

## How to Find the Right Car Seat

1. Find a car seat that fits your child. As children grow, how they sit in your car will change. Make sure the car seat you purchase is designed to fit your child's current size and age.

### Birth – 12 months

Your child under age 1 should always ride in a rear-facing car seat. There are different types of rear-facing car seats:

- Infant-only seats can only be used rear-facing
- Convertible and 3-in-1 car seats typically have higher height and weight limits for the rear-facing position, allowing you to keep your child rear-facing for a longer period of time

### 1 – 3 years

Keep your child rear-facing as long as possible – It's the best way to keep her safe. Your child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, she is ready to travel in a forward-facing car seat with a harness.

### 4 – 7 years

Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until he reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with a harness, it's time to travel in a booster seat, but still in the back seat.

### 8 – 12 years

Keep your child in a booster seat until she is big enough to fit in a seat belt properly. For a seat belt to fit properly the lap belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach. The shoulder belt should lie snug across the shoulder and chest and not cross the neck or face. Remember, your child should still ride in the back seat because it's safer there.

2. Make sure that the car seat is the right fit for your vehicle. Not all car seats fit in all vehicles. Test the car seat you plan to buy to make sure it fits well in your vehicle.

### Fitting Your Child Correctly in the Car Seat:

1. Properly position the harness on your child.
  - Rear-facing – Harness straps should lie flat, not twisted, and be placed through the slot that is at or below your child's shoulders.
  - Forward-facing – Harness straps should lie flat, not twisted, and be placed through the slot that is at or above your child's shoulders.
2. Buckle the harness and the chest clip and tighten.
  - The harness is snug enough when extra material cannot be pinched at the shoulder.
3. Make sure the chest clip is at armpit level.

3. Buy a car seat that can be installed and used correctly every time.

### Installing the Car Seat

1. Read the car seat instruction manual and the portion of your vehicle's owner's manual on car seat installation. Every car seat needs to be installed using either the lower anchors of the LATCH system or the seat belt to secure it in place. If you choose to use a seat belt to install your car seat, pay close attention to how to lock your seat belt in the vehicle owner's manual. Because every car seat and vehicle is different, it's important to follow all instructions carefully.
2. Place the car seat in the back seat of your vehicle and follow the manufacturer's installation directions.
3. The car seat must be secured tightly in the vehicle. It should not move side-to-side or front-to-back more than 1 inch when pulled at the belt path.
4. If it is a forward-facing seat and has a top tether strap, connect it to the tether anchor and tighten. This step is very important as it limits forward head movement in a crash.
5. If it is a rear-facing seat, make sure the car seat is installed at the correct recline angle. Most car seats have built in angle indicators or adjusters that help with this step.

