



## Arrival and Dismissal Observation Field Exercise Guide

The purpose of this field exercise is to provide information to your SRTS team about the arrival or dismissal process in action at your school during a normal school day. This is one of the best ways to understand walking and bicycling safety issues at a particular school. When doing this field exercise, you will observe the behaviors of all modes and travelers -- students, adults, bus drivers, family vehicle drivers, and others who are passing through the school zone.

This Guide will help you plan your observation and note your findings during the exercise. It includes 3 steps:

1. Prepare
2. Observe and Record
3. Acting on What You Observe

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### PREPARE: Before the Field Exercise

1. **Get a copy (if available) of the written arrival and dismissal procedures.** If none are available, talk with the principal or another staff person who is knowledgeable and involved in the process.
2. **Determine who will do the observation.** Consider inviting the principal, other school administrators, teachers, and parents, as well as members of the PTA to join you. You should aim for at least two people at each location where you'll be observing arrival or dismissal. It can be helpful to have another set of eyes and ears.
3. **Notify the school.**
  - a. Notify the principal that you are planning to conduct a field observation exercise. Make sure the principal is both aware and permissive of you being on campus and taking photos.
  - b. If anyone is on-duty helping with arrival/dismissal, make sure they know who you are and what you are doing. If you are not an employee of the school, make sure you sign-in at the school's main office a few minutes before your observation will begin.
  - c. Consider asking the principal or other school staff where you should position yourself (and others) to learn the most about the process if you are not sure. If possible, find out what the official process is intended to be for arrival/dismissal.
4. **Pick the right spot(s) to observe.**
  - a. Select the locations to observe where students will be entering or exiting the building, as well as the places where people enter and exit the school property. If there are multiple access points to the campus and the building, recruit a small team to help you expand your coverage. It may also make sense to move around during the arrival/dismissal process.



- b. Are there locations on campus where you know there might be conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles? (Potential conflict areas are those places where the paths of two modes cross each other's path.) What is your plan for observing how modes interact with one another at that location?
  - c. If there are bike racks at your school, position one group of observers so that they can see the racks.
- 5. Bring the right equipment**
- a. Camera
  - b. Pens, clipboard, safety/reflective vest
  - c. This tipsheet and accompanying Worksheet for recording comments
  - d. Map of the school campus: this is optional, but it can help you record behaviors that you see in a more pin-pointed way

## OBSERVE AND RECORD

**Observation Notes:** Use the worksheet at the end of this Guide during the observation. Make sure there is a copy for each observer. It may be helpful to review the form as a group first to make sure that everyone is comfortable with filling out each field. Remember to take pictures during the exercise. This will help you just as much as your written notes.

## ACTING ON WHAT YOU OBSERVE

1. Debrief with each other to compare notes and identify common issues.
  - a. Where do your observations match?
  - b. Where does it seem as though people disagree?
  - c. What parts of the arrival/dismissal process were observed by parents, students, staff, etc.?
  - d. What parts of the arrival/dismissal process were ignored by parents, students, staff, etc.?
  - e. What surprised you during the observation?
  - f. What surprised you during the debrief session?





2. Organize the thoughts of the team and jot down a quick list or outline of the challenges, issues, and barriers.  
Use the photos and notes to tell the story of your observation. Write out the process that you took and the behavior/conditions you observed and write it out in a few pages (no more than 3).
  - a. Think about:
    - i. What worked and should be kept as part of the process?
    - ii. What didn't work and should be addressed with possible changes?
    - iii. Are there other people who need to be involved (PTA, parents, law enforcement, etc.)
    - iv. Use the report as a starting point for identifying possible solutions.
3. Share your findings with the school principal, PTA, local transportation or public works staff, school division facilities staff, etc.



Observations on the Process	
<b>Date:</b> <b>Time:</b> <b>Location:</b>	<b>What process did you observe?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> arrival <input type="checkbox"/> dismissal
<b>Briefly describe the process that you observed:</b>           	
<b>Are all students released at once?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>If no, describe how students are dismissed. What is the order and what is the rationale?</i>	<b>Where do students enter/ exit the school campus and the school building and how is each entrance used?</b> (by grade, by mode of travel, etc.)
<b>Approximately how many students did you observe using each mode of travel?</b>  Walking _____  Biking _____  <b>Where do students park their bikes?</b>	<b>Approximately how many vehicles did you observe on campus?</b>  Family vehicles _____  How many buses? _____
<b>Where do parents pick up and drop off their children?</b> Is this activity separated from walking/bicycling? Does the queue of cars back up into the street?          	



On-campus behavior	
<p><b>Do motorists yield to pedestrians?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Notes:</b></p>	<p><b>Do motorists observe rules of the road?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Do they observe parking restrictions?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Notes:</b></p>
<p><b>Are students walking where it is safe?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Are students walking in a way that is safe and alert?</b> i.e. not horsing around or running between cars?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Notes:</b></p>	<p><b>Are students crossing where they are supposed to?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Are they crossing in a way that's safe?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Notes:</b></p>
<p><b>Are bicyclists observing rules of the road?</b></p> <p><b>Are bicyclists wearing helmets?</b>                      Yes (count) _____                      No (count) _____</p> <p><b>Notes:</b></p>	<p><b>Are students behaving safely around buses?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Are bus drivers aware of students walking on campus?</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes    <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Notes:</b></p>
<p><b>How are students matched with family vehicles?</b></p>	<p><b>Did you observe any unsafe behaviors among students in family vehicles/parents/drivers?</b></p>



Safety Issues and Concerns	
<p>Do students and/or parents use their own arrival or dismissal rules that create a safety concern?</p>	<p>Did you observe any desire lines or goat trails that indicate where pedestrians have created their own pathways? Did you see anyone using them?</p>
<p>Are there any visible obstructions that make it difficult for drivers to see pedestrians/bicyclists or vice versa?</p>	
<p>Additional Notes:</p>	

Learn it. Do it. Live it!

