

Child Passenger Safety Best Practice Recommendations

Phase 1	Rear-Facing Seats	Infants: Birth - 35 pounds. Rear-facing infant or rear-facing convertible safety seat as long as possible, up to the rear-facing height or weight limit of the seat. Properly install rear-facing in the back seat. The longer a child faces the rear, the safer it is for them.
Phase 2	Forward-facing Seats	When children outgrow the rear-facing safety seat, they should ride in a forward-facing safety seat as long as possible, up to the upper height or weight limit (40 - 80 pounds) of the harnesses. Usually 4+ years old. Properly installed forward-facing in the back seat. NEVER turn forward-facing before 1 year old AND 20-22 pounds. The longer the child is in a car seat instead of a booster seat, the safer it is for them.
Phase 3	Booster Seats	After age 4 and 40+ pounds, children can ride in a booster seat with the adult lap and shoulder belt until the adult safety belt will fit them properly (usually when the child is 4'9" tall). MUST have a lap/shoulder belt to use a booster seat.
Phase 4	Adult Safety Belt	Once children outgrow their booster seat (usually at 4'9", 100 pounds) they can use the adult safety belt if it fits them properly. Lap portion low over the hips/tops of thighs and shoulder belt crosses the center of the shoulder and center of the chest.

Children are better protected the longer they can stay in each phase. Keep children in each seat up to the **maximum** age/weight/height limits before moving to the next phase.

Vehicle manufacturers design their products for adults – not kids – and they support keeping kids in the appropriate safety or booster seat until the child can properly wear the adult safety belt...typically when they reach 4'9" tall.

Once your child has reached eight years old, to know when they can wear an adult seat belt properly without a booster seat, use this simple test:

Have your child sit on the vehicle seat, sitting all the way back, with their back straight against the back of the seat, and buckle the lap/shoulder belt over them.

1. Do their legs bend naturally at the knees over the edge of the seat?
2. Does the lap portion of the belt fit low over the hips and top of their thighs?
3. Does the shoulder portion of the belt fit across the center of their chest?

If the answer to any of these three questions is no, the child may be better protected in a booster seat.

A child in a poorly-fitting adult seat belt usually slumps down, allowing the seat belt to ride up into their abdomen or neck, which can cause severe injuries to the child's neck and internal organs during a car crash.

Although there is no law that prevents youngsters from sitting in the front seat of a vehicle, the safest place for a child in a car is in a rear seat, properly buckled into a child safety seat or a booster seat.

Air bags don't replace child safety seats and may increase the risk of serious injury to children. Children younger than 13 should never ride in the front seats of vehicles with active passenger air bags. If you do have to transport a child in the front seat in an emergency – make sure the front seat is moved all the way back on the track, placing as much room as possible between the deployment zone of the air bag and the vehicle seat...but NEVER place a rear-facing safety seat on a front seat.

A final, but very important note: please read and follow the instructions in both the safety/booster seat owner's manual AND the vehicle owner's manual. Not all safety or booster seats fit the same in all vehicles – so you may have to try several before finding a good fit for your child and vehicle.