

What Is a Booster Seat?

A booster seat is a firm cushion of foam or plastic that raises the child higher in the car to improve the position and angle of the shoulder belt. (If there are no shoulder belts in the back seat of your car, skip to the bottom of the page.) There should be slots or hooks for the lap belt to keep it low, on the child's hips and thighs. There are backless, highback, and removable-back boosters. Most boosters include a shoulder belt guide or comfort clip that can be used, if necessary, to pull the shoulder belt slightly downward so it crosses the center of the shoulder and chest.

Choosing the best booster for your child

The ideal booster has a removable back with an adjustable headrest. Most highback boosters have high-density, energy-absorbing foam in the head area. To protect the neck and spine, the child's head (up to the top of the ears) must be supported by the vehicle seatback, booster, or headrest. An adjustable headrest helps keep a sleeping child positioned properly under the vehicle belt and positions the shoulder belt comfortably without preventing it from retracting properly.

Backless boosters are lightweight and inexpensive, so they are a reasonable choice for carpooling, play dates, and public distribution programs. A backless booster should not be used unless the child is able to sit upright throughout the trip and the child's head is supported by the vehicle seatback. For family trips, a backless booster can be used in the car on the way to the airport and at the destination if it is packed in a carry-on bag. Boosters may not be used on aircraft.

Combination seats, which are often marketed as "highback boosters," usually have a harness that can be used up to 40 pounds or more, then removed to convert the seat to a booster (see cautions in next section).

How to tell if a booster fits

Try the booster with your child in your car(s). Make sure the lap belt is positioned low, touching the child's thighs and hips, and the shoulder belt crosses the middle of the child's shoulder, touching the chest.

Cautions: Some highback boosters and combination seats used as boosters have one or more of these problems:

(1) High sides that hold the lap belt above and away from the child, which may allow "submarining" (sliding downward and forward) in a crash. (2) Deep "wings" that hold the belt away from the child's shoulder, either too far forward or too far to the side. (3) A plastic shoulder belt guide attached to the side of the backrest that grips the shoulder belt tightly. This type of clip could prevent the belt from retracting properly after the child leans forward or pulls on the belt, resulting in dangerous slack. If the shoulder belt fits properly, it is not necessary to use the clip. If the clip is needed to keep the belt from scraping the neck or face and the shoulder belt cannot be "locked" (check vehicle owner's manual), supervise the child closely, or select a different model.

When a booster should not be used

- If your car does not have shoulder belts in the back seat, a booster seat cannot be used. (Many cars made before 1990 have only lap belts in the back seat; newer cars may not have shoulder belts in the center.)
- If your child is too large for a typical safety seat with its own harness and is under 3-4 years old or extremely active, he or she probably is not ready to sit still in a lap and shoulder belt with a booster. You need a larger seat or a travel vest to keep the child properly seated and secured (see below).

Large safety seats with a harness

For best protection, keep your child in a safety seat with a harness or a travel vest/harness as long as possible. For a complete list, go to www.carseat.org > Parents' Corner > Helpful Handouts or call (310-222-6860).

(See other side for a list of boosters)

List of Belt-Positioning Booster Seats

No internal harness. Must be used with vehicle lap and shoulder belts. Child should be at least 3-4 years old and able to stay seated with the belts properly positioned.

Highback Boosters with Adjustable Headrest

Recommended for best positioning of shoulder belt, to keep sleeping child placed properly in belt, and for head support in vehicles with low seatback, except as noted. Some have removable back. *Must be supported by vehicle seatback.

Manufacturer	Model Name	Child's Wt.	Features
Britax	Parkway SG	40-120	May be used without backrest. SecureGuard clip keeps lap belt low.
Combi	Kobuk	33-100	May be used without backrest.
Compass	Folding Boosters (various)	30-100	Fold up for storage and travel.
Dorel	enRoute, Auto Booster, Belt-Positioning Booster*	30-100	Removable back (for 40-100 lbs.) Also available without backrest.
Dorel	High Rider*, Protek*	30-100	May be used without backrest.
Dorel	Maxi-Cosi Rodi, Rodi XR*	30-100	Removable back (for 40-100 lbs.)
Dorel	Pronto*	30-100	Removable back (for 40-100 lbs.)
Evenflo	Big Kid	30-100	Also available without backrest.
Graco	AirBooster	30-100	Removable back (for 40-100 lbs.)
Graco	TurboBooster Safe Seat	30-100	Also available without backrest.
Magna Clek	Oobr	33-100	Includes rigid LATCH attachment.
Recaro	Vivo, Vivo Lite	30-100	Back is not removable.
Sunshine Kids	Monterey	30-120	May be used without backrest. Includes flexible lower LATCH attachments.
Team-Tex	Dreamway, Ferrari	33-100	May be used without backrest.

Other Highback Boosters

Back is not removable. No adjustable headrest. Do not use if shoulder belt is not touching child's shoulder and chest or if lap belt is not touching top of child's thighs. Caution: Some highback boosters have a belt guide that prevents the shoulder belt from retracting properly to take out the slack if child leans forward.

Manufacturer	Model Name	Child's Weight
Dorel	Complete Voyager, Select Ride	40-80
Dorel	Traveler	30-80
Evenflo	Sightseer	30-100
Jeffco Fibres Inc.	Grizzly Bear	40-95
Jeffco Fibres Inc.	Polar Bear	30-100
Jeffco Fibres Inc.	Teddy Bear	30-80

Backless Boosters Acceptable if child's head is supported by vehicle seatback. May have belt adjuster clip/strap.

Manufacturer	Model Name	Child's Wt.	Features
Combi	Dakota	33-100	
Dorel	enRoute, Auto Booster, No Back Booster	40-100	Also available with backrest.
Dorel	Highrise, Ambassador	30-100	
Evenflo	Amp	40-100	
Evenflo	Big Kid No-Back	40-100	Also available with backrest.
Graco	Backless TurboBooster SafeSeat	40-100	Also available with backrest.
Magna Clek	Olli, Ozzi	40-120	Includes rigid LATCH attachment
ProRider	CNS Booster	33-80	
Team-Tex	HighRide, Ola, Ferrari	33-100	

Note: Integrated or add-on child restraints are available from some vehicle dealers.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. P.O. Box 553, Altadena, CA 91003 www.carseat.org (800) 745-SAFE

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