



Installation Safety Office

Child Seat Safety

Car Seats & Booster Basics

There are so many car seat types and models, how do you know which one is right for your child? The right car seat or booster fits your child and your car, and is one you will use correctly every time you travel. Not only will your child ride as safely as possible, you will be establishing the foundation for a lifelong habit of seat belt use every time your child travels.

Our Recommendations

Select a car seat based on your child's age and size, and choose a seat that fits in your vehicle and use it every time. Always refer to your specific car seat manufacturer's instructions; read the vehicle owner's manual on how to install the car seat using the seat belt or LATCH system; and check height and weight limits. To maximize safety, keep your child in the car seat for as long as possible, as long as the child fits within the manufacturer's height and weight requirements. Keep your child in the back seat at least through age 12.

Birth - 12 months: Your child under age 1 should always ride in a rear-facing car seat. There are different types of rear-facing car seats: Infant-only seats can only be used rear-facing. Convertible and 3-in-1 car seats typically have higher height and weight limits for the rear-facing position, allowing you to keep your child rear-facing for a longer period of time.

1 - 3 years: Keep your child rear-facing as long as possible. It's the best way to keep him or her safe. Your child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, your child is ready to travel in a forward-facing car seat with a harness.

4 - 7 years: Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with a harness, it's time to travel in a booster seat, but still in the back seat.



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8 - 12 years: Keep your child in a booster seat until he or she is big enough to fit in a seat belt properly. For a seat belt to fit properly the lap belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach. The shoulder belt should lie snug across the shoulder and chest and not cross the neck or face. Remember: your child should still ride in the back seat because it's safer there.

For more information click on <http://www.nhtsa.gov/Safety/CPS>