

Types of car seats

Infant-only Seats

- * Only can be used rear-facing
- * Are used for babies who weigh up to 20 pounds (or more, depending on model)
- * Are small and portable and fit newborns best
- * Come with a 3-point or a 5-point harness

Infant-only Seat Features

Detachable base. Several infant seat models come with detachable bases. The base stays in the car so you do not need to install it every time you put your baby in the car. After buckling your baby into the seat, you simply lock the seat into the base. Some bases are adjustable to make it easier to correctly recline newborns. These seats can also be used without the base or you can buy additional bases for other cars.

However, this feature is helpful if the base fits tightly into your car. In some cases, the seat may fit better without the base.

Harness slots. Infant-only seats that come with more than one harness slot give more room for growing babies. On rear-facing seats, the harness slots should be at or below your baby's shoulders. Check the car seat manufacturer's instruction to be sure.

Higher weight limits. Several infant-only seats are available for use up to 22 pounds and at least one is available for use up to 35 pounds. This may make it easier to keep your baby rear-facing for a full year. However, if your infant's weight exceeds the weight limit of the seat before a year, use an infant-only seat or rear-facing convertible seat that has a higher weight limit. (Many now go up to 30 pounds or higher in the rear-facing position for heavier babies).
Handles. Carrying handles on car seats vary greatly in style and ease of use. Check the instructions on how to adjust the handle during travel. Angle indicators, built-in angle adjusters, harness adjusters and head support systems are now required.

Convertible seats

- * Bigger and heavier than infant-only seats, but can be used longer.
- * Some do not fit newborns as well as infant seats. Make sure that your baby can recline comfortably in the seat. Check the car seat manufacturer's instructions to be sure that harnesses can be adjusted properly.
- * Can be used rear-facing for infants until they have reached at least 1 year of age and weigh at least 20 pounds (or more depending on model). The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies be kept in rear-facing seats for as long as possible.
- * Can be used forward-facing for toddlers who are at least 1 year of age and weigh at least 20 pounds and not more than 40 pounds.

When your child is 1 year of age and has reached the highest weight or height allowed by the seat for use rear-facing, you may turn the seat forward-facing and make the following three adjustments:

1. Move the shoulder straps to the slots above your child's shoulders (usually the top slots, but check your instructions to make sure).
2. Move the seat into the upright position. (Check the car seat manufacturer's instructions for the recline angle allowed when forward-facing).
3. Route the seat belt through the forward-facing belt path.

Convertible seats have the following three types of harnesses:

1. 5-point harness - five straps: two at the shoulders, two at the hips, one at the crotch
2. T-shield - a padded T-shaped or triangular shield attached to shoulder straps
3. Overhead Shield - a padded tray-like shield that swings down around the child.

Note: If using a convertible seat for a small infant, the best choice for a more secure fit is the 5-point harness. A shield could contact a small baby's face directly in a crash.

Convertible seat features

- * Adjustable buckles and shields. Many convertible seats have two or more buckle positions to give you extra room for a growing child or bulky clothing. Many overhead shields can be adjusted as well.
- * Higher weight limits. Several convertible seats are now available with higher weight limits for bigger babies. For larger babies, look for a seat that can be used rear-facing up to 30 or 35 pounds.

Forward-facing seats:

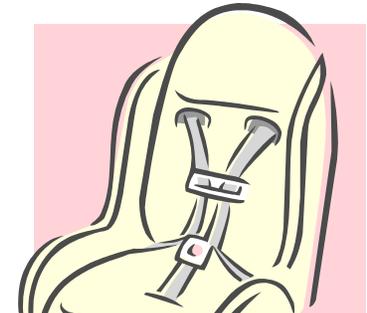
- * Cannot be used rear-facing and are only for children who are least 1 year of age and weigh at least 20 pounds.

Combination seats:

- * Cannot be used rear-facing.
- * Are only for children who are at least 1 year of age and weigh at least 20 pounds.
- * Convert to belt-positioning boosters for children who weigh more than 40 pounds. This allows the seat to be used longer.

Booster seats

When your child reaches the top weight allowed for his seat and his ears have reached the top of his car seat, you need a booster seat. Following are two types:
* Belt-positioning boosters are used with lap/shoulder belts. The booster raises your child so that the lap/shoulder belt fits properly. This helps protect your child's upper body and head. Both high back and backless models are available.



Are you using a second-hand seat?

Double-check everything!

A new car seat is best. However, if you must get a used seat, shop very carefully. To tell if a used seat is safe, keep the following points in mind:

Do not use a car seat that:

- * Is too old. Look on the label for the date it was made. If it is more than 10 years old, it should not be used. Some manufacturers recommend that seats only be used for 5-6 years. Check with the manufacturer to find out when the company recommends getting a new seat.
- * Was in a crash. It may have been weakened and should not be used, even if it looks fine. Do not use a seat if you do not know its full history.
- * Does not have a label with the date of manufacture and model number. Without these, you cannot check on recalls.
- * Does not come with instructions. You need to know how to use the car seat. Do not rely on the former owner's directions. Get a copy of the instruction manual from the manufacturer before you use the seat.
- * Has any cracks in the frame of the seat.
- * Is missing parts. Used seats often come without important parts. Check with the manufacturer to make sure you can get the right parts.

Has the car seat been recalled? You can find out by calling the manufacturer or the Auto Safety Hot Line at 888/DASH-2-DOT (888/327-4236), from 8 am to 10 pm ET, Monday through Friday. This information is also available online at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration web site.

Safety and Product Information from the American Academy of Pediatrics



Information supplied by:

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With A Purpose
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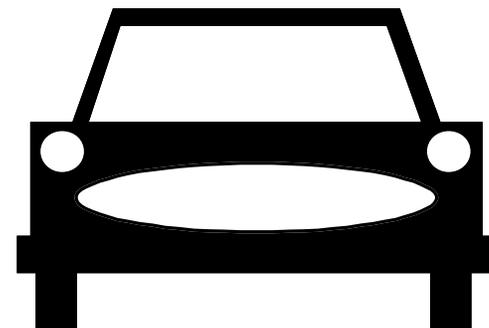
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United Cerebral Palsy

**Understanding Disabilities
Creating Opportunities**

All About Car Seats



Which is the "best" car seat?

- ** No one seat is "safest" or "best". The "best" car seat is the one that fits your child's size and weight, and is installed correctly in your car.
- ** Price does not always make a difference. Higher prices usually mean added features that may or may not make the seat easier to use.
- ** When you find a seat you like, try it out! Put your child in the seat and adjust the harnesses and buckles. Make sure it fits in your car.
- ** Keep in mind that displays or illustrations of seats in stores do not always show them being used correctly.

Car seats are constantly being tested to make sure they pass the safety standards. Sometimes they are recalled. When you buy a new seat, make sure you send the registration card to the manufacturer so you will be notified of any problems or recalls.

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