



Child Restraint Guidelines

Child Safety in Cars

What child restraint should my child be using?

Age	Size	Best Choice	Next best alternative
0 to <i>at least</i> ~6-9 months	Birth until too long for capsule	Baby capsule	Rear-facing child seat
6 months – <i>at least</i> 4 years	Until shoulders >2.5cm above top harness slot	Forward facing child seat with built-in harness	None
4 years +	Until 148cm tall	Booster seat with high back & wings	Backless booster seat (only if too tall for high back booster)
~11 years+	Height > 148cm, (see below for belt fit guidelines)	Adult lap-sash seat belt	None

- All children should be in the back seat up to the age of 12.
- Booster seats with a high back and big side “wings” are **much** better than backless ones.

When do I move my child to the next restraint?

- When they are too tall for their current one.
- Size is more important than weight.

Capsule to forward facing child seat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby is too long to fit in capsule (70cm)
Forward facing child seat to booster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoulders are more than 2.5cm above top shoulder strap slot of the child seat
Booster to adult seat belt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's legs are long enough to have their back firmly against the seat, and their knees bend in front of the edge of the seat cushion. This ensures the seatbelt fits across the hip bones, and not over the soft abdomen. Usually, this is about 148cm tall. • AND the sash (shoulder strap) passes across the outer part of the shoulder, NOT across the bottom or side of the neck.

Common mistakes that increase injuries

- Child is moved to the next type of restraint too soon.
 - The child does not fit the new restraint properly and is much more likely to be injured in a crash
- The harness is not done up tight enough. It should be really snug.
 - The child can come out of the harness during a crash
- Restraint is not properly fitted to the car. For example, the top tether is loose or not done up, seat belt too loose etc.
 - The restraint moves and allows child to crash into the inside of the car during a crash
- Putting the sash (shoulder part) of a seatbelt behind their back or under their arm.
 - This puts crash forces onto the child's unprotected abdomen and risks head and neck injuries because the head hits the inside of the car
- The seatbelt is sitting over the soft abdomen instead of over the hipbones
 - This puts large forces onto the child's abdomen and risks lower spinal injuries

But but but

My child is embarrassed to still be in a booster seat - his friends tease him about being a baby

- Moving to an adult seatbelt too soon increases the risk of injury by more than three times, especially for serious head, spinal and abdominal injuries.
- Let your child know that you insist on the booster seat because you care about their safety.
- If all else fails, get a backless booster seat and seat them in the middle if there's a 3 point belt there. They are better than no booster at all, but they don't give protection to the head in side impacts or keep the seat belt in the right place if they fall asleep.

I've got a new baby coming and I want to move my toddler to a booster seat so I don't have to buy two seats

- Is the toddler really too big for their child seat? If not, don't do it.
- Rent a capsule for the first 6 months for the baby.
- See if you can borrow a friend or relative's unused seat for the overlap period.

Is it safe to buy second hand child restraints?

- Unless you are 100% sure that the seat hasn't been in an accident, **NO**.
- If it's from a friend or relative who has looked after it and you know they haven't been in any accidents, you should be OK.
- You can have it inspected at a child restraint fitting station for a nominal fee, and they can replace the webbing if it's worn.
- Very old capsules that don't have proper harnesses with buckles (they have Velcro ones instead) shouldn't be used.

Can my child sit in the front seat?

- **NO**.
- They are much safer in the back seat until they are adult-sized (i.e. about 12).
- Child seats and booster seats are designed for the back seat.
- **Never** put a child in a front seat with a passenger airbag. These can be fatal for children.

What about lap-only belts?

- Lap only belts are better than no seatbelt, but much less safe than lap-sash belts, as there have been cases of lower spine injuries because the body bends forward in a crash.
- If you have only a lap belt in the middle, seat your children in the lap-sash belts on the outside seating positions.
- Lap only belts are OK for restraining child restraints because they have a tether strap that attaches to a "bolt" at the top.

But I'm just going around the corner - does it really matter that much?

- **YES!!!**
- Many accidents occur within a kilometre from home.
- A crash at just 25-30km/hr can be fatal for an improperly restrained child.

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