

Selecting the Appropriate Safety Seat for Your Child

1. Keep your baby facing the rear of the car as long as possible (one year minimum; 2 years recommended).
2. Keep your child in a seat with a harness as long as possible (3-4 years minimum; 50-80 lbs. recommended).
3. Keep your older child in a booster seat until he or she fits properly in the lap and shoulder belts in the car. To find out if your child is ready to wear just a safety belt, try the 5-Step Test at the bottom of this chart.

| Type of Seat | Child's Age | Child's Weight (check mfr. instr.) | Child's Height | Comments |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| Infant-only (must face rear of car) | Birth/5 lbs. up to about 6-9 months or more. | Up to 22 lbs. (Some models fit up to 30 lbs.) | Child's head must be at least one inch below top edge of seat | Smaller and lighter than a convertible seat. Most models have detachable base that stays in car. May be sold as part of stroller system. |
| Convertible (may be used rear facing or forward facing) | Birth/5 lbs. up to about 3-4 years or more | Up to 30-35 lbs. rear facing, up to at least 40 lbs. forward facing. (Some models fit up to 50-80 lbs.) | Rear facing: Child's head must be at least one inch below top edge of seat. Forward facing: shoulders must be at or below top strap slots. | 5-point harness without shield preferred. Use rear facing as long as possible (one year minimum; two years recommended). |
| Forward facing only with harness | Age 1-2 to 4 years or more | Most models fit 20 to 40 lbs. Some models for larger children | Shoulders must be at or below top strap slots | May not be used when baby outgrows infant-only seat unless baby is at least 1 yr. |
| Combination (forward facing only; harness is removable) | Age one to 8 years or more (use harness as long as possible, at least until 3-4) | 20-30 lbs. up to 40-65 lbs. with harness. 30-40 lbs. up to 80-100 lbs. with lap and shoulder belt. Check instructions. | Remove harness if child's shoulders are above top strap slots. Child's head must be supported up to top of ears. | Some models have higher strap slots than those in convertible seats. When used as booster, make sure lap belt is not positioned too high. |
| Belt-positioning booster (no harness included) | 3-4 years until vehicle belt fits properly (see 5-Step Test) | 30-40 lbs. up to 80-100 lbs. Weight limits vary; check instructions. | Child's head must be supported up to top of ears. If vehicle seatback is low, use booster with backrest. | Must be used with lap and shoulder belt. Recommend booster with removable back and adjustable headrest. |
| Special products | Birth to adult | Birth to 160 lbs. | Various | Car beds, harnesses, large seats for children with special needs. |
| Vehicle safety belt only | For children who pass the 5-Step Test. Depends on vehicle, child's size and behavior. | The 5-Step Test The child is ready for a safety belt if the answer to every question is "yes." 1. Does the child sit all the way back against the auto seat? 2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the auto seat? 3. Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and arm? 4. Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs? 5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip? | | |

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