

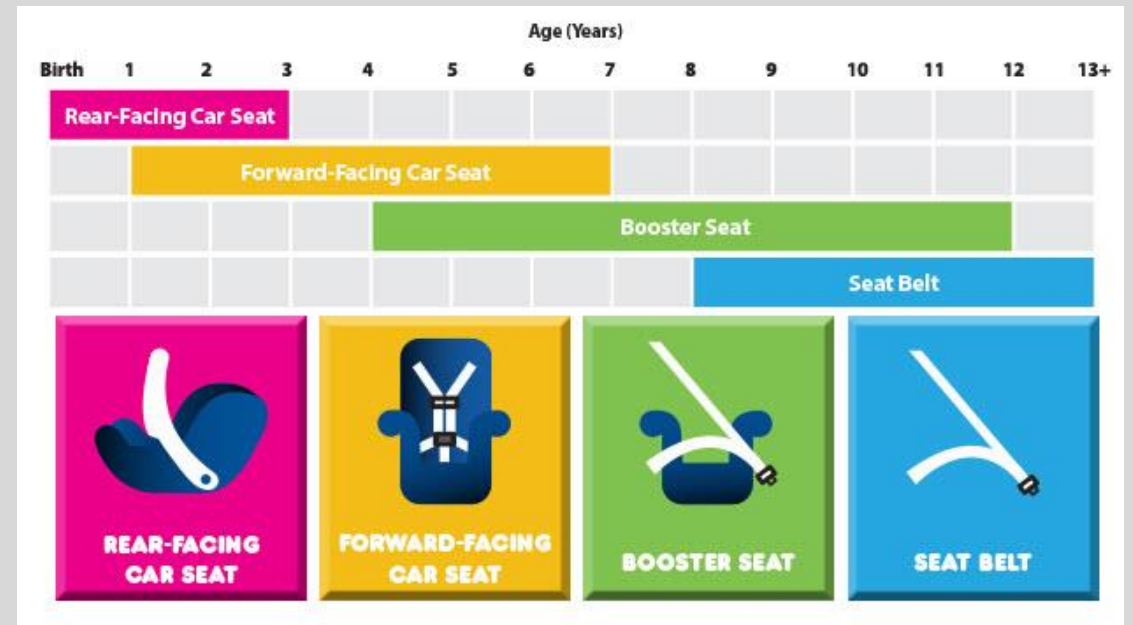


# CAR SEAT SAFETY

Foster Parent Training

# Overview:

Car seats and boosters provide protection for infants and children in a crash, yet car crashes are a leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 13. That's why it's so important to choose and use the right car seat correctly every time your child is in the car. Follow these important steps to choose the right seat, install it correctly, and keep your child safe.



# Rear-Facing Car Seat

The best seat for your young child to use. It has a harness and, in a crash, cradles and moves with your child to reduce the stress to the child's fragile neck and spinal cord.



- Infant Car Seat (Rear-Facing only): Designed for newborns and small babies, the infant-only car seat is a small, portable seat that can only be used rear-facing. Most babies outgrow their infant seats before their first birthday. When that happens, we recommend that parents purchase a convertible or all-in-one car seat and use it rear-facing.
- Convertible Seat: As a child grows, this seat can change from a rear-facing seat to a forward-facing seat with a harness and tether. Because it can be used with children of various sizes, it allows for children to stay in the rear-facing position longer.
- All-in-One Seat: This seat can change from a rear-facing seat to a forward-facing seat (with a harness and tether) and to a booster seat as a child grows. Because it can be used with children of various sizes, it allows for children to stay in the rear-facing position longer.

# Recommended car seats based on your child's age and size: **Rear-Facing Car Seat**

Birth-12 Months

Your child under age 1 should always ride in a rear-facing car seat. There are different types of rear-facing car seats:

- Infant-only seats can only be used rear-facing.
- Convertible and all-in-one car seats typically have higher height and weight limits for the rear-facing position, allowing you to keep your child rear-facing for a longer period of time.



# Forward-Facing Car Seat

Has a harness and tether that limits your child's forward movement during a crash.



- Convertible Seat: As a child grows, this seat can change from a rear-facing seat to a forward-facing seat with a harness and tether.
- Combination Seat: As a child grows, this seat transitions from a forward-facing seat with a harness and tether into a booster.
- All-in-One Seat: This seat can change from a rear-facing seat to a forward-facing seat (with a harness and tether) and to a booster seat as a child grows.

# Recommended car seats based on your child's age and size: **Forward-Facing Car Seat**

1 – 3 Years

Keep your child rear-facing as long as possible. It's the best way to keep him or her safe. Your child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, your child is ready to travel in a forward-facing car seat with a harness and tether.



# Booster Seat

Positions the seat belt so that it fits properly over the stronger parts of your child's body.



- Booster Seat With High Back: This type of booster seat is designed to boost the child's height, so the seat belt fits properly. It also provides neck and head support and is ideal for vehicles that don't have head rests or high seat backs.
- Backless Booster Seat: A backless booster seat is designed to boost the child's height, so the seat belt fits properly. It does not provide head and neck support. It is ideal for vehicles that have head rests.
- Combination Seat: As a child grows, this seat transitions from a forward-facing seat with a harness into a booster.
- All-in-One Seat: This seat can change from a rear-facing seat to a forward-facing seat (with a harness and tether) and to a booster seat as a child grows.

# Recommended car seats based on your child's age and size: **Booster Seat**

4 – 7 Years

Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness and tether until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with a harness, it's time to travel in a booster seat, but still in the back seat.





# Seat Belt

Should lie across the upper thighs and be snug across the shoulder and chest to restrain your child safely in a crash. It should not rest on the stomach area or across the neck or face.



# Recommended car seats based on your child's age and size: **Seat Belt**

8 – 12 Years

Keep your child in a booster seat until he or she is big enough to fit in a seat belt properly. For a seat belt to fit properly the lap belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach. The shoulder belt should lie snugly across the shoulder and chest and not cross the neck or face. Remember: your child should still ride in the back seat because it's safer there.



# Installation Help: Tips

- Read the car seat's instruction manual and the portion of your vehicle's owner manual on car seat installation. Every car seat needs to be installed using either the lower anchors or the seat belt to secure it in place. If you choose to use a seat belt to install your car seat, pay close attention to how to lock your seat belt in the vehicle owner's manual. Because every car seat and vehicle is different, it's important to follow all instructions carefully.
- Place the car seat in the back seat of your vehicle and follow the manufacturer's installation directions. The car seat must be secured tightly in the vehicle. It should not move side-to-side or front-to-back more than 1 inch when pulled at the belt path.
- If it is a forward-facing seat and has a tether strap, connect it to the tether anchor and tighten. This step is very important as it limits forward head movement in a crash.
- If it is a rear-facing seat, make sure the car seat is installed at the correct recline angle. Most car seats have built-in angle indicators or adjustors that help with this step. If you have questions, trained Child Passenger Safety Technicians can help you. Many local fire and police stations offer free car seat inspections.

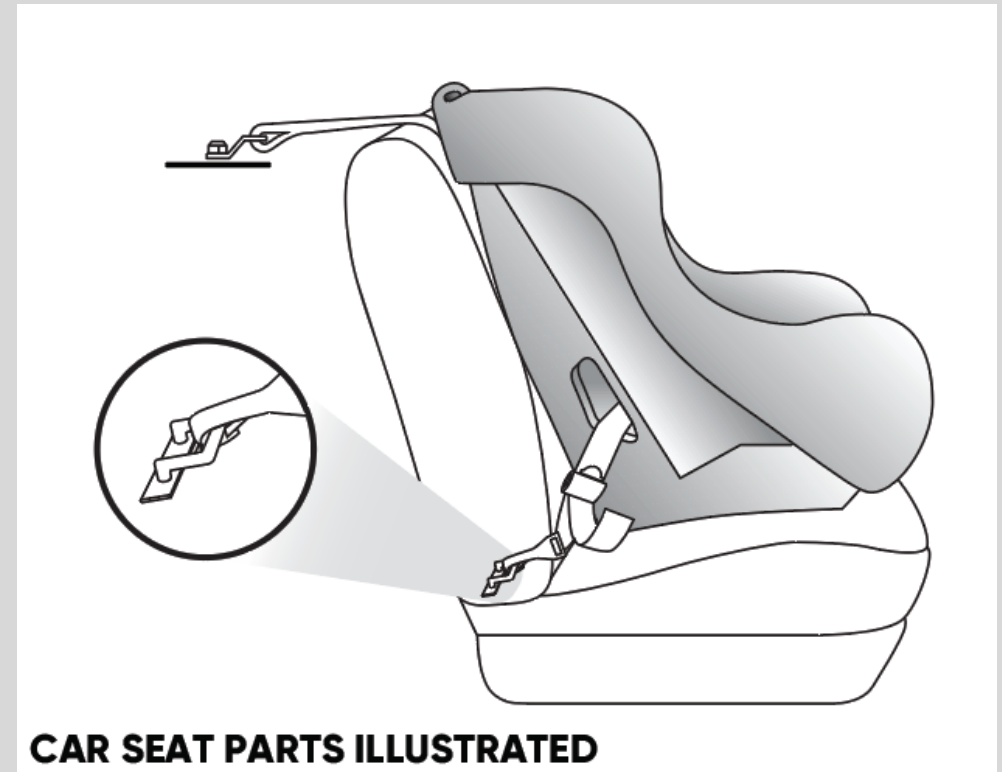
# Fitting Your Child Correctly In The Seat

- Properly position the harness on your child. Rear-facing: Harness straps should lie flat, not twisted, and be placed through the slot that is at or below your child's shoulders. Forward-facing: Harness straps should lie flat, not twisted, and be placed through the slot that is at or above your child's shoulders.
- Buckle the harness and the chest clip and tighten.
- The harness is snug enough when extra material cannot be pinched at the shoulder. Make sure the chest clip is at armpit level.



# Vehicle and Car Seat Parts Explained

- Attach top tether from the car seat to the tether anchor in the vehicle.
- Fasten lower anchor attachments on the car seat to the lower anchors in the vehicle.
- Every car seat needs to be installed using either the lower anchors or a seat belt to secure it in place, never both. If you choose to use a seat belt to install your car seat, pay close attention to how to “lock” your seat belt according to the vehicle’s owner manual. With a forward-facing car seat, use a tether if one is available. Before installing your car seat make sure you understand the function and location of the vehicle and car seat parts that are used in installation.



# Vehicle Parts

## Lower Anchors

- Used for installing a car seat using its lower anchor attachments
- The lower anchors are found in a minimum of two rear seating positions in a vehicle. Each lower-anchor-equipped seating position has two small horizontal bars found in the space between the vehicle seat's back and bottom cushion (the "seat bight").

## Tether Anchor

- Used for attaching a car seat's tether to the vehicle
- Typically there are a minimum of three tether anchors in a vehicle. In sedans, these are usually located above/behind the vehicle's back seat on the rear shelf. In some larger vehicles such as vans, pickup trucks, and SUVs, these tether anchors may be found on the back of a vehicle seat, on the floor, the ceiling, or other location.
- To avoid confusing tether anchors with other hardware such as luggage tie-downs, be sure to read your vehicle's owner manual carefully to find out where they are located in your particular vehicle.

# Car Seat Parts

## Lower Anchor Attachments

- Used to install the car seat in a vehicle with lower anchors

## Tether

- Used to secure a forward-facing car seat and limit forward head movement in a crash
- The tether is located on the top rear of convertible, combination, and all-in-one car seats. It's adjustable and has a hook and strap that connects to one of your vehicle's tether anchors. Most rear-facing car seats in the United States do not use a tether for installation. However, installations vary from model to model, so you must review your particular car seat's instructions and your vehicle's owner manual carefully.
- Follow your car seat manufacturer's instructions regarding when and how to use the tether for your particular seat. NHTSA recommends always using a tether with a forward-facing car seat—installed with your vehicle's seat belt OR the lower anchors—as long as it is permitted by both the car seat and vehicle manufacturers. **IMPORTANT:** Both installation methods are designed to work with the tether to achieve the highest level of safety for child passengers restrained in forward-facing car seats.

# Lower Anchor Weight Limits

- Lower anchors have weight limits set by the vehicle and car seat manufacturers. You can determine the lower anchor weight limit by checking the warning label or installation diagrams located on the side of the car seat. If your car seat does not have a label, you can determine the maximum allowable child weight for lower anchor use by subtracting the weight of the car seat (usually available in the car seat's instruction manual) from 65 pounds.
- Lower anchor weight limit = 65 lbs – weight of car seat
- Once your child outgrows the vehicle or car seat manufacturer's established limits for the lower anchors, stop using the lower anchor attachments and reinstall the car seat using the vehicle's seat belt.

# Infant Seat Installation Checklist



- At least 1" of shell above the head
- Child within height and weight limits
- Handle in locked position per manual
- Chest clip at armpit level
- Straps at or below shoulders
- Only padding used is included by manufacturer
- Recline indicator shows 45-degree angle for newborn



# Rear-Facing Car Seat Checklist



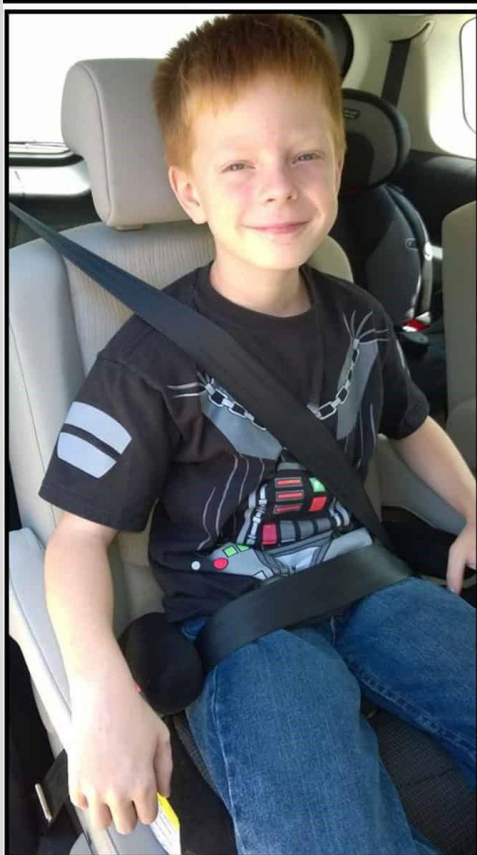
- Head must be at least 1" below top of shell
- RF straps are AT or BELOW shoulders
- Chest clip at armpit level
- Harness is snug and not twisted
- Legs CAN be bent.

# Forward-Facing Car Seat Checklist



- Head must be at least 1" below top of shell
- Chest clip at armpit level
- Harness straps are AT or BELOW shoulders
- Harness is snug and not twisted

# Booster Car Seat Checklist



Seat with high back (just like FF Seat):

- Ears below the top of the headrest
- Belt in the guide positioned above the shoulder
- Shoulder belt even across the torso
- Lap belt low and flat across the hip, touching the tops of the thighs

Booster Seat:

- Belt at shoulders (not neck)
- Belt low on hips (not abdomen)
- Car headrest raised to back of the head

# Car Seat Safety Tips

A child can ride **safely**  
with**out** a booster  
when they pass the 5 Step Test



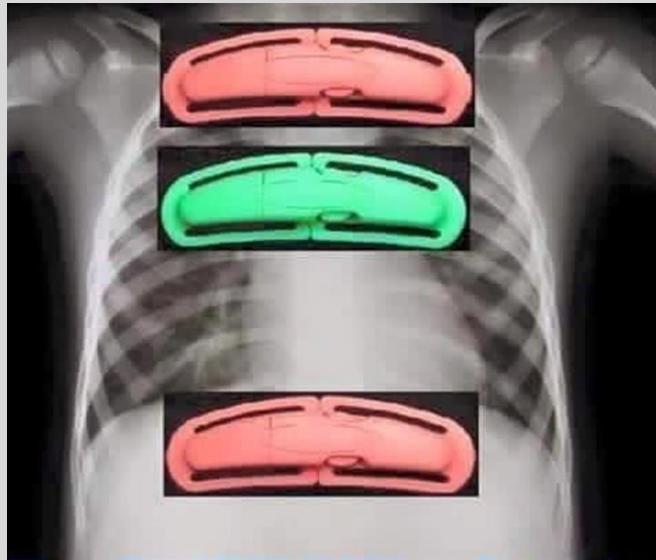
(C) TheCarSeatLady.com

Most kids are 10-12 years old before they pass

A child can ride safely without a booster when they pass the 5 Step Test:

- Back against the vehicle seat
- Knees bend at edge of seat
- Lap belt low on tops of thighs
- Shoulder belt between neck and shoulder
- Sit properly. No slouching, leaning over, etc.
- Most kids are 10-12 years old before they pass.

# Chest Clip Safety



## Chest Clip Placement:

- Too high can damage a child's airway
- Too low can damage a child's soft organs
- Lay the chest clip across the strongest part of a child's chest (ribcage) with the top even with the armpits.

# Winter Coats and Car Seats



## Puffy Coat Check

As a general rule, winter coats should not be worn underneath a car seat harness because that can leave the harness too loose to be effective in a crash. Here's a simple way to check whether your child's coat is too big to wear underneath a harness:

- Step 1: Put the coat on your child, sit him or her in the car seat and fasten the harness. Tighten the harness until you can no longer pinch any of the webbing with your thumb and forefinger.
- Step 2: Without loosening the harness at all, unhook it and remove your child from the car seat. Take the coat off, put your child back in the car seat, and buckle the harness straps, which should be adjusted just as they were when the child was wearing the coat.

If you can pinch the webbing between your thumb and forefinger now, then the coat is too bulky to be worn under the harness.

# How To Bundle Up Safely

- If you find that the coat can't be safely worn under the harness, here are a couple things you can do:
- For smaller children, put a blanket over them to keep them warm.
- Only use aftermarket covers, essentially fitted blankets, designed to give additional warmth that are approved by the car-seat manufacturer for your specific car seat. Such covers have been tested with the seat and won't compromise your child's safety.
- For a bigger child, after securing him or her in the car seat, turn the coat around and put it on backward (with arms through the armholes), so the back of the coat serves as a blanket resting on top of the harness.



**AFTERMARKET ACCESSORIES**

**NO** Only use accessories that belong with the seat

Contact your manufacturer if you're unsure

**NO** Carseat are a safety device NOT a fashion statement

**NO** Can interfere with the harness

**NO** Can void warranty

**NO** Not fire retardant

**NO** Not recommended by carseat manufacturers








### AFTERMARKET ACCESSORIES:

- Only use accessories that belong with the seat.
- Not crash tested.
- Can interfere with the harness.
- Can void warranty.
- Not fire retardant.
- Not recommended by car seat manufacturers.
- Contact your manufacturer if you are unsure.



# Car seats are NOT made to “click” into shopping carts!

Infant car seats are designed to conveniently and securely attach to car seat bases and strollers but were never meant to be attached to shopping carts.

Most car seat manufacturers include a warning about shopping cart and car seat use in their instruction manual.

When the warning is ignored, there is a risk of the car seat falling off or shopping cart tipping over. Babies have been seriously injured and even killed from this preventable accident.



## Safe Alternatives When Shopping

- Use a baby carrier
- Put the infant seat in the large bottom portion of the shopping cart.
- Use the carts that have built-in infant seats.

