicates the high school cluster. The third and fourth digits refer to a specific bus route. For example, a route number of 1200 means that the bus is assigned to the Bethesda Depot (all 1000s) and the Churchill cluster (all 200s). A bus assigned to a special education or other cross-cluster route carries the depot number with an 8 or 9 as the second digit. See “For More Information,” below. To inquire or to report a concern, students and parents should refer to the route number of the bus in question.

For more information

Call the depot office responsible for transportation in your cluster, or see the Department of Transportation Web site: www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/transportation.

Bethesda Depot: 301-469-1140	
Bethesda-Chevy Chase	1100s
Churchill	1200s
Whitman	1300s
Walter Johnson	1400s
Special education	1800s and 1900s
Clarksburg Depot: 301-353-0955	
Damascus	2100s
Poolesville	2200s
Quince Orchard	2300s
Seneca Valley and Northwest	2400s
Special education	2800s and 2900s
Randolph Depot: 301-929-2260	
Einstein	3100s
Kennedy	3200s
Sherwood	3300s
Wheaton	3400s
Northwood	3500
Special education	3800s and 3900s

Shady Grove Depot North: 301-926-4179	
Gaithersburg	4100s
Magruder	4200s
Watkins Mill	4300s
Special education	4800s and 4900s
Shady Grove Depot South: 301-840-8150	
Richard Montgomery	5100s
Rockville	5200s
Wootton	5300s
Special education	5800s and 5900s
West Farm Depot: 301-879-1062	
Blair	6100s
Paint Branch	6200s
Springbrook	5300s
Blake	6400s
Special education	6800s and 6900s



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For more information, see the
Department of Transportation Web site:
[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/
departments/transportation](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/transportation)

This document is available in an alternate format, upon request, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, by contacting the Public Information Office, 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 112, Rockville, MD 20850, 301-279-3391 or 1-800-735-2258 (Maryland Relay).

Individuals who need sign language interpretation or cued speech transliteration in communicating with the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) may contact Interpreting Services in Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing at 301-517-5539 or 5582 (Voice/TTY).

The Montgomery County Public Schools prohibits illegal discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, or disability. Inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination or Title IX issues such as gender equity and sexual harassment should be directed to the MCPS Compliance Officer, Office of the Deputy Superintendent, 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 129, Rockville, MD 20850, at 301-279-3474.



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