



## Car Safety Seat Guide

### Why are car seats and booster seats important?

Car crashes are a real source of injury to children. According to NHTSA, motor vehicle traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for ages 3-33. Booster seats and car seats place your child in a safer position in the car to survive a crash.

### Types of Car Safety Seats at a Glance

Age-group	Type of Seat	General Guidelines
Infants and toddlers	Rear-facing-only	All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing seat until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat manufacturer. Most convertible seats have limits that will allow children to ride rear facing for 2 years or more.
	Rear-facing convertible	
Toddlers and preschoolers	Forward-facing convertible	Children who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their convertible seat should use a forward-facing seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat manufacturer. Many seats can accommodate children up to 65 pounds or more.
	Forward-facing with harness	
School-aged children	Booster	All children whose weight or height exceeds 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 8 to 12 years of age.
Older children		All children younger than 13 years should ride in the back seat.
	Seat belts	When children are old enough and large enough for the vehicle seat belt to fit them correctly, they should always use lap and shoulder seat belts for the best protection. All children younger than 13 years should ride in the back seat.

### What are the “rules” for car seat safety? This has been Indiana law since 2005.

1. The AAP recommends that all infants ride rear facing starting with their first ride home from the hospital. All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing seat as long as possible until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat manufacturer. Most convertible seats have limits that will allow children to ride rear facing for 2 years or more. When infants outgrow their rear-facing-only seat, a convertible seat installed rear facing is needed. All parents can benefit from getting installation help from a CPST to ensure that their child’s seat is properly installed. Use forward-facing toddler seats in the back seat from age 1 and 20 pounds to age 4 and 40 pounds.
2. Seat belts are made for adults. Children should stay in a booster seat until adult seat belts fit correctly, typically when children reach about 4 feet 9 inches in height and are 8 to 12 years of age. Most children will not fit in a seat belt alone until 10 to 12 years of age. When children are old enough and large enough to use the vehicle

seat belt alone, they should always use lap and shoulder seat belts for the best protection. All children younger than 13 years should ride in the back seat.

- a. The shoulder belt lies across the middle of the chest and shoulder, not the neck or throat.
- b. The lap belt is low and snug across the upper thighs, not the belly.
- c. Your child is tall enough to sit against the vehicle seat back with her knees bent over the edge of the seat without slouching and can comfortably stay in this position throughout the trip.

### **What is the best car seat/booster seat?**

1. No one seat is the “best” or “safest.” The best seat is the one that fits your child’s size, is correctly installed, fits well in your vehicle, and is used properly every time you drive.
2. Avoid used seats if you don’t know the seat’s history. Never use a car safety seat that
  - Is too old. Look on the label for the date the seat was made. Check with the manufacturer to find out how long it recommends using the seat.
  - Has any visible cracks on it.
  - Does not have a label with the date of manufacture and model number. Without these, you cannot check to see if the seat has been recalled.
  - Does not come with instructions. You need them to know how to use the seat. Instructions can be found on manufacturer websites or by contacting the manufacturer.
  - Is missing parts. Used car safety seats often come without important parts. Check with the manufacturer to make sure you can get the right parts.
  - Was recalled. You can find out by calling the manufacturer or contacting the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Vehicle Safety Hotline at 888/327-4236. You can also visit the NHTSA website at [www.safercar.gov](http://www.safercar.gov)
3. Backless booster seats should only be used if your vehicle has head rests for the seats. Otherwise, use a high-back booster seat.
4. Do not use seats that have been in a moderate or severe crash. Seats that were in a minor crash may still be safe to use, but some car safety seat manufacturers recommend replacing the seat after any crash, even a minor one. The NHTSA considers a crash minor if all the following situations are true:
  - The vehicle could be driven away from the crash.
  - The vehicle door closest to the car safety seat was not damaged.
  - No one in the vehicle was injured.
  - The airbags did not go off.
  - You can’t see any damage to the car safety seat.

### **What if I’m not sure I have my car seat installed correctly?**

1. Lutheran Children’s Hospital: 7950 West Jefferson Blvd
  - a. Free car seat safety inspections by appointment every Tuesday
  - b. Call 260-435-7887 for an appointment. The process takes ~30 minutes per seat.
2. Visit [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov), click on “Child Seat Inspections” to find other inspection sites near you.
3. For additional information on car seat safety and how to keep kids safe from injuries visit: <https://www.safekids.org/>