

Child In Car Safety



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Purchasing and fitting appropriate child car restraints is vital but complicated

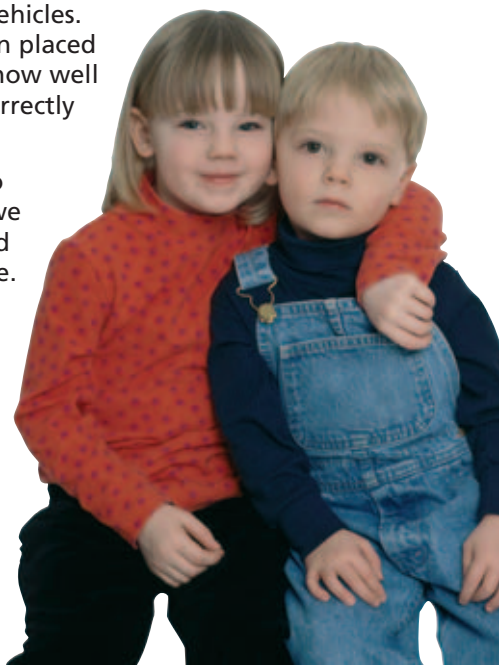
Following the advice in this leaflet will help you to protect the children travelling in your vehicle

Every year children are killed or seriously injured in collisions on British roads where they are passengers in vehicles. In many of these crashes children will have been placed in incorrectly fitted child restraints. No matter how well designed restraints are, if they are not fitted correctly they can be useless in a crash.

We know you will want to make every effort to protect the children in your vehicle. However, we also know that the fitting and adjusting of child restraints can be very daunting for many people.

We hope that this leaflet, together with the help lines offered by most leading manufacturers, will help you to make the best use of your restraints.

The law requires you to use a child car restraint and when well fitted and in good condition, they can be very effective in preventing injuries to children.



The Law - a useful guide to responsibility

Child car seat regulations

The regulations governing the use of child car seats came into force on 18 September 2006. There is a standard fixed penalty for not using a child restraint and if the case goes to court the fine can be much greater.

	Front seat	Rear seat	Who is responsible?
Driver	Seat belt MUST be worn if available.		Driver
Child up to 3 years*	Correct child restraint MUST be used*.	Correct child restraint MUST be used*. If one is not available in a taxi, may travel unrestrained.	Driver
Child from 3rd birthday up to 135cms in height (approx 4'5") or 12th birthday whichever they reach first**	Correct child restraint MUST be used***.	Correct child restraint MUST be used where seat belts fitted. MUST use adult belt if the correct child restraint is not available: in a licensed taxi/private hire vehicle; for a short distance for reason of unexpected necessity; two occupied child restraints prevent fitment of a third. A child 3 and over may travel unrestrained in the rear seat of a vehicle if seat belts are not available.	Driver
Child over 135cms (approx 4ft 5ins) in height or 12 or 13 years	Seat belt MUST be worn if available.	Seat belt MUST be worn if available.	Driver
Adult passengers (ie 14 years and over)	Seat belt MUST be worn if available.	Seat belt MUST be worn if available.	Passenger

continued overleaf

In addition, the revised regulations also say that rear-facing baby seats **MUST NOT** be used in a seat protected by a frontal air-bag unless the air-bag has been deactivated manually or automatically.

- * Children under 3 years **MUST** use the child restraint appropriate for their weight in all cars, vans and other goods vehicles, with the single exception for the rear of taxis. They cannot travel otherwise. This means for example that they may not travel in cars, vans or goods vehicles which do not have seat belts installed.
- ** Examples. A 7 year old who is 140 cms tall is over the height for a child restraint and may use an adult seat belt. A 12 year old who is 130 cms tall is over the age threshold and therefore may use an adult belt.
- *** If no seat belts are fitted in the front, then children under 135 cms in height (who are also under 12 years of age) cannot travel in the front.

Advice - buying the right seat

- Remember that vehicle interiors can vary considerably, so ensure that you get the best fit of child seat for your model.
- Don't expect your child seat to fit several different vehicles – always try before you buy.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Don't assume a seat is safe because of a media safety rating – it may not have been tried in your type of vehicle.
- Be careful when making purchases from internet sites, standards may vary from country to country and you can't necessarily check the suitability for your vehicle.

To make it easier for you to choose your child car seat, you will find they are divided into several groups or categories. The weight range generally determines each category.

Group 0 Up to 10kg (22lbs) 0 to 9 months approx.
Rearward-facing baby seat.

Group 0+ Up to 13kg (29lbs) 0 to 9 – 12 months approx.
Rearward-facing baby seat.

Group 1 9 to 18kg (20 – 40lbs) 9 months to 4 years approx.
Forward-facing child seat with integral harness. Often have adjustable seating positions.

Group 2 15 to 25kg (33 – 55lbs) 4 to 6 years approx.
Forward-facing child seat or booster seat which uses a seat belt. The booster seat lifts the child and positions the adult lap and diagonal seat belt correctly.

Group 3 22 to 36kg (48 – 79lbs) 6 to 12 years approx.
Booster cushion. They do not offer as much protection as a booster seat with back.

WARNING! YOU ARE STRONGLY ADVISED NOT TO BUY OR USE A SECOND HAND CAR SEAT

- Many seats sold through private adverts and car boot sales have been found to be defective and thus dangerous.
- You can never be certain how it has been used or whether it has been involved in a crash.
- They may be worn or incomplete and often have no fitting instructions.
- You are unlikely to get a seat made to the latest safety standards.

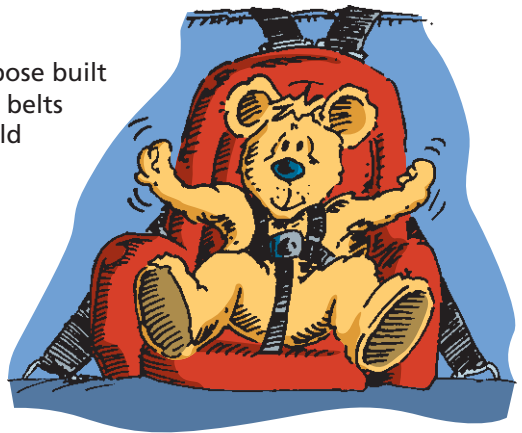
Fitting

A child's weight is the principal determining factor in selecting the right seat.

It's easy to make a mistake fitting a child restraint but the advice below will help you ensure it is fitted as safely as possible. Not all seats fit all vehicles.

A wobbly seat, a loose seat belt or slack harness, a seat belt going the wrong way or a small defect in the seat are all common faults which might put a child at risk.

- Opt for the middle of the back seat (if the child seat is suitable) as this is the safest position, followed by either side of the back seat and lastly the front passenger seat. The front passenger seat should never be used if an airbag is fitted.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and keep them safe for future reference. These instructions show the way the seat was designed to work in safety.
- Ensure the seat belt buckle is properly latched in place and the red button is accessible.
- Ensure that the seat belt is not twisted.
- Use only the vehicle seat belts or a purpose built fixing kit to secure the child seat. Using belts or ropes, for example, can leave the child seat not properly secured and unsafe.
- Never modify the child seat in any way.
- Check that the child seat is secure before each journey you make.
- Child car restraints should never be fitted on a sideways or rear-facing seats.



Rearward-Facing Seats

- Rearward-facing is the safest way to travel. A child should remain rearward-facing until either they have outgrown the weight limit on the seat or their head is level with the top of the seat. It is recommended that a child should not be put forward-facing until they weigh a minimum of 9kg (20lbs) and can sit up unaided.
- On a rear-facing child seat make sure that the harness' shoulder straps are level with or slightly below the child's shoulders.
- Allow only two fingers' thickness between the harness and the child's chest. Remember that slack in the harness drastically reduces the protection offered.
- Ensure the handle is in the correct position when being used in a vehicle.
- It is recommended that a baby should not stay in an infant carrier for periods exceeding 2 hours at a time.



Forward-Facing Seats

- When moving a child onto this stage we recommend a seat with a full harness. A recline function offers greater comfort for your child on long journeys.
- To make sure a seat is tightly installed take hold of the seat harness and pull it. There should be only very slight movement from side to side and no forward movement. If there is a lot of play, put your weight on the child restraint to press it firmly into the car seat. Then tighten the seat belt fully.
- The seat belt buckle should remain straight when tensioned. If the buckle is stressed against the child seat frame the buckle could snap open in a collision. This is known as buckle crunch.
- The harness pads are worn against the chest, not the shoulders. They cushion the child's chest preventing the harness cutting in when the seat is thrown forward in a crash.
- Allow only two fingers' thickness between the harness and the child's chest. Remember that slack in the harness drastically reduces the protection offered.
- On a front-facing child seat make sure that the harness' shoulder straps are level with or slightly above the child's shoulders.
- A child has outgrown a forward-facing seat when the child's eye line is above the top of the seat or they have outgrown its weight limit.



Booster Seats and Cushions



- We recommend that older children use a booster seat with backrest, as this gives the child greater protection.
- Booster seats and cushions cannot be used with a lap belt.
- When using a booster cushion, the seat belt must be positioned with the lap section across the thighs, not the stomach, and the diagonal section resting on the shoulder.
- Using a booster cushion could elevate a child's head above the top of the car seat. If no head restraint is present a child is at risk of sustaining whiplash injuries.
- Do not use an ordinary cushion instead of a booster cushion, as it does not provide sufficient protection for a child and is not an approved safety device.

Seat belts

Before the start of each journey check that the car seat is fitted correctly.

- Seat belt webbing should be checked for signs of wear, for example cuts, holes, fraying and mildew. Also look for incomplete, insecure or repaired stitching.
- Make sure buckles are not weak or broken.
- A seat belt, which has been involved in a collision becomes permanently elongated, loses its shock absorbing properties and must be replaced.
- Make sure your seat belt buckle is intact and in good working condition. If unsure seek advice from an MOT registered garage or vehicle dealer.
- We do not recommend the use of a lap only belt for children as they do not offer adequate protection and could result in abdominal, spinal, head and limb injuries.



Airbags

- Never use a child seat on a front passenger seat fitted with an airbag. In a crash the airbag will inflate and cause injury to the child.
- Some vehicle retailers can deactivate airbags. If you choose to have this done check with your insurance company as this might invalidate your insurance.
- We recommended that children never travel on the front seat of a vehicle fitted with an airbag.

Special needs

All children have the right to travel safely and in comfort, if you need more information on manufacturers of specialist restraints please contact us.

General

Keep children occupied on long journeys with soft toys/music and give them regular breaks. A bored child can distract the driver or fiddle with things they should not touch e.g. car seat buckle. Teach children about the dangers of playing with the buckle or wriggling out of the harness.

Secure loose items within the car, crook locks, shopping, tools and hard toys. Heavy and sharp objects can cause injury when thrown around inside the vehicle in the event of a crash.

Do not use a seat belt to secure both you and your child together. In the event of a collision you will crush the child.

For further advice on this or a range of other road safety issues contact:

Devon Road Safety Help Desk

Telephone: **0845 155 1004**

email: **rshelp@devon.gov.uk**

web: **www.devon.gov.uk/road_safety**



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