

WOW GUIDE



What is a WOW day?

WOW stands for Walk on Wednesdays/Weekdays and is an initiative that encourages students, parents and teachers to walk to school that day, and ideally on a weekly basis thereafter. WOW raises the profile of walking in a fun and enjoyable way and can achieve many positive outcomes, including less traffic around school, improved road safety, reduced air pollution and improvements to students physical and mental health.

This guide gives tips on how to have a successful WOW launch and achieve high levels of participation.

First Steps:

Choose your day. Is there a day that would work best for your school or any obvious days to avoid when students might have extra to carry, e.g. GAA gear.

Name your day. Some schools stick with WOW while others personalise the name, e.g. Fit and Fun Friday, Marching Monday, or Trekking Tuesday. You could run a naming competition amongst students, and this helps generate awareness plus ownership over the initiative.

Inform the whole school community!

- **Notify teachers at a staff meeting:** Teachers are integral to the success of the initiative as they can encourage students and help with WOW competitions, so they need to know about what's happening and be on board.
- **Notify students:** The Green-Schools Committee can play a big part in raising awareness of the initiative amongst their peers. Noticeboard displays, presenting on assembly and classroom visits are great ways to spread the word. Once students are engaged, they can unleash the powerful skill of 'pester power' upon their parents which is very effective way to get high levels of participation.
- **Notify parents:** Use notes home, newsletters, Aladdin and social media to publicise the event. Don't forget to tag @greenschools_travel. You may ask for any interested volunteers to support the initiative.

Park & Stride:

Not every student will be able to walk to school, but they might be able to **Park & Stride**.

Park & Stride is where you drive some of the way and walk the rest. Consider if there are any suitable locations near your school with adequate parking and good pedestrian routes. If yes, promote the Park & Stride location widely. Including details like the walking times and a simple route map can encourage people to take part.

Walking Bus:

Supportive measures such as a **Walking Bus** could be introduced. This is a term given to a group of children who walk to and from school, supervised by volunteers. Walking Buses follow a set route with agreed pick up and drop off points and can encompass a Park & Stride location. For more details, refer to our comprehensive [Walking Bus Pack](#).

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The Power of Competition

Competitions are a fun and effective way to raise awareness and achieve engagement. Some examples include:

- **A poster or slogan competition:** this could be held on the lead up to the WOW launch and displayed around the school.
- **Scores on the Doors:** this competition tracks how many students in each class walk/Park & Stride (sustainably) travel to school that day. A [record sheet](#) is displayed on the classroom door for all to see and the best performing class is celebrated each week.
- **The Golden Boot** trophy is awarded to the class with the highest number of sustainable travellers' and can be linked to Scores on the Doors.
- **Incentives** are an effective way to reward sustainable travel. The parent's association, board of management or local businesses could be approached to sponsor these. Local supermarkets could be asked to supply a healthy breakfast to walkers on the WOW launch day or raffle tickets could be given to participants to be entered into a prize draw.

Be Visible and Launch Big!

- **Make it Visual!** Make a banner or signs that students can walk with on their way to school (or arrange to use the 'We are Walking to School Today' banner available from An Taisce)
- **Make it Fun!** Theme your day! This will add an extra element of excitement and draw attention to the initiative. Some ideas include:
 - Walk in your Jersey,
 - Walk in bright colours (links with 'Be Safe and Be Seen' awareness campaign),
 - Bling your shoes! This could be run as a competition, or
 - Align with seasonal events like Easter, Halloween and Christmas.
- Send out a **press release** to local media in advance of the proposed launch date.
- **Get Support!** Contact your An Taisce Education Officer, local Gardaí, Road Safety Officer, etc. for assistance on the day of the launch.
- **Issue WOW stickers** to students that walked/park & strode.
- Hold a **travel assembly** on arrival with guest speakers (community garda/travel officer).

Involve your Green-Schools Committee

There are lots of opportunities for the Green-Schools Committee to be involved in the WOW day launch and its ongoing promotion.

An important task is for them to collect a [WOW Day Survey](#) on the day to measure the success of your initiative.