

# KNOW THE RULES®...

## When Your Child Is Traveling Unaccompanied by **BUS** or **TRAIN**



**A**ppropriate planning with bus or train lines and your child is the best way to guard against any potential unpleasant travel experiences and help ensure your child's safe journey from start to finish. To assist you in this process, it helps to know there are some consistencies among transportation providers. For instance Greyhound® and Amtrak®, the nation's primary bus company and passenger railroad respectively, do not allow children who are younger than the age of 8 to travel unaccompanied. Children younger than 8 years of age must travel accompanied by a passenger who is at least 15 years old. Children who are 15 and older may travel unaccompanied on Greyhound buses without restrictions. Amtrak requires children aged 15 and older to present a valid photo-identification card to the ticket agent or conductor in order to purchase tickets. For both carriers, children between the ages of 8 and 14 may travel unaccompanied per the conditions noted below.<sup>1</sup> Amtrak and Greyhound may deny your request to have your child travel unaccompanied if these conditions are not met.

- Children may not transfer between buses, between trains, from a bus to a train, or from a train to a bus.
- Amtrak requires the railroad stations at which your child begins and ends a trip be staffed at the time of departure and arrival. The bus departure and arrival terminals must be full-service agencies or company-operated facilities.
- Greyhound requires scheduling trips during daylight hours and the trips may not be more than 5 hours in duration.
- Amtrak requires scheduling the departure time no earlier than 6:00 A.M. and the arrival time no later than 9:00 P.M.
- Amtrak officials will interview your child to determine whether your child is capable of traveling unaccompanied. The accompanying adult and your child must arrive at the boarding station one hour prior to departure to allow time for the required interview, and the accompanying adult must remain at the station until the train has departed.
- Amtrak requires the child wear an Amtrak-issued wristband for the duration of the trip.
- Permission from Amtrak or Greyhound must be obtained in writing before your child is permitted to travel alone. Greyhound requires a parent, guardian, or legal custodian take the child to the bus terminal prior to departure to complete an "Unaccompanied Child Form." The completed form must be presented to Greyhound's Customer Service Supervisor on duty at the station. Amtrak requires the adult accompanying the child to the departure station present a valid and current government-issued identification card and sign a release form. The name, address, and telephone number of the trusted adult(s) meeting your child at the destination must be given. A trusted adult is a person parents/guardians have come to rely on and with whom they and their children feel comfortable. You, or a trusted adult designated by you, must meet your child at the arrival terminal. When the trusted adult arrives to pick up your child from the destination station, the adult(s) listed on the form must present a valid photo-identification card, such as a driver's license or other government-issued identification card, before your child will be released. Greyhound indicates if the individual does not present a valid identification card, the child will be released into the custody of Child Protective Services or local law-enforcement officials in the destination city.
- Amtrak and Greyhound do not allow you to purchase tickets for your unaccompanied child online.
- Fares, at a full adult rate, must be paid in most cases for passengers 8 and older when traveling by bus or train.

**The general rules noted below will help make the travel experience for your child safer and more enjoyable.**

1. Specify your child will be traveling alone when making reservations or purchasing the travel ticket. Make certain you are clear about the specific requirements for children traveling alone, ask for a written copy of the policies and procedures, and review them with your child.
2. Consider having your child take convenient beverages and foods to last for the duration of the trip per limited food options when traveling. Children with life-threatening food allergies are not permitted to travel unaccompanied by train.
3. Try to secure a seat near the front of the bus or train car where your child may be more comfortable, have a better view, and have easier access to transit personnel if needing assistance. Be sure the driver or conductor knows your child will be traveling unaccompanied. While in most cases you will not be able to reserve specific seats on either the bus or train it is important to help your child choose a comfortable seat that reduces the need for moving around during the trip. Talk with your child about the importance of staying securely on the bus during any rest stops.
4. Try to visit the bus terminal or train station prior to your child's trip. As with any new experience, "practice makes perfect." Take a tour of the area, introduce your child to some of the people working for the bus or train line, and explain the basics of the travel experience. Let your child know the types of things to expect. Instruct your child to follow general safety rules such as moving cautiously up and down the aisles while onboard for his or her safety. Advise your child that the bus or train personnel are the "helping adults" to look for when needing assistance; needing answers to questions; or feeling sad, scared, or confused by anything or anyone.
5. Arrive at the terminal or station on the day of travel at or before the required time prior to the departure of the bus or train. Remain at the terminal or station until the bus or train leaves. Should a delay occur, your child will be much more comfortable in the waiting area with you than sitting aboard the bus or train. If the trip is canceled or redirected, you want to be there to make alternative arrangements.
6. Make certain you have an alternate plan for the person(s) meeting the bus or train at the destination, in case they are delayed. Make certain your child knows and is familiar with the person meeting him or her. Tell your child to leave with only the person you have designated, never anyone else. Amtrak and Greyhound officials will not allow your child to leave with an individual other than the adult specified in the form completed prior to departure.
7. Dress your child comfortably in layered clothing to better allow for adjustments to various temperatures. A change of clothing is a good idea as well. Your child must have sufficient money for incidental expenses. When you give your child spending money be sure to include coins.
8. Make sure your child travels lightly with a carry-on piece of luggage, possibly on wheels, or backpack that holds clothes and other essentials such as identification and medications. Your child's photo identification and medications should be put in an envelope for safekeeping inside the carry-on luggage or backpack. It's a good idea to pack wipes and hand sanitizer for your child since onboard restroom facilities may not be adequate. Your child may wish to take reading materials. Since baggage handlers aren't always available, your child should take only what he or she is able to easily keep track of, lift, carry, and/or roll.
9. Make sure your child has headphones if planning to use any handheld electronic devices. Children should make sure the equipment is not noisy or intrusive to other passengers. Consider giving your child a cell phone so if there is a delay or problem he or she may be able to more easily contact you. If your child has a cell phone, make certain contact information for you and other trusted adults is programmed into the device. Cell-phone use is allowed on both buses and trains. Please remind your children of cell-phone etiquette while around others.



10. Tell your child not to become too friendly with other passengers because these are people he or she doesn't know. As in any social situation it's OK for your child to be polite but restrained. Caution your child not to reveal any personal information to other passengers and let transit personnel know if anyone bothers him or her.

<sup>1</sup>These tips are found at [www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?c=AM\\_Content\\_C&pagename=am%2FLayout&cid=1241245658491](http://www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?c=AM_Content_C&pagename=am%2FLayout&cid=1241245658491) and [www.greyhound.com/en/ticketsandtravel/childrentraveling.aspx](http://www.greyhound.com/en/ticketsandtravel/childrentraveling.aspx) accessed February 2, 2011. Since these conditions for travel may be revised visit these websites to review currently posted conditions before planning a trip for your unaccompanied child.

**1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)**  
**www.missingkids.com**

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