

Q: What should I do when my child gets out of her car safety seat, booster or seat belt?

A: Pull your car off the road where it is safe and re-fasten her car safety seat or seat belt. If possible it may help to have someone sit next to her in the back seat. Keep your child busy with other activities like counting cars, singing songs or listening to CD's.

Make sure the car safety seat fits your child correctly. Harness straps that are loose or through the wrong set of slots make it easier to get out of the seat. The harness should fit snugly. You know the harness is snug enough if your fingers slide off the harness when you pinch the webbing at her shoulders (Figure 1). When riding forward-facing, the harness should be through the slots at or above your child's shoulders (Figure 1). Read the car safety seat instructions to make sure you are using the harness the right way for your child.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

If your child opens or pushes down the car safety seat's chest clip, you may need to try other car safety seats that have different types of clips (Figures 2 and 3). You should not modify the chest clip or harness in any way.

If your child gets out of his booster seat or seat belt, try a car safety seat with a harness over forty pounds (Figure 4). (Make sure your child fits within the height and weight requirements to use the harness.) A harness car seat is harder to escape than a booster seat or a seat belt. For a list of child restraints for children over 40 pounds, visit www.preventinjury.org for a list of child safety seats with higher weight limits. Click on Special Needs Transportation, click Restraints.



Figure 4

Q: Would a behavior plan keep my child from getting out of her car safety seat or seat belt?

A: Yes. Testing limits is normal behavior for children. Consistent use of a behavior plan may help prevent your child escaping from her car seat.

Q: What should be in a behavior plan?

- A:**
- Teach your child what to expect when riding in the car and let them know ahead of time a car trip is planned.
 - Tell your child what the rules are for riding in the car.
 - Be consistent.

Make sure everyone who travels with your child uses the same behavior plan every time the child rides in the car. Follow the plan every trip.

- Praise and reward your child.

Praise your child for good behaviors and offer rewards your child likes. Give your child a reward such as a sticker for staying buckled up. At first, you may need to give your child more rewards, more often. For example, give her a sticker every time you come to a stoplight or every minute she follows the plan. Gradually increase the amount of time between rewards until she receives one reward for the full trip.

Let her choose the reward she will earn by following the plan. You may need to use a choice board with things that your child likes. Consider a special toy that she can only have in the car, such as a soft book, soft toy or music tapes. (Hard toys could hurt your child in a crash.) As your child becomes too used to the toys, replace them with different ones.

- Set boundaries.

Set limits for behaviors that are okay and not okay when riding in the car and stick to them. Praise and reward good behaviors immediately. Ignore behaviors that are not dangerous.

Q: I have tried a behavior plan and it is unsuccessful; what can I do?

A: You may want to consult with a behaviorist or a rehabilitation therapist who has experience with car safety and children with special health care needs. If there is not someone trained in special needs transportation in your area, please call 1-800-543-6227 for further assistance.

Q: My child unbuckles the seat belt. Is there anything I can put over the buckle?

A: No. Products such as buckle covers are not recommended because it is unknown how the devices would interact with the seat belt buckle in a crash.

Q: When can my child ride in the front seat?

A: The back seat is the safest place for all children 12 years and under, even if your car does not have an airbag.

Q: How can I be sure my child is buckled up correctly?

A: Always read and follow the directions that come with your car safety seat and your vehicle owner's manual. You can find a location where a child passenger safety technician can help you with your seats by visiting www.preventinjury.org (Indiana only) or www.seatcheck.org.

Q: Is there anything else I can do to make sure my child stays buckled up?

A: Yes, set an example. Be a good role model and always buckle up. If you always use your safety belt, your child is more likely to follow your example.

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For More Information Contact: Automotive Safety Program
800-KID-N-CAR
www.preventinjury.org



Car Safety for Your Child who Doesn't Stay Buckled Up

Sometimes children won't stay buckled up when riding in the car. This fact sheet answers some questions and gives tips for transporting your child safely.