

What's the Best Child Restraint?

Quick Tips for Parents & Caregivers

The best restraint for your child is one that:

- Fits your child correctly
- Fits your vehicle
- You will use correctly **every** time on **every** trip!

Selecting a Child Restraint

In Indiana, as many as nine out of 10 car seats are misused. When you're selecting a child restraint, be sure to:

- Know your child's weight and height.
 - Make sure that all labels and manufacturer's instructions are present.
 - Check the restraint's expiration date. *Yes, even child restraints have expiration dates to ensure safety and quality.*
 - Check to see that the child restraint has not been recalled. <http://www.odl.nhtsa.dot.gov/recalls/childseat.cfm>
 - Make sure that all parts are present and in working order. NEVER try to modify the seat by using duct tape, drilling holes, etc.
 - Refer to your child restraint manual for replacement guidelines after a crash occurs. Typically, restraints need to be replaced after a crash.
 - Avoid buying a used child restraint unless you are certain that it is not expired, damaged, recalled, or been involved in a crash.
- Make sure any restraint you use meets Federal Safety Standards and has all labels and instructions present.

1 SIZE MATTERS MOST

Child restraints are developed to protect a child based upon their size, not their age. Use your child's height and weight to determine which seat is appropriate.

2 DON'T BE IN A HURRY TO GRADUATE

Unlike other events in a child's life, moving them to the next type of child restraint should not be considered a graduation. Every time you move your child to the next level of restraint (e.g. from rear-facing to a forward-facing or a booster to a seat belt), you are actually losing valuable protection for your child.

3 READ THE MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS

Refer to the child restraint manual and labels, as well as your own vehicle manual to ensure the proper use and installation.

4 THE BACK SEAT IS BEST

All children under age 13 should ride in the back seat and be properly restrained at all times.

5 IT'S THE LAW

Police can ticket you for not having your child properly restrained.

6 SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

Always wear your seat belt and model good habits. Avoid distractions such as cell phones while driving. Your children look up to you.

Where To Get Help

The Automotive Safety Program has established a network of more than 120 Permanent Fitting Stations throughout Indiana where you can receive services and instruction on proper child restraint installation and use. To find a Permanent Fitting Station near you, contact the Automotive Safety Program.



1-800-KID-N-CAR
www.preventinjury.org



Indiana Criminal
Justice Institute
Traffic Safety Division
(317) 232-1233
www.in.gov/cji

Version 1, June 2011



PROTECTING PRECIOUS CARGO

A GUIDE TO CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY

KEEPING YOUR MOST PRECIOUS PASSENGERS SAFE

As a parent, nothing is more important than the safety of your child. And nowhere is protection more critical than when you're traveling in a motor vehicle.



Car crashes are the leading cause of preventable death among children in the United States. By securing your child in the most appropriate child restraint, you can reduce their risk of injury in a crash by up to 70 percent.

To help keep your children safe on Indiana roadways, it's important to educate yourself on the types and appropriate uses of child restraints.

What Is a Child Restraint?

A child restraint is a safety device that meets federal safety standards and is designed to provide protection in a crash. Types of child restraints include:

- Rear-facing Seats
- Forward-facing Seats
- Booster Seats
- Seat Belts

How Restraints Offer Protection

In the event of a crash, child restraints provide protection in five different ways:

- Prevents the child from being ejected or "thrown" from the vehicle.
- Stays in contact with the body at its strongest parts.
- Spreads crash forces over a wide area of the body, putting less stress on any one part.
- Helps reduce injuries by slowing the body down gradually.
- Protects the head, neck, and spinal cord.

Types of Child Restraints

Infants use rear-facing child restraints

Under age 2

Rear-facing means the child faces the back of the vehicle. Infants should remain in a rear-facing restraint for as long as possible. Check your child restraint's user manual for the appropriate height and weight limits.



SEAT CHECK

- ✓ Always install rear-facing child restraints in the back seat. Center position is the safest, if possible.
- ✓ Never place a rear-facing child restraint in the front seat of a vehicle in front of an active air bag.
- ✓ Restraint is tightly installed and doesn't move forward or side-to-side more than one inch at the seat belt path used to secure it.
- ✓ Restraint harness straps are snug and cannot be pinched.
- ✓ Buckled chest clip is at armpit level.
- ✓ Child restraint harness straps and seat belts should not be tangled or twisted.

Young kids use booster seats

After they have outgrown a five-point harness, usually around 4 years of age and 40 pounds



SEAT CHECK

- ✓ Ride in the back seat.
- ✓ ALWAYS use a booster seat with a lap and shoulder belt—never *just* a lap belt only.
- ✓ Lap belt sits low on the hips, not the stomach.
- ✓ Shoulder belt should sit across the center of the shoulder, not across the neck. NEVER allow your child to put the shoulder belt behind their body or under their arm.
- ✓ Seat belt is snug, flat and comfortable.

Older kids use seat belts

How do I know when my older kid is ready for a seat belt?

Seat belts can be used when a child can:

- ✓ Sit with their back and hips against the vehicle seat back without slouching.
 - ✓ Bend their knees easily over the front edge of the seat and feet stay flat on the floor.
 - ✓ Safely wear the seat belt.
 - Lap belt fits low and snug across the hips, not the stomach.
 - Shoulder belt goes across the mid-chest and shoulder and does not cross the side of the neck.
 - ✓ Use a properly adjusted vehicle head rest. Head rest should reach the top of the child's ears or higher.
 - ✓ Stay in this position for the entire ride.
- If your child does not yet meet all of these criteria, keep them in a booster seat until they do. Generally, kids can use a seat belt safely when they are about 4 feet, 9 inches tall, and between the ages of 8 - 12.



Toddlers use forward-facing child restraints

Over age 2 (or when child reaches the maximum height or weight limit for a rear-facing child restraint)

SEAT CHECK

- ✓ Ride in the back seat. Center position is the safest, if possible.
- ✓ Restraint is tightly installed and doesn't move forward or side-to-side more than one inch at the seat belt path used to secure it.
- ✓ Child restraint harness straps are snug and cannot be pinched.
- ✓ Buckled chest clip is at armpit level.
- ✓ Child restraint harness straps and seat belts should not be tangled or twisted.
- ✓ Select a restraint that has a five-point harness. Keep your child in the harness until he or she reaches the maximum weight or height limit for the harness feature.

