

# Magic Carpet Ride

## Rules For Schools

*A Motorcoach Safety Manual For School Teachers, Administrators and Chaperones*



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## Introduction:

Today's motorcoach is one of America's safest means of travel. It's also one of the most comfortable and affordable ways to move any travel group, making it the transportation mode of choice for thousands of public and private, elementary, middle and high schools and hundreds of colleges and universities who travel millions of miles each year on after school and extracurricular trips. Safe student motorcoach travel, however, isn't automatic. Travel planners, school administrators, students, parents and everyone associated with "student activity" transportation must exercise a strong concern for "safety first," good judgment and some basic advance research before selecting a motorcoach company to perform the trip. Safe student travel by motorcoach is the product of a partnership. It starts with a motorcoach company that's dedicated to preparing the vehicle and the driver for incident-free transportation.

After that, it's up to the travel planners, school administrators, chaperons and the students themselves to ensure that the trip is as safe and pleasant as it can be. The safety partnership starts with good planning and should extend well into and throughout the student motorcoach travel. In most cases, the combined skills of the driver and the travel chaperons will ensure pleasant and safe travel. For this, the driver must be dedicated to operating his vehicle with his attention clearly focused on highway safety while the events and activities in the coach behind him are clearly in the control of chaperons and travel supervisors.

## Testimonials

### **Connie**

*Just a few words to say how much I enjoyed my trip, it was wonderful. The driver was so considerate, polite, and did a great job when we hit a thunderstorm on the way back. The bus was so clean and a pleasure to be on. I am recommending it to my friends.*

### **Nancy - Magnet School**

*We really appreciated our driver. He was very professional and alert.*

### **Judith - Group Leader**

*I would like to tell you how much we enjoyed having your two drivers, Alan and Dawn, on our trip to Miami/Key West. We felt very safe because they are very careful drivers. Everyone on both buses told me that they enjoyed the ride because they too felt safe. Always on time and friendly, I will ask for them again for other trips. Thank you for having such wonderful drivers.*



## Planning The Trip:

Group planners and chaperons should have -- before departure -- a very clear policy and plan of action to deal with disciplinary problems whenever and wherever they occur during the trip. If a student must be returned home early, the responsibility for that return is not with the driver or the motorcoach company; nor is it the responsibility to notify school administrators, parents or guardians when a problem occurs.

Each motorcoach travel group must identify the person in charge of that group to serve as the primary liaison to the driver during the course of travel. In addition, if multiple vehicles are being used, a chaperon on board each individual coach should be designated as the leader aboard that vehicle. If a driver has problems with any group participant, they should be resolved through the designated group or motorcoach leader.

Unlike airline pilots who enjoy a separation of passenger compartment and cockpit to help them keep full attention on the controls, motorcoach drivers are subject to distractions from the passengers themselves, ranging from fights and parties, to well-meaning conversation from over their shoulders. Chaperons and drivers must cooperate to ensure that the distractions don't overpower the safety focus of the travel.

### Trip Tips

#### Before Your Trip:

- Select casual and comfortable attire and walking shoes for daytime travel unless the itinerary suggests otherwise.
- Since it is difficult to keep the temperature in a motorcoach at a level comfortable for everyone, a light jacket is suggested.
- Pack a small bag with emergency essentials such as medications. Never pack medications in "checked" baggage.
- If your trip involves crossing the US border, be sure to carry your birth certificate (with raised seal), or a valid passport as proof of citizenship
- Advise your friends and family of your itinerary. Take a list of phone numbers from home that you may need to contact in case of an emergency.
- Do not place valuables, including jewelry, cameras, car keys, medicines, etc., in any suitcase or bag that will not be kept with you at your seat. Do not leave valuables on the bus for any length of time, including rest stops, venues or attractions.



## During The Trip:

The motorcoach company and driver have a single, most- important, responsibility to student travelers: to deliver the vehicle and passengers safely to their destination. That responsibility places them, practically and legally, in the role of “captain of the ship” during travel. They are not babysitters, school disciplinarians, police, chaperons or parents.

Drivers will do everything in their power to help with unexpected difficulties during student travel. They understand that individual needs must be met, that there are often stragglers, and that sometimes, “kids will be kids.” But it’s unfair to expect the driver to deal with the group’s problems and be able to maintain their concentration on the road and safety. That’s where school administrators first, then travel chaperons, must bear the direct responsibility for group behavior. Chaperons must clearly be in control of the group. They should be plentiful enough to maintain order and control. And they should position themselves throughout the coach so that they can keep an eye on the entire group. Carrying four chaperons, all of whom sit in the front of the coach where activities behind them are not visible, is an invitation for trouble. Anyone who has traveled with a family understands how distracting to the driver it can be to watch a disturbance in the rear-view mirror. Under most state laws, the driver is empowered to deal with unlawful events that may occur aboard his coach (drinking, gambling, throwing items from windows, rowdiness). Drivers, just like airline pilots, are generally instructed to discontinue travel until they are satisfied that passengers are under control and are following the rules.

It is the responsibility of parents and chaperons during student motorcoach travel to care for and control the students. Parents, chaperons, or students should not play the role of “back seat driver,” armchair mechanic, traffic cop or critic. Certainly if a chaperon believes that there is something wrong with the vehicle or the driver, or if there is danger of which the driver may not be aware, it should be brought to the driver’s attention. These instances, however, are extremely rare.

## Trip Tips

### During Your Trip:

- Listen carefully to all driver’s and/or tour guide’s instructions. They may contain information that could be important to enjoying your trip. Write or jot down any information given to you by the driver about where and when you are going to be picked up.
- Never enter an area about which you are unsure, or where there are no other travelers around. When applicable, ask for information from reliable sources such as policemen, shopkeepers, hotel and restaurant personnel, or others who work with the public.
- Introduce yourself and your traveling companion (s) to others on the bus. Coach travel is an excellent way to make new friends.

If a chaperon believes that the driver or vehicle presents an imminent hazard to safety, it is, of course, incumbent on the chaperon to act to discontinue travel until he or she is confident that travel may proceed without incident. In the true spirit of a safety partnership, chaperons, group leaders and drivers should resolve disagreements in a fashion that fosters safety and harmony. There must be open, free communication and cooperation between both parties.

### **Federal Rules:**

- Federal law specifically prohibits the storage of items in the aisle of motorcoaches since the aisle is a primary path of escape in the case of an accident.
- Federal law specifically prohibits smoking anywhere on the bus at any time.

### **Rules For Schools:**

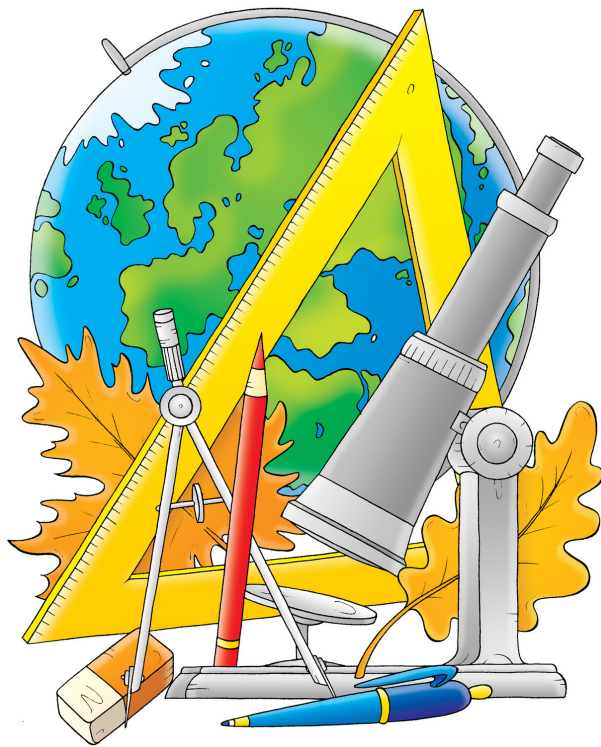
**In order to make extracurricular activity trips as safe and pleasant as possible, the following guidelines are to be observed by school groups when using a commercial motorcoach or bus:**

- The driver, based on legal requirements and company policy, will make all decisions pertaining to the operation of the motorcoach.
- The driver will determine where the bus may be safely stopped during emergencies on the road and where it may be parked at other times.
- Student behavior on the bus is the responsibility of the chaperons. Safety concerns require all passengers be seated while the bus is in motion. It is the responsibility of the chaperons to see that this rule is enforced. If the chaperons cannot enforce this rule, the driver may park the bus and remain parked until all passengers are seated. If there is a need to walk through the aisles, the person should ensure that they have a good, secure grip on seat backs and designated hand grips at all times to prevent loss of balance or to prevent injury in the event of a sudden stop.
- Commercial bus drivers are strictly regulated as to driving hours in order to comply with the legal requirements for safety. This requires close cooperation between the commercial bus company and the activity group to insure compliance.
- Passengers are not permitted beyond the white line marked in the floor of the coach behind the driver.





- Unless granted by the motorcoach company in advance, bringing food and drinks inside the bus is not permitted. Passengers are, however, allowed to bring bottled water onto the bus. If food and drinks are allowed inside the bus it is a privilege granted by the motorcoach company and may be rescinded at the discretion of the driver. When food and drink are allowed a cleaning deposit will be assessed. Should the driver determine that this privilege is being abused, all food and drink will be placed in the baggage area and passengers will have access during stops as needed. Chaperons are responsible for seeing that students put trash in containers provided by the driver and/or the group leader, and if necessary, pick up food, drink, and trash left by the students. Charges for clean-up and/or damage will be assessed if necessary.
- Backpacks are not permitted on the bus. They can be stored under the bus for retrieval on exiting the bus.



## Trip Tips

### After Your Trip:

- Thoroughly check your seat and overhead compartment on the coach for all personal belongings. We are not responsible for any articles left on the coach.
- Look carefully at the luggage to have upon return to make sure it belongs to you. Many suitcases look alike and can easily be confused.

### Other Considerations:

Passengers are asked to take care when operating the window shades and to not allow them to “snap up”. Unless deemed necessary due to an emergency, passengers shall not open the windows. The toilet is provided as a convenience for compelling use. It has limited functionality and is not intended to be used as one would use conventional facilities. Hence, passengers are encouraged to make use of accommodations prior to the trip or at rest stops long the way.

*Thank you for your cooperation! We look forward to getting your students to their destinations safely ~ **Magic Carpet Ride Motorcoach***