

A photograph of a young child with dark, curly hair sitting in a car seat. The child is wearing a green long-sleeved shirt and is secured by a black and grey car seat harness. The child is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. In the background, the interior of a car is visible, including the steering wheel and a driver wearing a red and white plaid shirt. The text "Car Seat Safety Guide" is overlaid on the left side of the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Car Seat Safety Guide

Keep a Child Safe with a Car Seat or Booster Seat.

Motor vehicle injuries are a leading cause of death for children. But many of these deaths can be prevented with the appropriate car seats, booster seats and seat belts.

Car seat use reduces the risk of death to infants under the age of 1 by 71% and to toddlers 1–4 years old by 54% in passenger vehicles.

Booster seat use reduces the risk of serious injury by 45% for children 4–8 years old when compared with seat belt use alone.

Make sure a child is in a car seat or booster seat every trip, every time.



**Department of
Health**

Ohio Injury Prevention Partnership
Child Injury Action Group

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Choose the Right Car Seat

based on a child's weight, height, age and developmental level.

Choose the Right Car Seat for a Child.

Select the seat based on a child's age, weight, height and developmental level.

Weight & Height

Car seats have limits and can have different ones for each mode of use. Weigh & measure your child and refer to the labels or manual.

If a child's weight or height exceeds the limit, he/she has outgrown the seat.

A child has outgrown a rear-facing car seat when the top of the head is only 1 inch below the top of the car seat shell.

Age

A child should remain rear-facing for as long as possible, until at least 2 years of age or until reaching the weight or height limit of a car seat. It's safest to use a car seat with a five-point harness for as long as possible.

Developmental Levels

Older children with poor head control and other children with special needs may benefit from staying rear-facing as long as possible.



Infant Car Seats

help protect a baby in a crash.

Infant Car Seats

Age: Birth to weight or height limit on car seat

Rear-facing Only

The carrier can be removed from a base that is installed in a vehicle.

Use a convertible car seat when a child reaches the weight or height limit listed on a car seat.

Recline the Seat Correctly

Rear-facing car seats should be reclined between 30-45°, depending on the instructions.

The recline position keeps a child's head and neck supported and airways clear. It is especially important for young infants who are still developing head and neck control.

Recline angle indicators are a bubble, line on a sticker or stamped into plastic, or a color indicator.

Install a car seat so the recline falls within the range suggested for a child.

Use the recline adjuster to accommodate the slope of a vehicle's seat.





Convertible Car Seats

protect a child from birth to 5 or 6 years old.

Convertible Car Seats

Age: Birth to 5 or 6 years old.

Always check weight and height limit on car seat.

A convertible car seat changes from rear-facing to forward-facing.

It has multiple slots for routing the seat belt or lower anchors for installation.

Always check the manual to make sure the seat belt or lower anchors are routed correctly based on the directions.

Slots should be labeled on the car seat as the rear-facing belt path or forwardfacing belt path.



Face a Car Seat the Right Way
based on a child's age, weight and height.

Rear-facing Car Seats

Rear-facing car seats are safer than forward-facing. All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car safety seat (CSS) as long as possible, until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their CSS's manufacturer. Most convertible seats have limits will permit children to ride rear-facing for 2 years or more" (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2018).

Birth - 12 Months

A child under 1 year should always ride in a rear-facing car seat.

1 Years - 3 Years Old

A child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until reaching the weight or height limit allowed by the manufacturer.

Caregivers should never use a rear-facing seat above the weight or height limit of the manufacturer.

Rear-facing children commonly sit with their legs comfortably crossed or resting on the back of the vehicle seat which is a low injury risk.



Face a Car Seat the Right Way
based on a child's age, weight and height.

Forward-facing Car Seats and Booster Seats

4 Years – 7 Years Old

A child should be kept forward-facing with a harness until he/she reaches the weight or height limit allowed by the car seat.

Booster Seat

Ohio law requires that children under age 8 or shorter than 4 foot 9 inches must use a booster seat.

Belt positioning boosters place the seat belt off a child's neck and across the chest.

The lap belt should sit low on a child's hips, not the stomach.

Make sure the seat belt is snug, flat and comfortable on the child.

High Back Boosters

They provide head, neck and back support.

They are recommended for vehicles that have a low seat back or that don't have a head restraint.



Seat Belts

need to fit correctly to protect a child from injury.

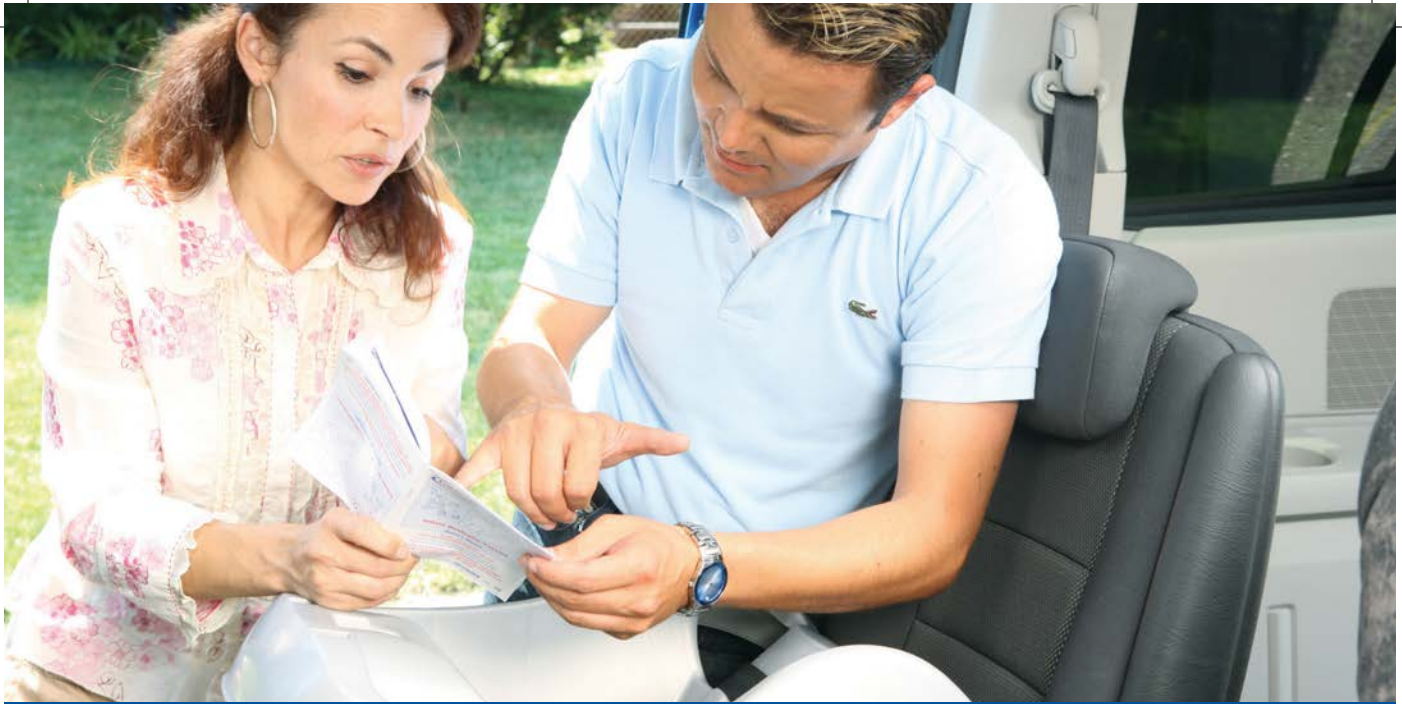
Make sure the Seat Belt Fits A Child Correctly.

A child may be between 8-12 years of age before the seat belt fits properly.

For a child to properly fit in a seat belt, he or she must be:

- Tall enough to sit without slouching.
- Able to keep his/her back against the vehicle seat.
- Able to keep his/her knees naturally bent over the edge of the seat.
- Able to keep his/her feet flat on the floor.

For all children under age 13, the back seat is the safest place for them to ride.



Properly Install & Secure a Car Seat
to decrease the risk of injury in a crash.

Properly Install & Secure a Car Seat.

A car seat that is not properly installed or secured increases the chance of a child getting injured in a crash.

Read the manual.

Read the vehicle and car seat manuals and follow the instructions.

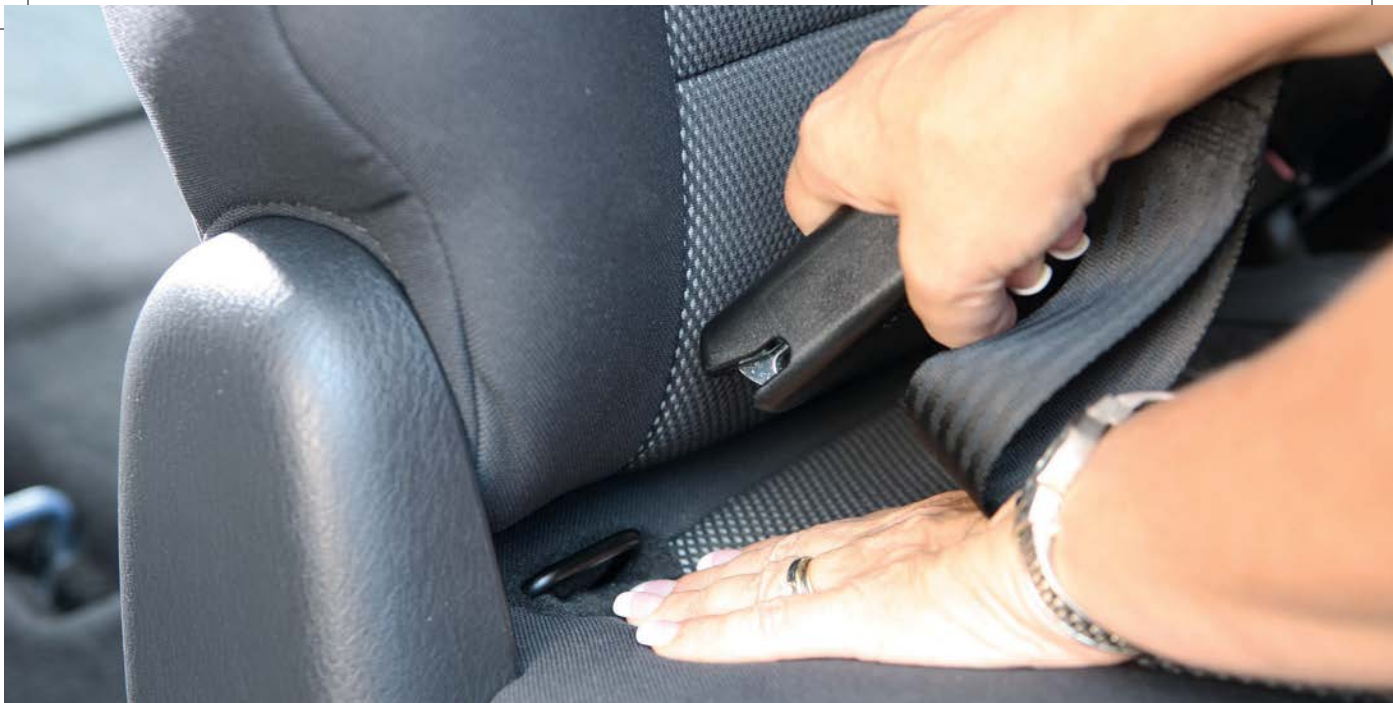
Use Anchors or a Seat Belt to Secure The Seat.

Decide to use the lower anchors or seat belt.

Use one or the other, not both together, unless specified by your car seat.

Pay attention to the labels on your car seat.

Using a seat belt is as safe as using the lower anchors.



Use Anchors to Secure the Car Seat
so it doesn't move in a crash.

Use Anchors to Secure the Car Seat.

Decide to use the lower anchors or a seat belt. Use one or the other, not both together, unless specified by both the car seat and vehicle's manuals.

Lower Anchors

Make sure connectors are fully secured and never upside down. Connect both sides, push down on a car seat, and tighten the webbing.

The car seat must have a set of lower anchor connectors that can attach to a vehicle's set of lower anchors.

If the anchor is hidden behind fabric or a cover in a car, a symbol near the anchor should help you find it.



Anchor Symbol Example



Lower anchors



Secure the Car Seat with a Seat Belt
so it doesn't move in a crash.

Use a Seat Belt to Secure a Car Seat.

Decide to use the lower anchors or a seat belt. Use one or the other, not both together, unless specified by the car seat's instructions.

The retractor or latchplate on the seat belt must lock.

- **Retractor:** Put the seat belt through the car seat belt path and buckle it. Slowly pull the seat belt all the way out of retractor. You will hear a click and a ratcheting noise when you release it. You should be unable to pull the webbing back out. Push down on the center of the car seat and tighten the seat belt. You should hear a ratcheting noise as the seat belt is pulled into the retractor.
- **Locking Latchplate:** It holds the lap belt snug after it has been adjusted and contains a metal bar on the underside that “locks” the belt in position. Put the seat belt through the seat belt path and buckle it. Push down on the center of the car seat and tighten the seat belt.

Installation Should Be Tight. The car seat shouldn't move more than 1 inch in any direction (side to side or outward). Grip the seat at the belt path and make sure there is less than 1 inch of movement. Car seats not properly secured increase the risk of injury in a crash.

The Webbing Should Never Be Twisted. The lower anchors or seat belt webbing should be in the correct belt path, laying flat and never twisted.



Harness Straps

limit movement to reduce injury in a crash.

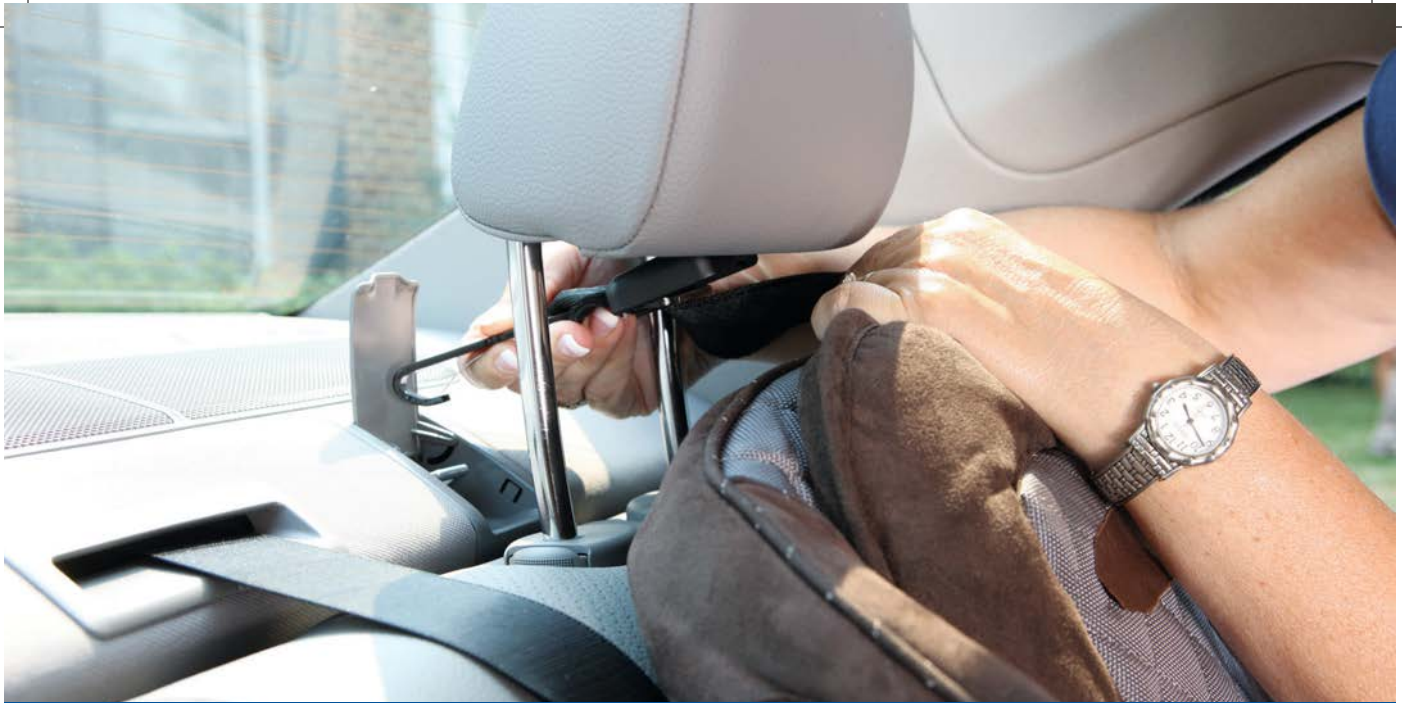
Harness Straps

Harness Straps for Rear-facing: Harness slots should be at or slightly below a child's shoulders to prevent him/her from sliding up in a crash.

Harness Straps for Forward-facing: Harness slots should be at or above a child's shoulders to decrease the distance he/she travels forward to limit force on the shoulders.

Tips:

- Harness straps should always be snug so you cannot pull the strap from a child's body and pinch fabric together, and should be flat and untwisted.
- Snug straps reduce movement in a crash. The more movement there is, the more risk of injury.
- If you can pinch extra fabric, the harness is too loose. Tighten and recheck it.
- Loosen the straps to get a child out and tighten them each time you put a child in the seat.
- Place the chest clip at armpit level -- not too high or too low.
- A chest clip will keep straps properly positioned on a child's shoulders.



Tether Straps

reduce movement of the car seat to
prevent injuries in a crash.

Tether Straps

The correct use of a tether strap can reduce the movement of a car seat by 4-6 inches. Reducing movement can reduce injuries in a crash.

When forward-facing, a tether strap should always be used if the top tether anchor is in the vehicle.

It is located at the top of a car seat and attaches to an anchor point in the car.

Check a vehicle's manual to find the correct anchor point and proper use.

Tightly attach the tether strap to the correct anchor point in a vehicle.



Top Tether Strap Attached to Anchor Point



Car Seat Registration, Expiration and History

are important to keep a seat as safe as possible.

Register the Car Seat.

It is the best way for the manufacturer to alert you of a recall and send a repair kit. Mail the registration card or register on the manufacturer's website.

Car Seats Expire.

Plastic and other materials degrade over time and may not function as they should. Newer technology and safety regulations can make older seats outdated and not as safe.

Car Seat History.

A car seat should have all parts, labels and instructions. You should not use it if it has ever been in a crash. Call your insurance company to request reimbursement for a new car seat if it has been in a crash.

Get Your Car Seat Checked.

Whether you've just installed a car seat or need help installing or using one, get help at a car seat inspection station near you. Certified technicians will inspect your car seat free of charge, in most cases, and show you how to correctly install and use it. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-boosterseats#installation-help-inspection>



Car Seats Are For Traveling.

Cribs are for sleeping.

Car Seats Are For Traveling.

If a baby falls asleep in a car seat, remove them from the car seat when arriving at a destination and put them on a firm sleep surface on their back as soon as possible.

ABCs of Safe Sleep: Ensure safe sleep out of the car seat by following the ABCs of safe sleep - every nap, every night, every time. Babies should sleep **A**lone, on their **B**acks, and in an empty **C**rib.

Tips:

- Do not leave children unsupervised in a car seat (awake or asleep).
- Never leave children in a car seat with unbuckled or partially buckled straps.
- Car seats should never be placed on a soft or unstable surface.
- In a car, the child is seated at an angle, but if the car seat is sitting on a floor or table, the child is not at the correct angle which could restrict the child's breathing (and lead to lower levels of oxygen).





It's the Law in Ohio
to have children in the right car seat.

Follow the Law

Ohio Car Seat Law ORC 4511.81 - Child Safety Restraint Requirements:

Infants/Toddlers

Law: Under 4 years of age or less than 40 pounds in child safety seat used according to car seat directions.

American Academy of Pediatrics' Recommendations:

- All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car safety seat (CSS) as long as possible, until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their CSS's manufacture.
- All children who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limits for their CSS should use a forward-facing CSS with a harness for long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by their CSS's manufacturer.

Preschoolers/School Age Children

Law: 4 to 8 year olds who weigh 40 pounds or more and who are shorter than 4 feet 9 inches (57 inches) in booster seat or other approved safety seat used according to car seat directions.

American Academy of Pediatrics' Recommendations:

- All children whose height or weight is above the forward-facing limit for their car safety seat should use a **belt-positioning booster seat** until the vehicle seat belt fits properly, typically when they have reached 4 feet 9 inches in height and are between 8 and 12 years of age.

Older Children

Law: Ohio law requires children age 8-15 to be in seat belts no matter where they are in the car.

American Academy of Pediatrics' Recommendations:

- When children are old enough and large enough to use the vehicle seat belt alone, they should always use **lap and shoulder seat belts**. All children younger than 13 years old should be restrained in the rear seats of vehicles for optimal protection.

Child Passenger Safety Law revised 10/7/09; Car Seat recommendations (AAP) revised 3/21/11.

A Message from the Ohio Department of Health:

The Ohio Department of Health's Child Passenger Safety (CPS) program, Ohio Buckles Buck-eyes (OBB), provides child safety seats and booster seats to eligible low-income families in all Ohio counties. The overall goal of this program is to increase the availability of child safety seats for families who could not otherwise afford them and to increase correct installation and proper use of child safety seats. More information about this program and how to find a local program in your area can be found at <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/child-injury-Prevention/child-passenger-safety>.

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For more information contact:

