

# ✓ Check Your Child's Car Seat!

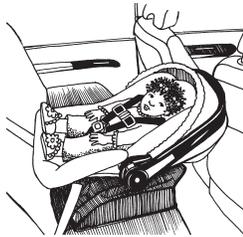
## Choosing and Using Car Seats Correctly

Child  
Safety  
Facts  
2009

### Is your child using the right car seat?

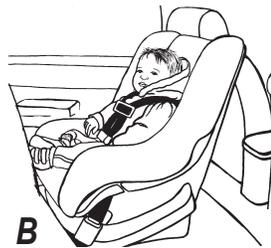
**STAGE 1: Rear-facing seat**—Facing the rear is the safest way for a baby or toddler to ride.

**Under age 1:** Small, infant-only car seats (A) always face the rear and may be easier to use. Make sure the baby's head is below the top of the car seat.



A

Convertible seats (B) face the rear for babies up to 30 to 35 pounds (check label), then can be faced forward (C, below).



B

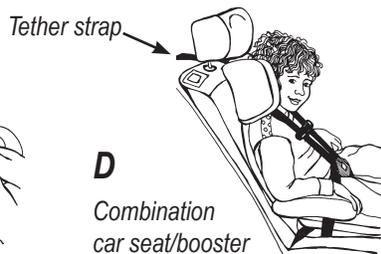
**Over age 1:** Continue rear facing in a convertible seat until the child is at the seat's rear-facing weight limit and the child's head is below the top of the car seat.

**STAGE 2: Forward-facing seat with harness (C, D)**—for a child over age 1 and over 20 pounds, up to 40 to 80 pounds. May be a convertible seat, combination seat (forward-facing seat/booster), built-in car seat, or vest.



C

Convertible car seat.



D

Combination car seat/booster

**STAGE 3: Booster seat with lap-shoulder belt (E)**—for older children (4 to 8+), from 40 pounds to 80 to 100 pounds. Seat belts do **not** fit children correctly until at least age 8. **Always** use a lap and shoulder belt with a booster. Never use a booster with a lap-only belt.

**In lap-only belt positions:** Use a vest or car seat with harness made for kids over 40 pounds. See a product list at [www.saferidenews.com](http://www.saferidenews.com).



E

### Is the car seat second-hand?

- **Be careful with used car seats.** Make sure you have the instructions and any recalls have been fixed. Make sure it has not been in a crash, as there can be hidden damage. Check for an expiration date on the seat. If there is none, avoid seats older than 6 years.

### Does your child ride in back?

- **The back seat** is much safer than the front. Correctly buckle up children under 13 in the back seat.
- **Air bag safety:** **Never** put an infant in a rear-facing car seat in front with an air bag. The force of the air bag can kill any child sitting or leaning too close to the dashboard. If the truck or car has an air bag on/off switch, **turn it off** when a child rides in the front seat.

### Are you following the instructions?

- Always follow instructions for your child's car seat.
- Always look in the car owner's manual for important information on installing the seat.

### Is the car seat tightly installed?

- Attach the car seat with seat belt or LATCH anchors (if both vehicle and car seat have LATCH). Use whichever gives the tightest fit. Do **not** use both, unless the instructions say it is okay.
- A tight fit means the car seat moves less than 1 inch forward or side to side.
- Put the seat belt in the correct path (check labels). If using lower LATCH straps, make sure you hook to the correct anchors in the car (check car manual).
- Always use tether strap on forward-facing car seats.

### Are the harness straps the right height? Are they snug on your child?

- For rear-facing seats, shoulder straps should be as close as possible to the child's shoulders **or below**.
- When facing forward, straps must be **at or above** the shoulders. For **some** forward-facing seats, only the top slots can be used (check instructions).
- Make harness straps snug, so you cannot pinch the straps and the child cannot lean forward.
- Put chest clip at armpit level.

### RESOURCES

NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline: 888-327-4236, [www.safercar.gov](http://www.safercar.gov)  
SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.: 800-745-7233, [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org)  
Find a local car seat inspection station: 866-732-8243, [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org)

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