

# One Minute Safety Seat Checklist

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
[www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps/ChilSS/OneMinuteChecklist/Index.html](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps/ChilSS/OneMinuteChecklist/Index.html)

Using a safety seat correctly makes a big difference. A child safety seat may not protect a child in a crash if it isn't used correctly and installed properly in your vehicle. *Take a minute to Check To Be Sure...*

- All children age 12 and under should ride properly restrained in the back seat!!!
- Never place a child safety seat in the front seat where a front mounted passenger air bag is present.

## Do You Have and Understand the Instructions?

- Always read the child seat use and installation instruction manual.
- Read your vehicle owner's manual seat belt and child seat installation section.

## Does Your Child Ride in the Correct Safety Seat?

- Infants, from birth to about age one, and at least 20 pounds should ride in the back seat in a rear facing safety seat.
  - Harness straps should be at or below the infant's shoulders.
  - Harness straps should fit snugly. The straps should lie in a relatively straight line without sagging.
  - The harness chest clip should be placed at the infant's armpit level. This keeps the harness straps positioned properly.
- Infants weighing 20 pounds or more before one year should ride in a safety seat rated for heavier infants (some convertible seats are rated up to 30-35 pounds rear facing).
- Children over one year and at least 20 pounds may ride forward facing in the back seat. Children should ride in a safety seat with full harness until they weigh about 40 pounds.
  - Harness straps should be at or above child's shoulders.
  - Harness straps should be threaded through the top slots, in most cases.
  - Harness should be snug. Straps should lie in a relatively straight line without sagging.
  - Harness chest clip should be at the child's armpit level, which helps keep the harness straps positioned properly on the child's shoulders.

The Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children (LATCH) System is designed to make installation of child safety seats easier by requiring child safety seats to be installed without using the vehicle's seat belt system. As of September, 1999, all new forward facing child safety seats (not including booster seats) have to meet stricter head protection requirements, which calls for a top tether strap. This adjustable strap is attached to the back of a child safety seat. It has a hook for securing the seat to a tether anchor found either on the rear shelf area of the vehicle or, in the case of mini-vans and station wagons, on the rear floor or on the back of the rear seat of the vehicle. As of September 2000, all new cars, minivans, and light trucks have this tether anchor.

As of September 2002, two rear seating positions of all new cars, minivans, and light trucks come equipped with lower child safety seat anchorage points located between a vehicle's seat cushion and seat back. Also, all new child safety seats will have two attachments which will connect to the vehicle's lower anchorage attachment points. Together, the lower anchors and upper tethers make up the LATCH system.

Children between 40-80 pounds should ride in the back seat in a belt-positioning booster seat, which uses the adult lap and shoulder belt. Booster seats should be used until the adult lap and shoulder belt fit children properly.

- Belt-positioning boosters can only be used with both the lap and shoulder belt across the child. The shoulder belt should be snug against the child's chest, resting across the collar bone. The lap belt should lay low across the child's upper thigh area.
- Boosters should be used as "in between" safety devices for children over 40 pounds who have outgrown a forward-facing child seat.
- Booster seats should be used until the child can sit with his/her back against the vehicle seat back cushion, knees bent over the seat cushion edge, and feet on the floor, approximately 4'9".

If only a lap belt is available in the rear seating positions, an option may be to contact the vehicle dealer to see if retrofit shoulder belts can be installed. Another option may be to install products that can be used with a lap belt only such as a specially-made harness or vest. For additional information, contact the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-327-4236.