

# Safety Seat Smarts

Choosing and using the best safety seat for your child

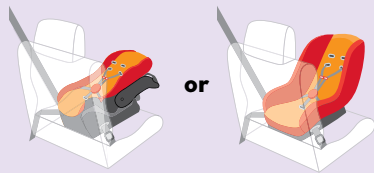


## Safety Seat Tips

Important Reminders for Every Parent

- All safety seats and vehicles are different, so read and follow the safety seat's instructions and your vehicle owner's manual to make sure your child's safety seat is properly installed.
- The most common mistake people make when installing a safety seat is not getting a tight fit. To correct this problem, use one hand to press down the child safety seat while you use your other hand to pull on the safety belts or lower anchor straps that hold it in place.
- If a safety seat is more than 6 years old or has been involved in a crash, replace it according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- There are two ways to install safety seats in a vehicle—with either a vehicle's safety belts or the LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tether for Children) system. The LATCH system has metal anchors in the vehicle (where the seat cushion meets the seat back) and top tether anchors (see your owner's manual). Attach connectors to metal anchors, and connect tether straps to tether anchors.
- Children under age 13 should ride buckled up in the back seat.
- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle, even for a short period of time.

### Stage 1



#### Rear-Facing Seats

For the best protection, keep infants in the back seat, in rear-facing child safety seats, as long as possible up to the height or weight limit of the particular safety seat. At a minimum, keep infants rear-facing until age 1 and at least 20 pounds.

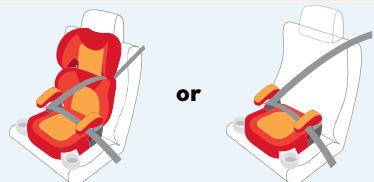
### Stage 2



#### Forward-Facing Seats

When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at a minimum of age 1 and at least 20 pounds), they should ride in forward-facing child safety seats, in the back seat, until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the particular seat (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds).

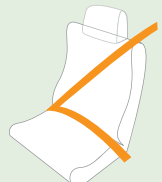
### Stage 3



#### Booster Seats

Once children outgrow their forward-facing seats (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds), they should ride in booster seats, in the back seat, until the vehicle safety belt fits properly. Safety belts fit properly when the lap belt fits low and snugly over the hips/upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest and shoulder (usually at age 8 or when a child is 4'9" tall).

### Stage 4



#### Safety Belts

When children outgrow their booster seats, (usually at age 8 or when they are 4'9" tall) they can use the adult safety belt in the back seat if it fits properly (lap belt fits low and snugly over the hips/upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest and shoulder).

## Resources

- Technician assistance via telephone, child seat distribution program referrals and inspection information  
**Safe Riders** ..... (800) 252.8255 or [www.dshs.state.tx.us/saferiders](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/saferiders)
- Child safety seat information  
**Texas Department of Transportation** ..... [www.txdot.gov/safety/tips/safety\\_belts.htm](http://www.txdot.gov/safety/tips/safety_belts.htm)
- Child safety information and recalls  
**National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** ..... (888) 327.4236 or [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)  
**American Academy of Pediatrics** ..... [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
- Child passenger safety laws by state  
**Safe Kids Worldwide** ..... [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)
- Proper installation of safety seats  
**Inspection Station Locator** ..... (866) SEAT.CHECK or [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org)
- Listing of child passenger technicians in Texas  
**Texas AgriLife Extension Service Passenger Safety** ..... [buckleup.tamu.edu](http://buckleup.tamu.edu)

# From birth to at least 1 yr old and 20 lbs

Up to 35 lbs (depending on the car seat)

- 1 Straps threaded through the lower slots so they are at or BELOW shoulder level
- 2 Chest clip even with baby's armpits
- 3 Harness straps should fit snugly against baby's body

**WARNING:** Never install a rear-facing seat in front of an active passenger air bag.



# Over 1 yr old

20 to 40 lbs or more (depending on the car seat)

- 1 Straps threaded through the slots so they are at or ABOVE shoulder level, usually upper slots
- 2 Chest clip even with child's armpits
- 3 Harness straps should fit snugly against your child's body

**TIPS:** Tether anchors are often located on the rear floor of vans, station wagons and SUVs. When your child reaches the maximum weight and height allowed for the safety seat, it's time to advance to a booster seat.

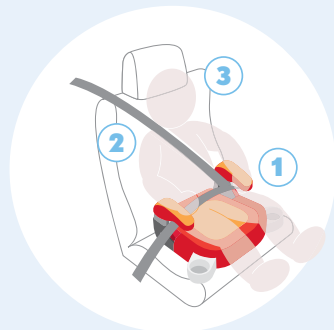


# About 4-8 yrs old

Up to 4'9" tall

- 1 Lap belt across your child's upper thighs and hips, not the stomach
- 2 Shoulder belt across the chest and shoulder, not the neck
- 3 Booster seats are available in two styles: high-back and backless. A backless booster can only be used in a seating position with head restraints.

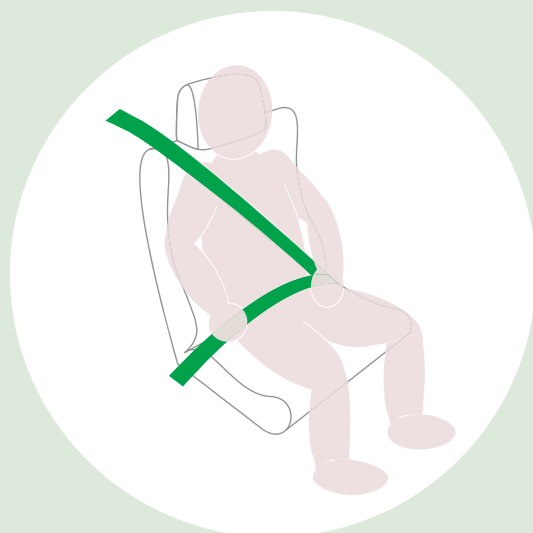
**WARNING:** Never allow children to put shoulder belts under their arms or behind their backs. Lap and shoulder belts are required for booster seat use. A booster seat cannot be used with a lap only belt.



# 8+ yrs old

Over 4'9" tall

**TIPS:** Children under age 13 should ride buckled up in the back seat. Never share safety belts—one passenger per safety belt.



## Stage 1 Infant Only or Rear-Facing Convertible Safety Seats

Your baby should ride in a rear-facing seat until he or she reaches the weight limit or height limit of the car safety seat.

Your baby should ride in a semi-reclined position according to safety seat instructions—about halfway back. The baby's head should rest flat against the safety seat.

Rear-facing safety seats increase crash protection by supporting the child's head, neck and back.



## Stage 2 Convertible/Forward-Facing Safety Seats

Children may ride in a forward-facing car seat when they are at least 1 year old AND weigh at least 20 lbs. Keep your child in a forward-facing safety seat as long as the safety seat allows for it.

If the child safety seat has a top tether strap and your vehicle has a corresponding tether anchor, use them. They will help anchor the safety seat in the vehicle and protect your child in case of a crash. If you can't find the top tether anchors, check your vehicle's owner's manual.



## Stage 3 Booster Seats

Safety belts are designed for adults, not children. A booster seat lifts a child up and can prevent severe head, abdominal and spinal cord injury in a crash.

When your child sits in a booster seat, make sure the safety belt fits snugly with no slack.



## Stage 4 Safety Belts

Children may use a regular safety belt when he or she can:

- Sit straight against the vehicle seat back with knees bent over the seat edge
- Wear the lap belt low and snug across hips
- Wear the shoulder belt across the shoulder and mid-chest (not neck)

