Safety basics for children in cars

Infants and toddlers

- Always place infants or toddlers in an infant or convertible child safety seat appropriate for the child’s height and weight.
- Infants and toddlers should remain rear-facing until 2 years of age or until the child reaches the highest weight or height limit allowed by the car seat manufacturer.
- Many rear-facing child safety seats now accommodate children up to 35 pounds or more.
- Infants and toddlers should always ride in the back seat, never in front of an active air bag.
- Shoulder straps must be at or below the baby’s shoulders when the child is seated in the rear-facing direction.
- Adjust harnesses to be snug so that no excess webbing may be pinched.
- The harness retainer clip should be placed at armpit level.
- Install child safety seat according to the manufacturer’s instructions of both the seat and vehicle.

Toddlers and preschoolers

- Children 2 years or older, or children who have outgrown the weight or height limit for their rear-facing safety seat, may transition to a fully harnessed forward-facing seat.
- Select a forward-facing seat with a full harness appropriate for the child’s height and weight. Many forward-facing harnesses will accommodate children up to 65 pounds or more.
- It is best for children to ride in a child safety seat with a full harness as long as possible, at least up to 4 years of age.
- Place harness straps at or above the child’s shoulders when riding in a forward-facing direction.
- Check the harness strap tightness so there is no excess webbing when pinched.
- The harness retainer clip should be placed at armpit level.
- All toddlers and preschoolers should ride in the back seat and never in front of an active air bag.

School-age children

- Children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their fully harnessed child safety seat may transition to a belt-positioning booster seat until the vehicle seat belt fits properly.
- Booster seats must be used with a lap and shoulder belt, with the lap belt low and snug across the child’s upper thighs and the shoulder belt across the middle of the child’s shoulder.
- All children should always ride in the back seat and never in front of an active air bag.
- A belt-positioning booster seat should be used until the vehicle lap and shoulder belt (adult seat belt) fits properly, typically when he or she reaches 4 feet 9 inches in height and is between 8 and 12 years of age.
Older children

- When children are old enough and large enough to use the adult vehicle seat belt alone, they should always use both the lap and shoulder belts.
- Vehicle seat belts fit properly when the lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits comfortably across the chest.
- The shoulder belt should remain on the shoulder, not behind or under the arm.
- Children using the adult vehicle seat belt alone should be mature enough to remain seated in position for the entire ride.
- All children younger than 13 years of age should be restrained in the rear seats of vehicles.

Safety in and around motor vehicles

- Child safety seats are used for transporting children in motor vehicles only.
- Never leave children unattended in a motor vehicle.
- Always lock the vehicle’s doors and trunk and keep keys out of children’s reach.
- Identify and use safe play areas for children away from parked or moving cars.
- Walk all the way around your parked vehicle to check for children before getting in the car and starting the engine.
- When exiting the care, always look before you lock the doors so no child is accidentally forgotten.

For proper seat installation instructions, please refer to the owner’s manuals of both the child safety seat and the vehicle.

TO FIND OUT MORE

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