

Safe road use: the role of pedestrian and passenger

[Transportation](#), [Road](#)



Globally, over 270, 000 pedestrians die on the roads daily. According to World Health Organization (WHO), pedestrian deaths amount to 22% of road deaths. The Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), has declared pedestrians as the most “ at-risk” road users. There is a threat of injury and death with pedestrians.

Nigerian roads are very busy. Most times, road users have to contend with themselves to obtain their right of way, often with reckless abandon, putting their lives and the safety of other road users in jeopardy. Alarming number of Nigerians across all ages, lose their lives on the road daily. Pedestrian accidents have become so common and usual, that the horrible sight no longer arouse goose bumps in bystanders.

Safe road use and the safety of pedestrians is everyone’s responsibility, because we are all pedestrians at some points during our activities on the road. Every road user ought to show understanding and respect for other road users. Motorists should watch for pedestrians and pedestrians should take caution while they are on and of the roadways.

Pedestrians and passengers need to play their role in ensuring a safe road. Pedestrian death and serious injuries are not unavoidable.

Who Are Pedestrians and Passengers?

A Pedestrian is someone who is travelling on foot for at least part of his journey on roads also used by vehicles. People with walking aids like wheelchair, skateboard, roller-blades and motorized scooters are also considered as pedestrians.

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A Passenger is someone who is travelling on the road in a vehicle is not the one driving the vehicle.

A passenger also constitutes the pedestrian-group because he would have to walk to get a vehicle and after dismounting from the vehicle.

People will make errors while on the road, which results to road accidents that lead to injuries and death. Unsafe pedestrian behavior has been a major cause in pedestrian injuries and death all over the world.

Pedestrian make-up 1/5th of road users and is the 2nd highest victim of road accidents, while car occupants (passengers inclusive) is 1st on the list. Many more are injured in pedestrian accidents, some of which lead to permanent disability. In 2010, Africa region recorded the highest pedestrian death of 38%, compared to other regions of the world.

Below are represented statistics of road deaths in the world and in Africa, computed by WHO in the year 2010.

Thus for safe road use, pedestrians and passengers have the following roles to play:

- Walk Safe
- Cross Safe
- Safe Road Use as a Passenger
- Safe Use of Pedestrian-Safety Infrastructure

Walk safe

While walking on the road, Pedestrians should:

1. Be aware that some drivers may be visually impaired or distracted while driving, so walk cautiously and consciously. Ensure nothing is blocking your view from vehicles movement. Always be prepared for the unexpected.
2. Walk on sidewalks. It is advised to walk on sidewalks while facing oncoming traffic close to you; so you can see vehicle movements' closely and be alert to possible dangers. If there is no sidewalk or pavement for pedestrians on the road, walk very cautiously on the edge of the road, away from traffic, as possible as you can.

If you are walking in a group, on a narrow road, walk in a single file to give way to motorists.

3. Do not walk on major roads and other roads where pedestrians are prohibited.
4. Stay Alert, Stay Alive! Avoid distracted walking. Wearing headphones, listening to music, playing with your mobile gadgets, texting and walking, or talking and walking is much dangerous as doing any of these things while driving.
5. Avoid taking alcohol or drugs as it might affect your senses in walking safe.
6. While walking with a child, walk in between the child and the traffic to protect him and hold his hand firmly. Also, since children learn from what they see, while on the road with them, you should always follow the traffic rules, to help them understand and be a safe road user.

7. Be very alert when walking by a parking lot. It can be more dangerous than a street, as drivers may not expect you to be there.
8. Be on the look-out for vehicles that are turning or taking a reverse.
9. Make yourself visible to other road users. Walk on sidewalks so you can be clearly seen and see clearly too.
10. When walking at night or on the dark, wear bright clothes or reflective clothing like arm bands, sashes, jackets to make drivers aware of your presence from a distance; also hold a torch.

Reflective clothing enhances pedestrian visibility in the dark. Always be aware that if you don't walk safe, you put your life and that of other road users at a great risk.

Cross safe

Research has shown that most pedestrian accidents happen while crossing the road, than while walking or standing on the road. Thus, more caution should be applied to cross safe.

1. Before you cross a road, Stop, Listen and Look.

Sometimes, you hear the sound of oncoming vehicles at a distance, before you actually see it. Look left, look right and left again.

Do not cross the road until the road is clear or when there is a long gap in traffic-flow safe enough for you to cross.

2. Never assume that an oncoming vehicle will stop for you once you step into the road; because most drivers feel they own the roads and owe

no pedestrian any pity, or that an oncoming motorist is aware of your intentions.

3. While crossing, do not run, so you don't stumble and fall. Instead, walk across fast.

Do not jaywalk. Do not cross a street anywhere apart from marked pedestrian crosswalks like pedestrian bridges, zebra crossing, subways, and tunnels, where available.

A zebra crossing to allow for safe Pedestrian crossing.

4. Before using a crosswalk, pedestrians should look and ensure it is safe to cross, though they have a right of way; but must give way to vehicles at all other points on the road.

Look for a safe place to cross.

5. Cross streets at a corner where you can clearly see both ways and be seen too.

While crossing a one-way street, make sure you know the direction traffic is moving before stepping onto the road.

6. Use all of your senses while crossing, especially your eyes and ears, as they are very important to keep you safe.
7. Be very cautious when crossing drive-in lanes and car-parks. Drivers may not be skilled enough to avoid you whilst struggling to maneuver pulling-in or reversing-out.

Also be watchful for parked vehicles.

8. Do not cross behind or in front of a parked vehicle with its engine running, it can move anytime; and the driver might not see you.

Also, do not cross in front of or between parked vehicles, as other drivers might not see you.

9. As much as possible, try to have eye contact with the driver of the oncoming vehicle, when crossing busy streets; or wave or hold your hand up to make sure the driver sees you and allow you to cross.
10. Watch and obey the pedestrian signal, they are there to aid you to cross safe.
11. Avoid crossing at road bends, because you won't be able to see oncoming vehicles well and on-coming motorists might not get to see you.
12. When crossing busy intersections, it is safer to use pedestrian bridges instead of crosswalks.
13. Where foot-bridges or underpasses, carefully cross to the first island at the intersection (towards the direction you are heading), wait until the next part of the road gets clear, till you complete your crossing safely.

Safe road use as passengers

Like pedestrians, passengers are at more risk to road fatalities than drivers, and so have to take due caution for their safety on the roads.

To ensure this, the passengers should:

1. Set out early to avoid rushing and having to run to catch the bus. Do not rush into the vehicle to avoid pushing other passengers or hurting yourself.
2. Do not enter or dismount any vehicle at unapproved points, but at official bus stop; or at a traffic point.
3. Board a vehicle only after it has come to a stop, because if the vehicle moves while one is half-way into the bus, he might lose his life or sustain serious injuries.

Same applies when alighting from a vehicle.

4. Do not get onto or hold on to moving vehicles.
5. Adhere to the vehicle's safety rules. Use seat belts and apply other safety measures available in the vehicle. Do not sit or stand on unsafe places on the bus, like the footboard of the vehicle.

If you are standing in a moving vehicle, ensure you hold on to the railing for support, especially while approaching sharp bends.

6. Do not stick out any part of your body or objects out of the bus, as oncoming vehicles may not see you to avoid casualties.
7. Insist that the driver stops for you to dismount at safe points. Look out for other vehicles before stepping out of the vehicle; and wait for the vehicle to move off, so you can see the road clearly in both direction to enable you cross safely.
8. Do not refrain from cautioning or bringing the driver to order whenever he violates any safety rule, because your safety is at risk as well. If

adamant, report him to the nearest traffic point or officer you come across on the road, or better still, alight from the vehicle.

Safe use of pedestrian safety infrastructure

Being a pedestrian implies walking on the road also used by cars. Walking is very beneficial to human health; and as a means of transportation, does not pollute the environment, and thus should be encouraged. This concern has led to the design and provision of several pedestrian safety infrastructures, like side-walks, foot-bridges (also known as pedestrian bridges), crosswalks (like Zebra-crossing, pedestrian scramble), underpasses and more.

However, pedestrians have the responsibility to use them to ensure their safety. Below are some ways to do this:

1. Side-Walks are solid surface for pedestrians to walk on while on the road, to keep them away from traffic. Most times, they are elevated from the major road to partition pedestrian's path from that of motorists. It is advised to walk on sidewalks where you can face oncoming traffic close to you.
2. Zebra Crossing are pedestrian crossing that has alternating black and white stripes, like the coat of a Zebra, which runs across from a side of the road to the other. It is a means to help pedestrians cross safely. There are especially useful for children, disabled, old and frail people.

A Zebra crossing point demands that motorists stop whenever a pedestrian steps onto it. However, before stepping onto the crosswalk, pedestrians should look well and make sure they are seen by motorists.

Do not move into the path of moving vehicles unexpectedly so as not to create a death-trap; neither should you walk slowly nor stand idly on any crossing.

Do not cross outside the Zebra markings.

3. Foot-Bridges are crossings that allow pedestrians to cross the road from one point to another, without getting into the way of moving vehicles. They are mostly over busy intersections, and are accessible to pedestrians through the use of stairs.

When on a pedestrian bridge, hold onto the railings for support. Do not throw things down the road. Do not loiter or litter the pedestrian bridges.

Conclusion

The pedestrian-road-user-group is the second largest group of road fatalities. These pedestrian crashes mostly occur as a results of human errors, especially on the part of the pedestrians; most victims were not using the pedestrian crossing or sidewalks at the time of the accident, weren't paying due attention while using the road, or ignored road traffic rules and road safety measures.

From estimated data, Nigeria has an alarming rate of road fatalities; an average of 15 pedestrians die daily, many are injured, while many others are disabled for life.

This essay has shown that safe road use is responsibility of every road user and stated the role of pedestrians and passengers in safe road use. Our

roads can be made safer by reducing the possibilities of road users' errors. Hence the importance for pedestrians and passengers, who are most-at-risk, to know how-to and use the road safely.

Suggestions made in this essay, if applied would show that pedestrian accidents can be inevitable; contribute a great decrease in pedestrian accidents; improve safe road use by pedestrians and passengers; and aiding them to contribute their quota to the United Nation's " Decade of Action for Road Safety" from the year 2011-2020.