



Driving on the Right Side of the Road Skateboarding Safety



JUST THE FACTS

- In 2009, there were approximately 74,841 injuries to children involving skateboards.¹
 - Of those 74,841 injuries, an estimated 3,054 were serious injuries.²
- 60% of skateboard injuries involve children under age 15; most of those injured are boys.
- At highest risk are:
 - **Inexperienced skateboarders.** Those who have been skating for less than one week suffer one-third of injuries, usually caused by falls.
 - **Skateboarders who do not wear protective equipment.** Every skateboarder should wear standard safety gear. This includes a helmet, wrist guards, elbow and knee pads, and appropriate shoes. Skateboarders who perform tricks should use heavy duty gear.
 - **Skateboarders who go near traffic or use homemade skateboard ramps.** Both activities are particularly dangerous.
 - **Experienced skateboarders who encounter unexpected surfaces or try risky stunts.** Irregular riding surfaces, rocks, or other debris can cause you to fall. You can stumble over twigs or fall down slopes. Wet pavements and rough or uneven surfaces can cause a wipeout. Avoid risky behavior. Don't skateboard too fast or in dangerous or crowded locations.
- Skateboarders who have been skating for less than a week suffer one-third of all skateboarding injuries; riders with a year or more of experience have the next highest number of injuries.³
- Injuries to first-time skateboarders are mainly due to falls.⁴
- Experienced riders mainly suffer injuries when they fall after their skateboards strike rocks and other irregularities in the riding surface or when they attempt difficult stunts.⁵
- Skateboarding is a special risk for young children⁶ because:
 - Children have a higher center of gravity, less development and poor balance. These factors make children more likely to fall and hurt their heads.
 - Children are less able to break their falls since they have slower reactions and less coordination than adults.
 - Children overestimate their skills and abilities and are inexperienced in judging speed, traffic, and other risks.
- Serious skateboarding injuries happen when you lose control and fall or run into a motor vehicle, road hazard, pedestrian, another skateboarder or bicyclist.⁷

Adapted from *Bicycling and Skating Safety Fact Sheet*⁸, *Skateboarding Safety*⁹, and *Skateboards Fact Sheet*¹⁰

IT'S THE LAW

- Eight states and the District of Columbia require children to wear a helmet while participating in other wheeled sports, such as riding on scooters, inline skates, or skateboards.¹¹
- Texas laws do not specifically address skateboarding. Laws that apply to pedestrians and bicycling may apply. A number of cities have specific ordinances that govern skateboarding. Check your city's website or <http://www.municode.com> for ordinances that apply to your town or city. Below are several examples of the types of local laws that have been adopted by cities across the state:
- Many cities have made it against the law to ride a skateboard on any public street except when crossing a street in a crosswalk. For instance, the City of San Marcos has the following ordinance:

- It is unlawful for a person upon roller skates, inline skates, a skateboard, or riding in or by means of any coaster, toy vehicle, or similar device to go upon any public street, except while crossing a street in a crosswalk.¹²
- Several other cities have nearly identical ordinances.¹³
- It is not uncommon for a city to ban skateboarding in a certain area of the city. For example:
 - San Marcos has made it unlawful to ride a skateboard within the central business area zoning district.¹⁴
 - Denton has made it unlawful to ride a skateboard within 500 feet of certain intersections as long as signs are posted.¹⁵
 - A Fort Worth ordinance bans skateboarding in designated parks and recreation areas where signs are posted indicating that skating is prohibited.¹⁶
 - Galveston does not allow people to ride a skateboard in the entertainment areas of the city unless the person has obtained approval from the city park board of trustees to do so.¹⁷ Galveston also does not allow skateboarding in a specific area “between and including 19th and 25th Streets and between and including Water and Church Streets.” Violating the ordinance is punishable by a fine of up to \$500.¹⁸
 - San Antonio prohibits riding a skateboard on walking and running tracks and trails in two city parks listed in an ordinance.¹⁹
- Cities are also likely to ban “skitching” or clinging to a vehicle on a roadway. An example is this San Antonio ordinance :
 - Any person riding upon any bicycle, motorcycle, coaster, roller skates, sled, or any toy vehicle shall not attach the same or himself to a moving vehicle upon any roadway.²⁰

KEEP IT SAFE

- Ride skateboards on smooth, dry surfaces located in a well-lit area.
- Never ride on the street, at night or on any surface that has water, sand, dirt, or gravel.
- Wear a helmet, wrist brace, and protective gear (slip resistant shoes, padding for hips, knees, elbows, and gloves).
- Never hold onto the side or rear of a moving vehicle while riding a skateboard ("skitching"). You could fall or be thrown into oncoming traffic if the vehicle suddenly slows, stops or turns.
- Avoid skateboarding in crowded walkways, in wet weather, or in darkness.
- Always screen the area before you skateboard, inspecting surfaces for rocks and other debris.
- Don't take chances:
 - Complicated tricks require careful practice and a specially designated area.
 - Only one person per skateboard.
 - Never hitch a ride from a car, truck, bus, bicycle, etc.
- Learning how to fall in case of a crash may help reduce your chances of being seriously injured.
- If you are losing your balance, crouch down on the skateboard so that you will not have so far to fall.
- In a fall, try to land on the fleshy parts of your body.
- In a fall, try to roll rather than absorb the force with your arms.
- Even though it may be difficult during a fall, try to relax your body, rather than stiffen it.

Adapted from *Skateboard Safety for Kids*,²¹ *Skateboarding Safety*,²² and *Skateboards Fact Sheet*²³

¹ Safe Kids USA, *Bicycling and Skating Safety Fact Sheet*, Retrieved on September 30, 2011, from <http://www.safekids.org/our-work/research/fact-sheets/> (hereinafter referred to as *Bicycling and Skating Safety Fact Sheet*).

² See *Bicycling and Skating Safety Fact Sheet* - endnote 1

³ Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Skateboards Fact Sheet*, Retrieved on September 30, 2011, from <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/093.pdf> (hereinafter referred to as *Skateboards Fact Sheet*).

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- ⁴ See *Skateboards Fact Sheet* - endnote 3
- ⁵ See *Skateboards Fact Sheet* - endnote 3
- ⁶ American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, *Skateboarding Safety*, Retrieved on September 30, 2011, from <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00273> (hereinafter referred to as *Skateboarding Safety*).
- ⁷ See *Skateboarding Safety* - endnote 5
- ⁸ See *Bicycling and Skating Safety Fact Sheet* - endnote 1
- ⁹ See *Skateboarding Safety* - endnote 5
- ¹⁰ See *Skateboards Fact Sheet* - endnote 3
- ¹¹ See *Bicycling and Skating Safety Fact Sheet* - endnote 1
- ¹² San Marcos Code Ordin. (Tex.) §82.004 (1998).
- ¹³ See Denton Code Ordin. (Tex.) §18-11; Fort Worth Code Ordin. (Tex.) §22-16; Galveston Code Ordin. (Tex.) §34-2; San Antonio Code Ordin. (Tex.) §38-21; Waco Code Ordin. (Tex.) §25-9.
- ¹⁴ San Marcos Code Ordin. (Tex.) §82.269 (1998).
- ¹⁵ Denton Code Ordin. (Tex.) §8-13.
- ¹⁶ Fort Worth Code Ordin. (Tex.) §24-18.
- ¹⁷ Galveston Code Ordin. (Tex.) §20.5-18.
- ¹⁸ Galveston Code Ordin. (Tex.) §24-18 (1999).
- ¹⁹ San Antonio Code Ordin. (Tex.) §22-26 (1998).
- ²⁰ San Antonio Code Ordin. (Tex.) §19-285; *see also* Fort Worth Code Ordin. §22-14.
- ²¹ [Livestrong.com, Skateboard Safety for Kids](http://www.livestrong.com/article/179199-skateboard-safety-for-kids/#ixzz1Zgq8605f), Retrieved on September 30, 2011, from <http://www.livestrong.com/article/179199-skateboard-safety-for-kids/#ixzz1Zgq8605f>.
- ²² See *Skateboarding Safety* - endnote 5
- ²³ See *Skateboards Fact Sheet* - endnote 3