

Keep Kids Safe

A Parent's Guide to Car Seats



Choosing and using the right car seat.



For safety's sake...

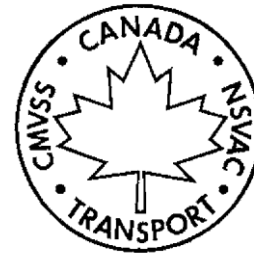
Your child should be in a properly installed car seat whenever he or she rides in any car. This includes riding in taxis or in grandparents' or babysitters' cars.

Use this information to help you learn how to install and use car seats in your own car, van, truck or SUV. Your car seat instructions and car owner's manual will have information specific to your own car seat and vehicle.

Please note: When we use the word "car" it includes cars, vans, trucks and SUVs.

Choosing and Using the Right Car Seat

Car crashes kill and injure more children than any other cause. When you use the right car seat in the right way, you can reduce the risk that your child will be hurt or killed by 70%. Car seats and booster seats save lives.



For a car seat to protect your child, you must:

- ☐ Use a car seat that meets Transport Canada's safety regulations. *Look for this safety mark*
Look for a seat with the safety mark shown to the right.
- ☐ Choose the seat that is right for your child's age and size.
- ☐ Put the seat in your car the right way.
- ☐ Buckle your child in the seat correctly every time.

Once you've chosen the right car seat for your child's age and size, you can use the checklists in this booklet to be sure that:

- You put the seat in your car the right way.
- You buckle your child into the seat correctly.

The kind of seat children need changes as they grow. Don't be in a rush to move your child from one kind of seat to the next. Make sure that your child is old enough and big enough to be safe in the next stage of seat.

If you are using an old or used car seat, check that:

- it has all of its parts including the instruction manual
- it is not visibly damaged in any way
- it is not older than the manufacturer's expiry date
- it has never been in a crash

For safety's sake...

Never ride with a baby or child in your arms or on your lap.

Never leave a child alone in a car.

Objects in the car can fly around and injure people during a crash or sudden stop. Be sure everything in your car is strapped down or stored in the trunk.

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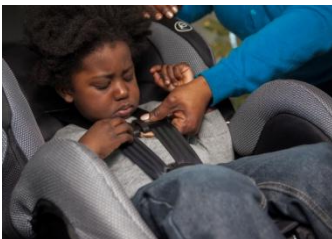


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Babies need a rear-facing seat from birth until they are at least 1 year old and weigh at least 10 kg (22 pounds). Rear facing is safest for young children. Many seats can be used rear facing until your baby weighs 18 kg (40 pounds).



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Children must be at least 1 year old and weigh at least 10 kg (22 pounds) before they move to a forward-facing seat. They must continue to use this seat until they weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds). Some forward-facing car seats can be used with harness straps until your child weighs up to 30 kg (65 pounds).



Booster Seat 16

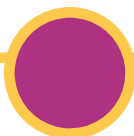
Children must weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds) to move to a booster seat. A child should also be at least 4 years old. It's safest for children use a booster seat until they are at least 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall.



Seat Belt 18

Children are not ready for a seat belt until they are at least 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall. They must be tall enough for their legs to bend over the edge of the seat while sitting up straight.

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For safety's sake...

When you buy a car seat:

- **Read and follow the directions that come with your car seat.** Every brand of car seat is a little different. Each will come with an instruction booklet.
- **Send in the registration card or register online** when you buy a car seat. If you do this, the manufacturer can let you know if there are any recalls or problems with the seat.
- **Check with Transport Canada** to see if there are any recalls on the seat you plan to use. You'll find contact information for Transport Canada on page 21.

The Safest Spot in Your Car



The safest spot for your child is in the back seat of your car. Even when your child no longer needs a car seat or booster seat, he or she is safest in the back seat until age 13.

Airbags are dangerous for children. Even without an airbag, children are much safer riding in the back seat.



For safety's sake...

If you don't have a back seat:

- It is **never safe** to put a rear-facing infant seat in a seat with an active front air bag. This includes airbags that use a weight sensor.
- If you can disable the airbag with a key or switch you may be able to install your child's seat in the front passenger seat. Remember to re-activate it for an adult passenger. Check your vehicle manual for more information.

The middle seat of a truck is not a safe place for a child, because he or she would be too close to the driver's airbag.

Airbags are dangerous for children.

To find out if it's okay to use a car seat in the front seat of your car:

- Check your owner's manual
- Call your car's manufacturer
- Call Transport Canada

(You'll find contact information for Transport Canada on page 21.)



The middle seat

If your car will allow it, the middle of the back seat is the safest place. The side positions are also safe. The middle position is NOT the safest if you cannot get a tight and secure installation in that spot.

In many cars you can only use the Universal Anchorage System (page 13) or the lower anchors to install a seat on the sides. You can still use the seat belt to install the car seat in the middle. Check your car owner's manual for more information.

For a child in a booster seat or seat belt, the middle seat is no longer the safest when:

- **There is a lap-only belt.** A booster seat can only be used with a lap AND shoulder belt. A child in a seat belt is not safe with a lap-only belt. Choose a seat with a lap and shoulder belt.
- **There is no head support.** A child needs head support to the tops of his or her ears. This support can come from a high-back booster seat or a tall seat back or the car head rest.

Types of Car Seats

Rear-facing Seats

Babies need a rear-facing seat from birth until they are at least 1 year old and weigh at least 10 kg (22 pounds). Rear facing is safest for babies and young children.

A rear-facing only car seat can be used from birth until at least 10 kg (22 pounds). Some rear-facing only seats can hold a larger baby and can be used up to 18 kg (35 pounds). Check the label on your seat for weight and height limits.

These seats can be carried with a handle and are then attached to a base that stays in the car. Most models can also be installed without the base.

A convertible car seat can be used rear facing for longer and can then be used as a forward-facing seat. Most models can be used rear facing until your child weighs at least 18 kg (40 pounds), and there are a few that can be used rear facing for even longer. Check the label on your seat for weight and height limits.



Rear-facing only car seat



Rear-facing convertible car seat

Forward-facing Seats

Children must be at least 1 year old and weigh more than 10 kg (22 pounds) before they can move to a **forward-facing car seat**. It is safer to keep your baby in a rear-facing convertible seat longer.

Children must use a **forward-facing car seat** until they weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds). Some forward-facing seats can be hold children up to 30 kg (65 pounds). It is safest to keep your child in a seat with a 5-point harness until he or she is ready for a booster. In order to use a seat with a 5-point harness longer, look for a seat with high weight and height limits.

Some seats can be used as a booster seat once the harness is outgrown.



Forward-facing car seat

Booster Seats

Children must weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds) to move to a **booster seat**. A child should also be at least 4 years old and have the maturity to sit in a booster seat correctly. Your child should use a booster seat until he or she is at least 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall and fits the seat belt correctly without a booster seat.



High-back booster seat



Backless booster seat

Using a Rear-Facing Car Seat



Rear-facing only infant car seat



Rear-facing convertible car seat

Babies need a rear-facing infant seat from birth until they are at least 1 year old and weigh at least 10 kg (22 pounds). Rear-facing car seats provide the best protection for your baby and toddler's head and neck.

Many babies start off using an infant seat with a handle and then move to a convertible seat later. Most convertible seats can be used in the rear-facing position until your baby weighs 18 kg (40 pounds). Check the label on your seat for height and weight limits. It is okay for your baby's feet to touch the back of the car. It is safest to keep your toddler rear-facing for as long as he or she still fits in his or her larger convertible car seat.

1. Put the seat in your car

Cars built after September 2002 have a Universal Anchorage System (UAS/LATCH). If you are using this system:

- ☐ Check the Owner's Manual to see how to use the UAS/LATCH system in your car. In most cars you cannot use the UAS in the middle seat. Use the seatbelt to install the seat in the middle instead.
- ☐ Put the UAS/LATCH strap through the marked pathway for rear facing on the car seat or base. Connect the car seat's UAS/LATCH strap to the UAS anchors in the car.
- ☐ Push down hard on the car seat or base and pull the UAS belt tight. The seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch). If the top of the seat moves, that is normal.

*If you are using a UAS/LATCH system **do not** also use the regular seat belt.*



Lift the cover to get easier access to pull the strap tight.

If you are using a lap-only belt to install:

- ☐ Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with a rear-facing car seat in your car.
- ☐ Put the seat belt through the marked pathway for rear facing on the car seat or base. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- ☐ Push down hard on the car seat or base and pull the seat belt tight. The seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch). If the top of the seat moves, that is normal.
- ☐ Test the seat belt to be sure it stays tight. If the seat belt loosens, tighten it again, unbuckle the seat belt, flip the buckle over and buckle it again.



Push hard. Use your hand or a knee



Rear-facing only seat without the base



Locking clip in use

If you are using a lap and shoulder belt to hold the car seat:

- ☐ Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with a rear-facing car seat in your car.
- ☐ Put the seat belt through the marked pathway for rear facing on the car seat or base and buckle it. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- ☐ Pull the shoulder belt all the way out. You'll hear it click when it reaches the end. Let go of it. As the belt shortens, push **down** on the infant car seat or base. Push hard. At the same time, pull **up** on the shoulder belt so that it will lock in place as tightly as possible.
- ☐ Test the seat belt to be sure it stays tight. The car seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch). If the top of the seat moves, that is normal.
- ☐ Not all seatbelts lock in this way. When you pull your seatbelt all the way out and let it go, it should shorten but not lengthen again. If it can be pulled out again, it doesn't lock and you will need to use a locking clip to keep the car seat in place. Only use a locking clip on a buckle that can slide along the belt.

If you find that a tight shoulder belt is tipping the car seat to the side, you may leave the belt unlocked and use a locking clip instead

How to use a locking clip



Place within 2.5 cm (1 inch) of the edge of the buckle.



Squeeze belts through each prong of clip.



Locking clip lies flat and should look like the photo.

Where should the HANDLE go?

For some rear-facing only seats the handle will need to be **up** in the car. For other seats it will need to be tucked **down** behind the seat. For some seats the handle goes to **another position** at the baby's feet. Follow the instructions for your seat.



Make sure that the angle is correct for your rear-facing car seat

Rear-facing seats need to be installed at a reclined angle. If a seat is too upright it is not safe for newborns and young babies who need to be tilted at an angle to keep their heads lying back.

- ☐ Check the labels on the seat to see if it is at the right angle in the car. You may find a line that should be level with the ground or there might be a guide that can only be read when the car is parked on flat ground.
- ☐ Adjust the angle of your seat. Some seats have a way to adjust the seat to be more reclined. If the seat is still too upright or does not have another way to adjust the angle, you should check the instruction booklet to find out if you may add a rolled towel or pool noodle to change the angle of your seat.
- ☐ Some seats can be installed more upright for an older baby or toddler. Check your labels.



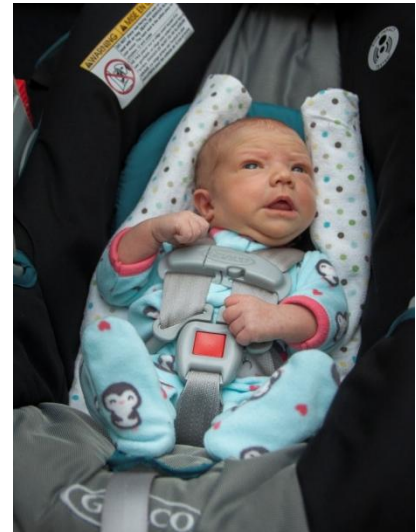
Check the angle of your rear-facing car seat.



Check the instructions to find out how to change the angle of your seat.

2. Put your child in the seat

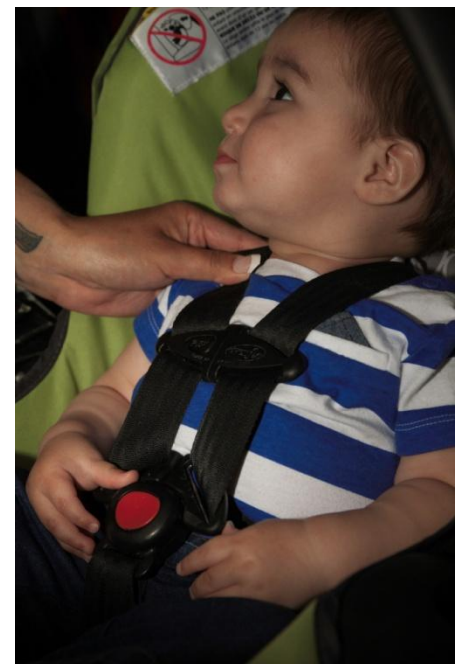
- ☐ The shoulder harness should be threaded in the car seat as shown in the instructions. Choose the slot that is even with or slightly below your child's shoulders for rear facing.
- ☐ The child's bottom should be placed all the way back.
- ☐ Buckle the harness over the child's legs.
- ☐ The chest clip should be level with your baby's armpits.
- ☐ The shoulder harness should stay on the baby's shoulders.
- ☐ Pull the harness snug. You should not be able to pinch the harness together at the shoulder.
- ☐ Do not use snowsuits, bunting bags or head-huggers that did not come with the seat. You may use rolled receiving blankets on either side of the baby.



Rolled receiving blankets are allowed.



Add a blanket over top, once baby is buckled.



The harness should be snug. You should not be able to hold a pinch.

Using a Forward-Facing Car Seat



Babies must be at least 1 year old and weigh more than 10 kg (22 pounds) before they move to a forward-facing seat. There is no rush. It is safer to keep your child in a rear-facing convertible seat for as long as he or she still fits.

Children must use a forward-facing car seat until they weigh 18 kg (40 pounds). Some forward-facing car seats can be used with harness straps until your child weighs 30 kg (65 pounds). Look for a seat with a high weight and height limit so that you can use a harnessed seat longer.

Before you install the car seat

Put your child in the car seat to see how the harness straps fit. The harness straps should come out of a slot that is level with or above your child's shoulders.

1. Put the seat in your car

Cars built after September 2002 have a Universal Anchorage System (UAS/LATCH). If you are using this system:

- ☐ Check the Owner's Manual to see how to use the UAS/LATCH system in your car. In most cars you cannot use the UAS in the middle seat. Use the seatbelt to install the seat in the middle instead.
- ☐ Put the UAS/LATCH strap through the marked pathway for forward facing on the car seat. Connect the car seat's UAS strap to the UAS anchors in the car.
- ☐ Push down hard on the car seat and pull the UAS/LATCH belt tight. The seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch).
- ☐ Hook the tether strap on the car seat to the tether anchor in the car. Pull the tether strap tight. If you don't see a tether anchor, your owner's manual will show you where it is.

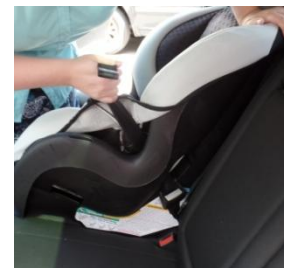
*If you are using a UAS/LATCH system **do not** also use the regular seat belt.*

If you are using a lap-only belt to hold the car seat:

- ☐ Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with a front-facing car seat in your car.
- ☐ Put the seat belt through the marked pathway on the car seat. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- ☐ Push down on the car seat and pull seat belt tight. Push hard.
- ☐ Test the seatbelt to be sure it stays tight. If the seat belt loosens, tighten it again, unbuckle the seat belt, flip the buckle over and buckle it again. The car seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch).



Belt path is behind child's back.



Lift cover to pull strap easier



Always attach the top tether to the anchor point for that seat.



Tether anchor



Push hard. Use your knee.



Locking clip used on a forward-facing car seat.

- ☐ Hook the tether strap on the car seat to the tether anchor in the car. Pull the tether strap tight. If you don't see a tether anchor, your owner's manual will show you where it is. It is never safe to use a forward-facing car seat without a tether.

If you are using a lap and shoulder belt to hold the car seat:

- ☐ Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with a forward-facing car seat in your car.
- ☐ Put the seat belt through the marked pathway for forward facing on the car seat and buckle it. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- ☐ Pull the shoulder belt all the way out. You'll hear it click when it reaches the end. Let go of it. As the belt shortens, push **down** on the car seat. Push hard. At the same time, pull **up** on the shoulder belt so that it will lock in place as tightly as possible.
- ☐ Not all seatbelts lock in this way. When you pull your seatbelt all the way out and let it go, it should shorten but not lengthen again. If it can be pulled out, it doesn't lock and you will need to use a locking clip to keep the car seat in place. Only use a locking clip on a buckle that can slide along the belt. *How to use a locking clip* is on page 10.
- ☐ Test the seat belt to be sure it stays tight. If the seat belt loosens, use a locking clip. The car seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch).
- ☐ Hook the tether strap on the car seat to the tether anchor in the car. Pull the tether strap tight. If you don't see a tether anchor, your owner's manual will show you where it is. It is never safe to use a forward-facing car seat without a tether.

If you find that a tight shoulder belt is tipping the car seat to the side, you may leave the belt unlocked and use a locking clip instead.

2. Put your child in the seat

- ☐ The shoulder harness should be threaded in the car seat as shown in the instructions. Choose the slot that is even with or above your child's shoulders for forward facing.
- ☐ The child's bottom should be placed all the way back.
- ☐ Buckle the harness over the child's legs.
- ☐ The chest clip should be level with your child's armpits.
- ☐ The shoulder harness should stay on the child's shoulders.
- ☐ Pull the harness snug. You should not be able to pinch the harness together at the shoulder.
- ☐ Do not use bulky coats, snowsuits, or any items that are not intended to be used with your seat.



You should not be able to hold a pinch of the harness together at the shoulder.



Using a Booster Seat

For safety's sake...

When the booster seat is empty, buckle it in place or take it out of your car. A loose booster seat can bounce around in a sudden stop or crash.



Children must weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds) before moving into a booster seat. Your child should also be at least 4 years old and have the maturity to sit straight and tall in order to use a booster seat safely. Your child must also have the maturity to never meddle with or unbuckle the seat belt. There is no rush. Some car seats can be used with a 5-point harness until your child weighs 30 kg (65 pounds).

Children should continue to use a booster seat until they are 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall and fit the adult seat belt correctly. Most children are between 10-12 years old when they reach this height.

Adult seat belts are too big for a child's small body. A booster seat lifts your child up so that the seat belt fits safely across the strongest bones and away from the soft belly.

A booster seat also helps the shoulder portion of the belt to fit. When the shoulder belt is uncomfortable a child may move it off his or her shoulder and tuck it unsafely under the arm or behind the back.

Booster seats can be used only in seats with a lap AND shoulder belt. There are two kinds of Booster Seats:

- **High Back:** These seats support the child's head in cars with low-backed seats or no headrest in the car.
- **Backless:** They are safe in cars with high seat backs or headrests.

All children need support behind their heads to the top of their ears. This support can come from a high-back booster seat, a tall seat back or a car headrest. If the child's ears are above, he or she may need a different booster seat with a higher back.

1. Put the seat in your car:

- ☐ Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a booster seat in your car.
- ☐ Follow the instructions that come with your booster seat.
- ☐ Put the booster seat in the back seat of your car.

2. Put your child in the seat

- ☐ The lap belt is low and snug over the hips.
- ☐ The shoulder belt crosses the middle of your child's chest. Your child could be hurt or killed if the shoulder belt is behind his or her back or under the arm.



High-back booster seat



Backless booster seat

Using a Seat Belt



For safety's sake...

Children are safest in the back seat, away from an active airbag until they are 13 years old.

When a child reaches 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall he or she may be ready to use a regular seat belt. Most children are between 10-12 years old before they reach this height. There's no rush to move to a regular seat belt.



Children are ready for a seat belt when:

- ☐ They are at least 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall.
- ☐ Their knees bend at the edge of the seat while sitting up straight with their back against the vehicle seat.
- ☐ The lap belt stays low and snug across their hip bones.
- ☐ The shoulder belt fits across the middle of their chest and rests between their neck and shoulder.

It should NOT be across the child's neck, behind the back or under the arm.

- ☐ They can sit this way for the whole trip without slouching.

If your child does not fit the seat belt in your car, he or she still needs a booster seat. A child may fit well in one car and still need a booster seat in another car.



To Find Out More



For more information and resources on car seat and booster seat safety contact:



www.childsafetylink.ca

phone: (902) 470-7036 or

1-866-288-1388

(toll free in the Maritimes)

Email: childsafetylink@iwbk.nshealth.ca

Find us on



For product advisories or recalls:

Transport Canada

www.tc.gc.ca

Search for "Child Restraint Notices"

phone: 1-800-333-0371 (toll free)

We would like to thank the parents and children of Saint John, NB and Halifax, NS for posing for these car seat and booster seat photos.

Aussi disponible en français

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