

Car Seat Basics

Tips to keep your child safe on the road



Four types of car seats

Each seat has unique features to protect your child. Use your child's age, weight and height to pick the right one.

1 Infant only

This seat has a handle and base. When used, it always faces the car's rear and is reclined.



2 Convertible

This seat can be rear- or forward-facing. Your child can stay rear-facing until the seat's height and weight limits are reached.



3 Combination

This type looks like a booster seat with a harness. It's used forward-facing only. Use the harness until your child reaches the weight or height limits. Once you remove the harness, use it with the car's seat belt as a booster.



4 Booster

This seat raises your child to make the car's lap and shoulder belts fit the right way. There are backless and high-back booster seats.



Before installing the car seat

Read the label and owner's manual or go to the maker's website to learn how to:

- Install the seat.
- Place your child in the seat.
- Buckle and tighten the harness.
- Place the chest clip.
- Check that the straps fit snugly.

The harness protects your child

The harness spreads crash forces evenly over the strong parts of a child's body, like the shoulders and hips. If the harness is not secured the right way, your child can be injured or thrown from the car in a crash.

When using the harness:

- Straps must lay flat, evenly and not twisted.
- In a forward-facing car seat, the strap level must be at or above your child's shoulders, with the chest clip at the armpit level.
- In a rear-facing car seat, the strap level must be at or below your child's shoulders, with the chest clip at the armpit level.



Forward Facing Car Seat



Rear Facing Car Seat

NEVER use a car seat after a crash, even if your child was not in the seat. The seat is no longer safe. Check your car insurance policy on how to replace it.



California buckle-up laws

- Children under 2 years old must ride in a car seat facing the rear of a vehicle unless the child weighs more than 40 pounds or is over 40 inches tall. (*California Vehicle Code Section 27360*)
- Children must use a booster seat until age 8 or 4 feet 9 inches tall. However, if the child is older than 8, adult seat belts must fit correctly to help prevent injury in case of a crash. (*California Vehicle Code Section 27363*)


Adult seat belts fit correctly when your child can do all the following:


- Sit back against the seat.
- Bend their knees over the edge of the seat with their feet touching the floor.
- Sit with the shoulder portion of the belt lying between the neck and shoulder, crossing their chest.
- Sit with the lap belt lying low and flat on their thighs (not on the belly).
- Stay seated for the whole trip without slouching.

Resources:

Low-Cost Car Seat Program

Eligible parents can buy a new car seat at a low cost after they complete a safety class. For details, call:

 **San Bernardino County**
1-800-782-4264

 **Riverside County**
1-800-455-4942

Your local police dept. or California Highway Patrol

Ask trained agents to help install your child's car seat.

Learn more about car seat safety:

 **Safe Kids Worldwide**
www.safekids.org/car-seat

 **American Academy of Pediatrics**
www.HealthyChildren.org