

**A Guide for Choosing the Right
Child Safety Restraint and
Instructions for Correct Use.**

Table of Contents

Section	Page	Section	Page
General Information and Seat Placement		Integrated (Built-in) Restraints – 1 to 4 Years or 4 to 8 Years	12
Selecting a safety seat	1	Boosters – 4 to 8 Years	
Used safety seat checklist	2	General information.....	13
General tips for installing safety seats	3	Positioning the seat.....	14
Airbag warning.....	3	Belt-positioning booster.....	14
Harness fit	4	Shield booster	14
Children in front seat.....	4	Specialty Restraints	15
Retainer clip	12		
Locking clip	19		
Infant Restraints – Birth to 1 Year		Safety Belts – Over 8 Years	
General information.....	5	General information.....	16
Positioning the seat	5	Safety belt use.....	17
		Tips	18
Convertible Restraint – Rear-Facing Birth to 1 Year		Using the Locking Clip	19
General information.....	7	Tethers and Top Anchorage	20
Positioning the seat	8		
Convertible Restraint – Forward-Facing 1 to 4 Years		Universal Anchor Systems with LATCH (Lower Anchor and Tethers for Children)	21
General information.....	9	Pick-up Trucks	23
Positioning the seat	10	Air Travel Tips for Child Restraint Use	24
Forward-Facing Only Restraint – 1 to 4 Years		Final Reminders	25
General information.....	11		
Positioning the seat	11		





Motor Vehicle Crashes Are the Leading Cause of Death and Disability Among Children.

Children who are not properly buckled up may be seriously hurt not only in crashes, but also from sudden stops.

To keep children safe, EVERYBODY needs a safety belt or safety seat.

The violent forces of a crash can cause anyone who rides loose to be thrown out of the vehicle and seriously hurt. People riding without belts or safety seats can also hurt others who are buckled up by being thrown against them.

Seven out of 10 child safety seats are not used the right way.

Vehicle seats and safety belts are built to fit adults, not children, which can make it hard to properly buckle up. Buckling your child in the appropriate restraint — the right way, can protect them during a crash or sudden stop.

This guide will help you learn how to choose the proper restraint for your child and how to use it the right way.

The best or safest restraint should fit the child's size and weight, fit in your vehicle tightly and be used the right way every time. All safety seats for children under 50 pounds must meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213 (FMVSS 213), a strict set of requirements including crash testing. Ages stated are guidelines; always check manufacturer's instructions for weight limits.



US Department of Transportation
National Highway
Traffic Safety Administration

Office of Traffic Safety
Minnesota Child Passenger Safety Program



When Choosing a Safety Seat, Remember:

- A seat that is easy to install and use will be the best for you and your child. Find and read the instruction manual.
- Try the seat in your vehicle. Some safety seats fit in some vehicles better than others. Choose the seat that can be held tightly against the vehicle seat back. Read your vehicle owner's manual and the safety seat instructions.
- Choose the seat that is the right size for your child.
- You'll save a little money if you buy one convertible seat to do the job from birth to 40 pounds, but an infant-only seat may be easier for you to use and may fit your newborn baby better.
- Look for a convertible seat that has a higher weight limit (30 pounds or more) in the rear-facing position.
- Try locking and releasing the buckle in the store. Try adjusting the harness. Be sure you understand how to use it.
- When you buy your safety seat, be sure to register it with the manufacturer so that you will be notified of any safety recalls. All new safety seats come with a registration card. If you have an older seat or purchase a used seat, call the manufacturer to register your seat.
- A safety seat that is more than 6 years old should be replaced. Normal wear and tear may cause the seat to not work as well as it did when it was new. Also, newer seats have improved safety designs.
- Combination safety seats can also do double duty. These seats include a harness system with a set weight limit and can be converted to a belt positioning booster seat.

WARNING!

A safety seat that was used in a vehicle during a crash should not be used again — it should be destroyed. Regardless of how the seat looks or how old it is, possible unseen damage may make the seat less effective in a second crash and cause serious injury to a child.

Used Safety Seat Checklist

Many parents feel a used safety seat is a good bargain or others may have trouble affording a new seat. Some used safety seats may be perfectly safe, especially if they are fairly new and have had only one owner. However, any used seat could have many problems and should be checked carefully. If the seat has had more than one owner, it may be difficult to get accurate information.

Was the seat ever used in a vehicle during a crash?



NO - continue



YES - DISCARD the seat!

Does the seat have a label showing that it meets all Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards?



YES - continue



NO - DISCARD the seat!

Does the seat have a label showing the date of manufacture?



YES - continue



NO - DISCARD the seat!

Is the seat 6 years old or less?



YES - continue



NO - DISCARD the seat!

Although some seats may be safe even when 6-10 years old, it is recommended that seats not be used if they are over 6 years old. Normal wear and tear may cause the seat to not work as well.

Is the shell cracked or the frame rusted?



NO - continue



YES - DISCARD the seat!

Is the seat missing any parts? Are straps frayed, clips bent or metal slides rusted?



NO - continue



YES - DISCARD the seat!

Has the seat been recalled for a safety defect? If unsure, contact the manufacturer.



NO - continue



YES - DISCARD the seat!

If the safety defect can be repaired, do so before using the seat.

If the safety defect cannot be repaired, discard the seat.

A used seat that receives a thumbs up for every question has a low risk of being unsafe.

Putting the Safety Seat in Your Vehicle the Right Way



- Always read the instructions that come with the safety seat and the owner's manual that comes with the vehicle. In the owner's manual turn to the section(s) on safety belts and child safety seats (child restraints or car seats).
- Check your vehicle owner's manual for instructions on air bags.
- A child safety seat must be held tightly against the vehicle seat back to protect a child. If the safety belt is loose or the safety seat slides around on the vehicle seat, your child could be hurt.
- Some older vehicle owner's manuals have little or no information on safety seats or the owner's manual may be missing. Contact the vehicle manufacturer for more information.
- Check for air bag warning labels on the sun visor and/or on the front of the passenger door frame.
- Read labels on safety belts and safety seats.



WARNING!

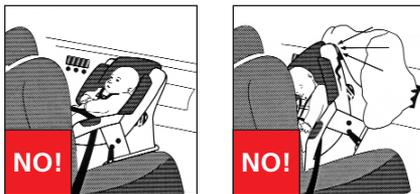
An air bag comes out faster than a blink of an eye to protect a person's head and chest. Many lives have been saved by air bags. But, an air bag can hurt people who are too close to it. Young children and babies can be seriously hurt or killed by the air bag. Children under age 13 should always ride in the back seat. **NEVER** put a rear-facing baby (under 1 year old and under 20 pounds) in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger air bag. Babies (under 1 year old and under 20 pounds) must always ride in the back seat facing the rear of the vehicle. Older children and adults in the front seat must be careful too if there is an air bag — always buckle up the right way with a lap and shoulder belt and move the seat all the way back. Keep away from the air bag housing (center of steering wheel or dashboard) at all times. Avoid leaning forward, leaning against the door, or placing objects near any air bag housing.

Proper Harness Fit

The harness and the safety belt hold your child in the seat to remain protected in a crash. It is important that the harness is snug on the strong parts of the child's body. If the harness is loose, your child could be ejected in a crash. The harness must lie flat on the child to safely spread the forces of a crash; do not allow the straps to become twisted. Always read the instructions that come with the safety seat.

Children in the Front Seat

- When possible, it is best for children under age 13 to ride in the rear seat; most crashes occur in the front of the vehicle.
- Make sure the child is correctly buckled up with the vehicle seat moved all the way back. Make sure the child is being held back snugly by the harness straps of the safety seat or by both the lap and shoulder belt. Use a belt-positioning booster to ensure proper belt fit if necessary. Do not allow the child to slip out of the shoulder belt or lean toward the dashboard. Read the vehicle owner's manual about air bags.
- NEVER put a rear-facing baby in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger air bag. Babies (under 1 year old and under 20 pounds) should ride in the back seat facing the rear of the vehicle.



Improperly restrained and unrestrained occupants can be severely injured by a deploying airbag.



Infant Restraints (Birth - 1 Year)



Infant-only safety seat



Spaces filled with cloths



Rolled towel for angle

- Rear-facing only.
- Some have detachable bases.
- Usually fits a newborn well and some may be the best fit for premature infants.
- Long babies may outgrow this seat before they reach the upper weight limit (17-22 pounds).
- Use only until baby's head comes within 1 inch of the top of the shell; then move to the convertible seat, rear-facing until at least 1 year of age and 20 pounds.
- Make sure the infant safety seat is approved for use in a motor vehicle. Check the labels and instructions.

Positioning the Safety Seat

- Place the safety seat in the vehicle so that its base is resting flat on the vehicle seat cushion. If this is not possible, try another seating position or find a safety seat that fits better.
- Babies under one year and under 20 pounds should face the rear of the vehicle in a safety seat that is designed for their height and weight. Babies must ride facing the rear, even when they are out of the driver's view in the back seat. Parents should feel just as comfortable in this situation as they do when they put their babies down for a nap and leave the room. If the baby has special health needs that require full-time monitoring, ask another adult to ride with the baby in the back seat and travel alone as little as possible.
- Be sure the rear-facing safety seat is reclined (30 to 45 degree angle) to keep infant's head from falling forward. A tightly rolled towel or foam swimming noodle cut to fit the width of the base of the safety seat may be used to maintain angle, but be careful not to tip the seat too far back (see top right photo).
- Make sure the infant safety seat you use is approved for use in a motor vehicle. Check the labels and instructions.

Rear-Facing Seat

- Straps should be at or below baby's shoulders.
- Be sure the straps are threaded through the shell not just the pad. Check the instructions.
- The harness must fit snugly on the baby's shoulders and buckle between the legs. A snug harness is important, it holds the baby down in the safety seat during a crash. The harness is tight when no fabric can be pinched.
- Dress the baby in clothes that keep the legs free. If you want to cover the baby, buckle the harness first, adjust it for a snug fit, then put a blanket over the baby. Avoid using bulky snowsuits or buntings, this can make it hard to adjust the harness snugly.
- Make sure the harness will stay snug. Check if there is a metal slide in back of the seat which must be locked by threading the strap back through (see photos at right).
- The plastic harness retainer clip keeps the straps on baby's shoulders. Make sure the clip is threaded correctly to keep the strap from sliding off. Place the clip at mid-chest, armpit level (see photo on page 12).
- ALWAYS keep the handle on an infant safety seat in the down position when the seat is in the vehicle. The child could hurt its head by striking the handle in a crash.
- A new baby needs support. To fill empty spaces and give support, roll up a couple of small blankets and tuck them in on each side of your baby's body and head. If the baby still slumps down, put a rolled diaper between the legs behind the crotch strap. NEVER put padding behind or under the baby (see middle photo on page 5).



Convertible Restraints — Rear-Facing (Birth - 1 Year)

Can face rearward and forward. Use rear-facing up to 35 pounds (varies by manufacturer, check the instructions).

There are three types — a five-point harness and two types of shields.



Five-point harness

Two shoulder two hip and one crotch strap. **Many safety experts prefer this system**, because the straps can be adjusted to fit snugly across the child's strong

hipbones. Straps may twist and tangle — keep straps flat for best protection.



Tray-shield

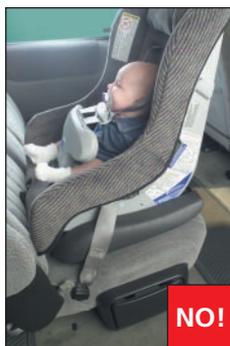
Shoulder straps attach to a wide, padded shield that swings up. Some shields may not fit over the child's head unless straps are adjusted each time. May be hard to get a snug fit on the

child's hips. In some cars, the roof may be too low so the shield cannot be lifted all the way.



T-shield

Shoulder straps attach to a flat pad. The shield helps keep straps flat, and can be buckled with one hand. It may be hard to get a snug fit on the child's hips.



Unacceptable fit of a T-shield harness

Tray-shields and T-shields are not recommended for infants. The shield comes up too high and may make proper harness fit impossible.

Positioning the Safety Seat

- Place the safety seat in the vehicle so that its base is resting flat on the vehicle seat cushion. If this is not possible, try another seating position or find a safety seat that fits better. At least 80 percent of the safety seat base must contact the vehicle seat.
- Babies under 1 year and under 20 pounds must face the rear of the vehicle in a safety seat that is designed for their height and weight. Babies must ride facing the rear, even when they are out of the driver's view in the back seat. Parents should feel just as comfortable in this situation as they do when they put their babies down for a nap and leave the room. If the baby has special health needs that require full-time monitoring, ask another adult to ride with the baby in the back seat and travel alone as little as possible.
- Be sure the rear-facing safety seat is reclined (30 to 45 degree angle) to keep infant's head from falling forward. A tightly rolled towel or foam swimming noodle cut to fit the width of the base of the seat, may be used to maintain angle, but be careful not to tip the seat too far back (see top right photo on page 5).
- Use the convertible safety seat rear-facing until the child is 1 year of age and 20 lbs. or more. The child can continue to face rear until she/he reaches the upper weight limit. A child seat with a higher rear-facing weight limit allows you to keep baby rear-facing longer, which is the safest position.

Rear-Facing Seat

- Make sure the convertible safety seat you use is approved for use in a motor vehicle. Check the labels and instructions.
- Use the lowest harness strap slots that are at or below baby's shoulders.
- Be sure the straps are threaded through the shell not just the pad. Check the instructions.
- The harness must fit snugly on the baby's shoulders and buckle between the legs. A snug harness is important, it holds the baby down in the safety seat during a crash. The harness is tight when no excess fabric can be pinched.
- Dress the baby in clothes that keep the legs free. If you want to cover the baby, buckle the harness first, adjust it for a snug fit, then put a blanket over the baby. Avoid using bulky snowsuits or buntings, this can make it hard to adjust the harness snugly.
- Make sure the harness will stay snug. Check if there is a metal slide in back of the seat which must be locked by threading the strap back through (see photo on page 6).
- The plastic harness retainer clip keeps the straps on baby's shoulders. Make sure the clip is threaded correctly to keep the strap from sliding off. Place the clip at mid-chest, armpit level (see photo on page 12).
- A new baby needs support. To fill empty spaces and give support, roll up a couple of small blankets and tuck them in on each side of your baby's body and head. If the baby still slumps down, put a rolled diaper between the legs behind the crotch strap. NEVER put padding behind or under the baby (see middle photo on page 5).

Convertible Restraints — Forward-Facing (1 - 4 Years)

There are three types — a five-point harness and two types of shields.



Five-point harness

Two shoulder two hip and one crotch strap.

Many safety experts prefer this system, because the straps can be adjusted to fit snugly across the child's strong hipbones. Straps may twist and tangle — keep straps flat for best protection.



T-shield

Shoulder straps attach to a flat pad. The shield helps keep straps flat, and can be buckled with one hand. It may be hard to get a snug fit on the child's hips.

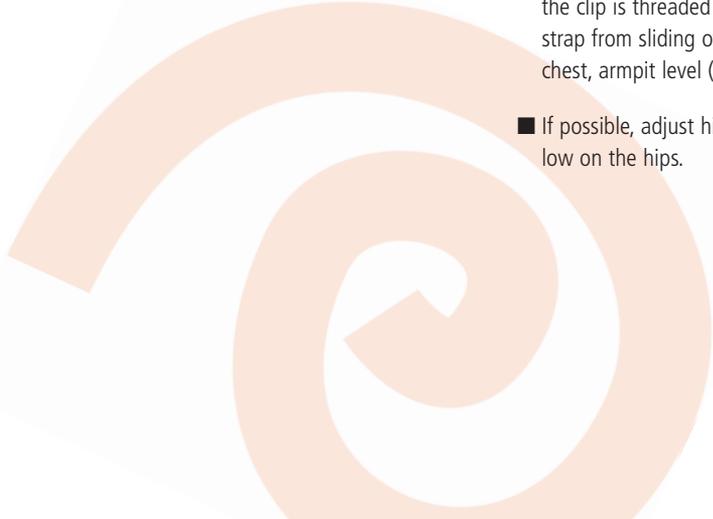


Tray-shield

Shoulder straps attach to a wide, padded shield that swings up. Some shields may not fit over the child's head unless straps are adjusted each time. May be hard to get a snug fit on the child's hips. In some cars, the roof may be too low so the shield can't be lifted all the way.



Convertible Restraints — Forward-Facing (1 - 4 Years)

- Use facing forward for children over 1 year and 20 pounds or more.
 - Use until child outgrows it (when the top of the ears reach top of the seat, when shoulders are above the top slots, or when child reaches the upper weight/height limit) then move to the booster seat.
 - Seats are sold with a tether strap to anchor the top of the seat to the vehicle. A tether strap keeps the seat more tightly secured. For tether anchor installation, contact your vehicle dealer (see page 20 for more information about tethers).
 - Place seat in the upright position so the child is sitting up straight, not reclined. The more upright position is preferred for safety.
 - If changing from rear-facing to forward-facing, harness straps must now be threaded at or above child's shoulders.
 - Typically, only the top harness strap slots on front-facing convertible seats are reinforced. The top slots are reinforced to prevent the harness from breaking through in a crash. Always check the child seat instructions for additional reinforced slots.
 - The harness must fit snugly on the child's shoulders and buckle between the legs. A snug harness is important because it keeps the child in the safety seat during a crash.
 - Check harness tightness on every ride. A harness is snug when no excess fabric can be pinched.
 - Make sure the harness will stay snug. Be sure the straps are threaded correctly through the shell not just the pad. Check the instructions.
 - The plastic harness retainer clip keeps the straps on the child's shoulders. Make sure the clip is threaded correctly to keep the strap from sliding off. Put the clip at mid-chest, armpit level (see photos on page 12).
 - If possible, adjust hip straps or shield to stay low on the hips.
- 

Forward-Facing Only Restraints (1 - 4 Years)



This car seat converts to a booster by removing the harness and rerouting the safety belt.

- Forward-facing only seats provide full harness for upper body and head restraint.
- Not recommended for under age 1 and under 20 pounds.
- Use until child outgrows it (when the top of the ears reach top of the seat, when shoulders are above the top slots, or when child reaches the upper weight limit, check the instructions); then move to the booster seat.
- Beginning Sept. 1, 1999, forward-facing restraints must meet a stricter test for head excursion. Most manufacturers are expected to meet the new requirement through the use of a tether. The tether is attached to the top of the seat and anchored to the vehicle. A tether strap keeps the seat more tightly secured and reduces forward head movement in a crash. For tether anchor installation, contact your vehicle dealer (see page 20 for more information about tethers).
- Some forward facing restraints are a vest with shoulder, hip and crotch straps. The vehicle lap belt goes through the back of the vest. Some use a tether strap.
- Some models can be converted to a belt-positioning booster by removing the harness for the larger child over 40 pounds.
- Harness strap slots should be at or above the child's shoulders on forward-facing only seats.
- The harness must fit snugly on the child's shoulders and buckle between the legs. A snug harness is important because it keeps the child in the safety seat during a crash.
- Check harness tightness on every ride. A harness is snug when no extra fabric can be pinched.
- Be sure the harness straps are threaded correctly through the shell and not just the pad. Check the safety seat instructions.
- The plastic harness retainer clip keeps the straps on the child's shoulders. Make sure the clip is threaded correctly to keep the strap from sliding off. Put the clip at mid-chest, armpit level (see photos on page 12).
- If possible, adjust hip straps or shield to stay low on the hips.

Integrated (Built-in) Restraints (1 - 4 or 4 - 8 Years)



- Forward-facing only; some convert to a belt-positioning booster, others have a 5-point harness that can be used up to 60 lbs. (Check the vehicle manual)
- Integrated seats provide good protection because they are anchored directly to the vehicle. However, they cannot be moved from one vehicle to another.

Correct Use of the Retainer Clip

- The plastic harness retainer clip keeps the straps on baby's shoulders. Make sure the clip is threaded correctly to keep the strap from sliding off. Put the clip at mid-chest, armpit level.



Why Use a Booster Seat with a Safety Belt?



This five-year-old rides in a belt-positioning booster with a high back using the lap AND shoulder belt.

A booster seat makes an adult safety belt fit

correctly on a child's body. The booster's design helps keep the lap belt low on the hips and the shoulder belt across the chest.

Boosters are specially designed and crash-tested. Do not use pillows or books because they can cause serious injury in a crash.

4 - 8 Years Old

- Use a booster seat until the child reaches the upper weight limit or the child can sit comfortably without slouching on the vehicle seat. The lap belt should stay low on the hips and the shoulder belt should comfortably cross the chest and shoulder. Most children do not fit the adult belt until ages 8 to 10, with a minimum height of 4 feet 9 inches.
- Make sure the booster you use is approved for use in a motor vehicle, and check the

- Most children under 8 years are not big enough to fit the adult safety belt properly. A belt that rides up on the tummy can cause serious injury. A belt that is put under the arm or behind the back can also cause serious injury.
- Many young children do not sit still enough or straight enough to keep lap belts low across their hips.
- Boosters are comfortable for children because the raised base gives the child a better view and allows their legs to bend normally. This also reduces slouching, which leads to poor lap belt fit.

labels and instructions. Booster seats designed for use at the dining table do not keep kids safe in a crash.

- If the child's ears come above the top of the vehicle seat back, use a high-back booster. A lap and shoulder belt must be used.
- If the booster seat comes with a clip or strap to hold the shoulder belt in place, make sure to thread it correctly.

WARNING!

Products or devices sold in catalogs and stores that say they will improve safety belt fit for older children and adults are not required to pass any government safety standards. Using these "after-market" products could be dangerous. Some have been shown to reduce the effectiveness of lap/shoulder belts in crash tests. These products might make the shoulder belt fit more comfortably but may allow too much slack in the shoulder belt. These products may also cause the lap belt to ride up on the soft tummy, which can cause serious internal injury.

Approved booster seats are a better way to make a safety belt fit a small child.

Booster Seats (4 - 8 Years Old)

For children who have outgrown a safety seat with a harness. There are two types of belt-positioning boosters — high-back and no-back.



High-back Booster
with Harness



High-back Booster



No-back Booster

Belt-Positioning Boosters

- Use **ONLY** with a lap/shoulder belt; cannot be used with the lap belt alone.
- Makes the vehicle lap/shoulder belt fit well.
- Some have a clip or strap to hold the shoulder belt in place.
- High backs provide head support for taller children.
- Some have no back and can be used if the vehicle seat has a head restraint that the child can utilize.
- Children who outgrow their safety seat with shoulder straps before age 4 may not be mature enough to stay seated properly in a belt-positioning booster. A vest or harness that uses the belt system and a tether strap would be an option in this situation.
- A high-back booster with a harness can be converted to the booster by removing the harness system and rerouting the safety belt.
- If only lap belts are available in your vehicle, adding a manufacturer provided shoulder belt (retrofit) or using a vest or harness that uses the lap belt system and a tether strap would be better in this situation. Contact the vehicle manufacturer regarding installation of a tether anchor.

Shield Boosters

- Shield boosters are for use when only lap belts are available in all rear-seating positions AND only when children are between 30 and 40 pounds.
- Some have a removable shield. If the shield can be removed, use the booster with a lap/shoulder belt and a vehicle head restraint (check the safety seat instructions).

Specialty Restraints

Children with special health care needs should have access to proper resources for safe transportation. Standard child restraints may be used if compatible with the child's needs. If a standard restraint is not workable, several options are available. It is possible that insurance will cover the costs of specialty restraints. Contact your insurance carrier for specific information. For a listing of special needs products contact:

American Academy of Pediatrics
141 Northwest Point Blvd.
P. O. Box 927
Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0927
www.aap.org

- Vests and harnesses for children and adults are designed for use with the vehicle belt system and a tether strap. Tethers provide additional upper body protection.
- Several restraints have been designed for children with special health or physical needs and have upper weight limits of 100 or more pounds.
- Many of these devices require additional hardware.
- Car beds for low birth weight and/or medically fragile infants are available for infants who must lie flat. Ask your baby's doctor about testing for breathing problems before discharge.

Many specialty restraints are voluntarily tested but are not required to meet any federal safety standard.



The Gorilla specialty seat by Snuggly



Angel Ride car bed

Safety Belts (Over 8 Years)

Use when the child can sit comfortably without slouching.

Use the following guide to determine safety belt readiness.

Six Steps to Seat Belt Safety

- 1: Does your child sit with their back against the vehicle seat back?
- 2: Does your child's knee bend comfortably around the vehicle seat edge?
- 3: Do your child's feet touch the floor?
- 4: Does the safety belt rest on the shoulder (not on the face or upper arm)?
- 5: Does the lap portion of the belt stay low on the hips?
- 6: Can your child ride comfortably in this position for the whole trip?



If you answer "NO" to any of these questions, your child needs a booster seat with the lap/shoulder safety belt.

This 11-year-old rides using the safety belt.

- If no shoulder belt is available, keep the lap belt low and snug across the hips or thighs. If the lap belt rides up onto the tummy, it could cause serious injury in a crash. Also, check with the vehicle manufacturer for a safety belt retrofit. However, it is much safer for anyone (except small babies who cannot sit up) to use just a lap belt than to ride completely unrestrained.
 - If the shoulder belt rubs against the side of the neck, it is uncomfortable for the child but not harmful. Try using a soft folded cloth over the belt.
 - If the shoulder belt stays loose when it is pulled out, teach your child how to take up the slack by pulling on the shoulder belt to reset it. Too much slack can cause injuries in a crash.
 - If the shoulder belt fits so badly that it goes across the neck or face, have the child use a belt-positioning booster. If a belt-positioning booster is not available or the child is too heavy, a lap belt in the rear seat could work better.
 - Never use pillows or books to raise a child to fit the belt. Using these will not keep the belt in the right place in a crash and could cause serious injury to a child.
 - Never put a shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back. Doing this could cause serious internal injury in a crash. The lap belt of a lap and shoulder belt is not designed to work alone.
- Children who have outgrown safety seats are better protected by lap/shoulder belts than by lap belts alone. If several children are riding in the back, and there are shoulder belts, let the older ones use the shoulder belts. Put the child riding in the safety seat in the middle where there is only a lap belt.

Using the Safety Belt

Most safety belts use a retractor to take up the slack. There are three types.

Emergency locking retractor

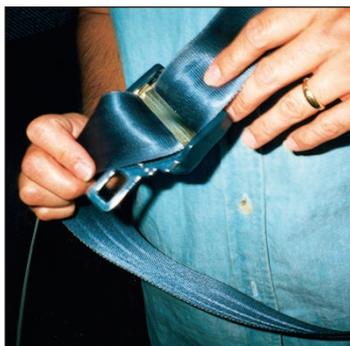
(ELR) — Will lock only in a crash or sudden stop. It cannot hold a child safety seat on its own. Check the label on the belt or the vehicle owner's manual for further instructions. Also, see page 19 for information about locking clips.

Automatic locking retractor

(ALR) — Will lock whenever you stop pulling it out. It can hold a safety seat tightly; take the slack out by pushing the webbing back into the retractor.

Switchable — Works well with safety seats. It is an emergency locking retractor that switches to an automatic locking retractor when belt is completely pulled out and allowed to retract back in. Check the label on the belt or the vehicle owner's manual on how to use this type.

There are several types of safety belt systems. Some may not stay tight and will need special hardware.



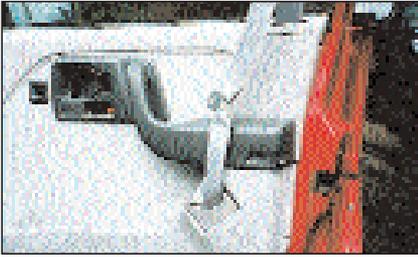
- Lap belt with a locking latch plate — Usually found in the center rear seat. A locking bar keeps the lap belt from loosening.



If the latch plate rests on the safety seat at the wrong spot the safety belt may still loosen. DO NOT use a locking clip to fix this problem. To keep the belt from loosening in this situation: buckle and tighten the belt, unbuckle the belt and turn the latch plate over once so that the locking bar faces up and then rebuckle it (check the vehicle owner's manual to be sure this is correct).



Using the Safety Belt



■ Belts that do not lock (ELR), belts that come out forward of the seat back, belts in the door, and belts on a track require special attention. Some may need a special part from the dealer, others may require a tether strap (see page 20 for more information about tethers). Check the vehicle owner's manual and safety seat instructions.



■ Put the safety belt through the correct belt path (where the belt goes through the seat) and buckle the belt. Belt paths are different depending on whether the seat is facing the rear or forward and whether an infant-only seat base is being used. Check labels and read the safety seat instructions.

■ Push down on the safety seat with your full weight while you tighten the safety belt. With a baby in a seat, push down with one hand between the baby's legs or on the side of the seat. Pull the safety belt very tight.



■ To check if it is tight enough, **grasp the seat on both sides, at the belt path.** Pull the safety seat forward and pull it from side to side. It is safe for the rear-facing safety seat to tip slightly toward the back of the vehicle seat. If the belt loosens or the safety seat slides more than an inch, be sure you have locked the seat belt. Reinstall the seat or move the seat to a different seating position. You may need to try a different safety seat. Remember, using the top tether increases stability and improves installation.

Using the Locking Clip



- Lap and shoulder belt with a free-sliding latch plate has one piece of belt webbing that slides through the latch plate. If the free-sliding latch plate is on an ELR belt a locking clip is needed.



- Check the vehicle owner's manual and the safety seat instructions for how to use the metal locking clip. Always use the locking clip next to the latch plate.

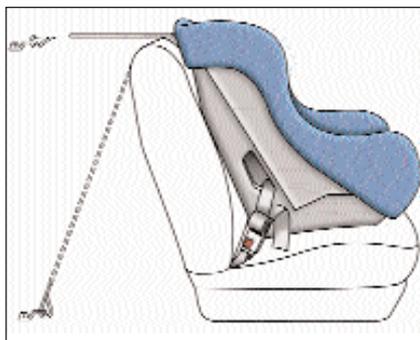


Tethers and Top Anchors

A tether is a strap attachment system that connects the top of a safety seat to an anchor in the vehicle's metal structure. Tethers are used in addition to the vehicle safety belt or the lower anchorage. Check the vehicle owner's manual for installation instructions.

Beginning September 1, 1999, all forward-facing child restraints are required to meet stricter head protection requirements. The top tether strap adds stability, reduces forward head movement and helps to secure a child restraint more tightly. Most child restraint manufacturers will be meeting the current standard through the use of a tether. Tethers will be included when the convertible or forward facing child restraint is purchased.

Also beginning September 1, 1999, all model year 2000 passenger cars, except convertibles, must provide user-ready, factory-installed tether anchors. By September 2000, light trucks, vans and sports utility vehicles are required to provide tether anchors. Tether anchors that are preinstalled make it easier for parents and caregivers to make use of tethers immediately. Additionally, older child restraints that did not initially come with a tether may be retrofitted for a tether attachment. Contact the child restraint manufacturer for answers on tether options.



- When tethering the safety seat to the vehicle, be certain to use the tether anchor point, not a cargo tie-down anchor. Consult the vehicle owner's manual to verify correct tether anchor point locations.
- Installation of tether anchor kits can be done by the owner, vehicle manufacturer or local mechanic. Newer vehicles may have factory-installed tether anchor brackets and will not need kits.
- Designated anchor points take many forms. Consult the vehicle manual in the child restraint section under "top strap" or "tether strap." Tether anchor locations can also be found in safety equipment diagrams through the local dealership parts department.



An anchor option for tether hook

Universal Anchor Systems with LATCH

(Lower Anchor and Tethers for Children)

Phase in for the child restraint lower anchors and top tether anchors will begin in vehicle model year 2001, and continue for two years. At least two rear-seating positions in each vehicle will be equipped with the system. In addition, a third rear-seating position will have an upper tether anchorage to hold the child seat tightly. The child restraint anchorage system is standardized and independent of the vehicle seat belts. The ability to bypass the belt system and install the restraint using lower anchors and a tether, means an alternate choice the parent may make to install a child restraint system.



Flexible LATCH hook using anchor bar

The anchor system consists of three points of attachment.

- Two small bars (lower anchors) behind the seat bight (where the vehicle seat cushion meets the vehicle back) to which two special hooks on the lower frame of the child restraint are attached. The hooks may be on straps (flexible) or part of the child restraint frame (rigid).
- One tether anchor behind the seating position to which a tether strap from the top of the child restraint is hooked. This will appear as a ring-like object, permanently attached to the vehicle at the top of the rear seat.



Lower anchor bars

Beginning September 2002, child restraint manufacturers must produce child safety restraints that are LATCH compatible. Parents may choose to install the child restraint with either a seat belt or the new LATCH system if available in the vehicle.



Tether anchor logo

Child safety restraints purchased before September 2002 may have a LATCH retrofit kit available from the car seat manufacturer. Belt positioning booster seats, vests, and car beds are exempt from LATCH requirements.

LATCH Facts

- *LATCH* is not required for booster seats, car beds or vests.
- Most *LATCH*-equipped vehicles have anchors in the right and left rear seat positions. If the center seat does not have anchors, you can still install your child safety seat using a safety belt.
- If your vehicle is not *LATCH*-equipped, use the safety belt and, if available, a top tether.
- *LATCH* anchor bars are required to be a specific distance apart, which may lead to a rear center seating position in the vehicle that does not have *LATCH* anchors. You may not use the two inboard lower anchors (of the outboard *LATCH* seating positions) to install a child seat in the rear center seating position. The only exception is if BOTH the vehicle and child seat manufacturers specifically state that this installation is acceptable. It is safe and acceptable to install a car seat using the standard safety belt in the rear center seating position.

LATCH Installation

- Always read and follow both the vehicle owner's manual and child safety seat manufacturer's instructions for correct installation and proper use.
- Locate the lower *LATCH* attachments on the child safety seat.
- Locate the lower *LATCH* anchor bars in or near vehicle seat crack.
- Hook the *LATCH* attachments to the vehicle anchor bars.
- Use your body weight in the child safety seat by kneeling in the seat, then pull excess webbing to tighten flexible *LATCH* attachments.
- Check for secure fit by testing for tightness at the base of the seat, near the *LATCH* attachments. The child safety seat should not move more than 1 inch side-to-side or forward.
- Attach the tether to a tether anchor (if applicable). Pull excess webbing and tighten tether strap.

Special Considerations for Pick-up Trucks



- Pick-up trucks with passenger air bags and no 'shut-off' switch and no back seat cannot safely transport babies under 1 year of age and under 20 pounds. Babies this age must ride rear-facing and always in the back seat; the front may only be used if there is no danger from an airbag.
- If there is an air bag 'shut-off' switch, read the pick-up truck owner's manual for instructions.
- Extended cab pick-ups with side-facing jump seats are NOT appropriate to transport children, or adults for that matter. Safety belts do not provide good protection in these seats. Safety seats cannot be installed in these seats.
- Extended cab pick-ups with rear bench seats may be appropriate. Make sure at least 80 percent of the base of the safety seat fits on the vehicle seat. Make sure the rear-facing seat will fit when reclined for a 30 to 45 degree angle.
- Even when a forward-facing safety seat is installed tightly with the safety belt, a child's head could hit the front seat in a crash. A tether strap is recommended (see page 20 for more information about tethers). Check the safety seat instructions and vehicle owner's manual.
- Never allow anyone to ride in the cargo bed of a pick-up truck. Ejection can cause serious injury or death and a canopy does not guarantee safety. In fact, covered cargo beds can trap poisonous carbon monoxide fumes, which can be deadly.
- Front seat occupants of compact extended cab pick-up trucks are at a lesser risk for injury than occupants using rear seats.



Tips for Safe Air Travel and Child Safety Seats

Proper use of an approved child restraint system (CRS) on an aircraft enhances child safety in the event of turbulence or a crash. In addition to protecting your child during flight, there is also the added benefit of having a child seat on hand when traveling by motor vehicle away from home. An added note of precaution: research the child restraint laws for the state or country in which you will be traveling. Laws may vary.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) strongly recommends that all children who fly, regardless of age, use the appropriate restraint based on their size and weight. Before you fly:

- Ensure that your CRS has received FAA approval. Check for a label reading, "This restraint is certified for use in motor vehicles and aircraft."
- Check the width of your CRS. While airline seats vary in width, a CRS no wider than 16 inches should fit in most coach seats. Even if the armrests are moved out of the way, a CRS wider than 16 inches is unlikely to fit properly into the frame of the aircraft seat.
- Ask the airline if they offer a discounted fare for a child traveling in a CRS. Purchasing an airline ticket (discounted or full fare) for your child is the only way to guarantee that you will be able to use a CRS.
- Check with the airline to determine their busiest days and times. By avoiding these times, you are more likely to be on a flight with an empty seat next to you. In many cases, airlines will allow you to seat your child under 2 years of age in your CRS in the empty airplane seat without having to pay the airline fare for the child. Be sure to ask your airline for its policy regarding an empty seat.
- Arrive early for departure and request ample pre-boarding time to install the CRS properly.
- If you purchase a ticket for your child, reserve adjoining seats. A CRS must be placed in a window seat so it will not block the escape path in an emergency. A CRS may not be placed in an exit row.
- If you need to change planes to make a connecting flight, it can be very challenging to transport a CRS, child and luggage through a busy airport. Most airlines will help parents make the connection if they can arrange for assistance in advance.
- Children under 20 pounds and under 1 year of age should be placed in a rear-facing CRS.
- Children 20 to 40 pounds and over 1 year of age use a forward-facing restraint. Current restraints offer dramatic improvement in protection compared to lap-held or unrestrained children.
- Booster seats and harness vests are banned for use on aircraft. These devices may be checked as baggage.
- In the United States, supplemental lap restraints are banned from use in aircraft.



Be Sure Your Child Rides Safely Every Time, Remember...

- Everybody needs a safety belt or safety seat every time you travel — even on short trips!
- Children ages 4 to 8, under 4 feet 9 inches tall, 40 - 80 pounds, should always ride in a booster seat.
- The back seat usually is safer than the front, because head-on crashes are the most common type of crash.
- If the vehicle has a front passenger air bag, NEVER put a rear facing baby in the front seat. Children under age 13 should ride in back.
- Babies under 1 year old and under 20 pounds must ride facing the rear, even when they are out of the driver's view in the back seat.
- Always use a safety seat that is the right size for your child.
- Read and follow the instructions in the safety seat manufacturer's directions and the vehicle owner's manual.
- Always make sure the safety seat is held tightly by the vehicle safety belt.
- Always make sure the safety seat harness is snug on the child and buckled into the crotch strap.
- There must be one safety belt for each person. Two people with one belt around them could hurt each other.
- NEVER hold a child on your lap because you could crush the child in a crash even if the safety belt is around both of you. If only you are using a safety belt, the child would be torn from your arms in a crash.
- The cargo area of a station wagon, hatchback, van or pick-up is a very dangerous place for anyone to ride.
- On long trips, plan to stop in a safe place (rest stop or a gas station) and let everyone out to stretch. Never unbuckle when the car is moving or stopped on the road.
- Bring small soft toys, books and snacks to keep children happy in the vehicle.
- Never hang toys from the safety seat handle or secure them to a shield. The handle should be in the down position when traveling. Toy accessories that attach to the back of the seat for baby's amusement are not recommended.
- Never put anything in the back window of your vehicle. Secure items in the cargo area of a station wagon or hatchback. Loose objects, such as large toys, or other heavy things in the vehicle can be thrown around in a crash and hurt someone. Secure all loose objects in the cargo area.



www.buckleupkids.state.mn.us

The Minnesota Child Passenger Safety Program Web site has valuable information designed to address many questions. Please visit the site online at www.buckleupkids.state.mn.us regarding:

- Car seat inspection clinics
- Car seat distribution programs
- Car seat recall list
- Minnesota car seat law
- Resource materials
- Training information
- Related links



AAA wants your child to be...



Seated, Safe & Secure

For more than a century, AAA has worked to foster a safe environment for travelers through education, research and advocacy.

Visit www.aaapublicaffairs.com for more information on child passenger safety and other AAA programs, or call (952) 707-4623 in the Twin Cities metro area, and toll-free 1-800-222-1333 in Greater Minnesota.

AAA programs and activities that support children and teens include:

- School Safety Patrol Program
- Centennial Grant Program for Schools
- Traffic Safety Education Materials
- Driver's Education Publications and Materials

It Pays to Belong!

AAA has been serving motorists and the traveling public since 1902. For information on AAA member benefits and services, including travel, insurance, roadside assistance and financial services,

call 1-800-222-1333 or visit www.aaa.com.



For more information about child passenger safety, contact:

The National Auto Safety Hotline
800-424-9393



To order additional brochures or learn more about the
Minnesota Child Passenger Safety Program, contact:

800-818-9296

www.buckleupkids.state.mn.us