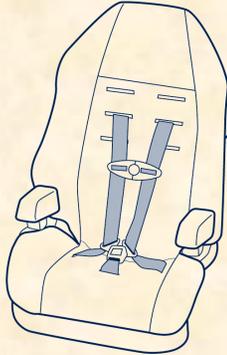


Car Seat Harness

The car seat harness is made up of webbing straps that keep the child in the car seat and distributes the crash forces.

A five-point harness has:

- ◆ Two straps that contact the child's shoulders;
- ◆ Two straps - one on each side of the pelvis;
- ◆ One strap between the legs with all five coming together at the buckle.



Parts of the harness include the following:

- ◆ **Buckle:** Connects and locks to secure the webbing straps that contact the child's shoulders, hips, and crotch.
- ◆ **Adjuster:** Part used to tighten or loosen the harness straps of a car seat.
- ◆ **Slots:** Openings on the back of the car seat where harness straps are fed through the seat shell.
- ◆ **Retainer clip:** Plastic buckle or clasp that holds the harness shoulder straps together over the child's chest and is positioned at child's armpit level.

There are four steps to correctly place a child in a car seat.

1. Place the **child all the way back** in a car seat. The child's back and bottom should be in contact with the back and bottom of the car seat.
2. Place the harness straps in the **correct harness slots for the child.**
 - ◆ **Rear-Facing:** The harness is placed **AT or BELOW** the child's shoulders.
 - ◆ **Forward-Facing:** The harness is placed **AT or ABOVE** the child's shoulders.
3. Tighten the **harness straps snugly.**
 - ◆ "A snug strap should NOT allow any slack. It lies in a relatively straight line without sagging. It does not press on the child's flesh or push the child's body into an unnatural position."
4. Place the **harness retainer clip at armpit level.**

Common Car Seat Harnessing Misuse



Using the wrong harness slot:

It is important to select the correct harness slot in the back of the car seat to safely secure a child.

- ◆ **When rear-facing,** the harness straps should be located at or below your child's shoulders.
- ◆ **When forward-facing,** the harness straps should be located at or above your child's shoulders.



Loose harness straps:

Loose harnesses do not properly restrain a child in a crash, which increases the child's forward movement and possible ejection from the car seat.

- ◆ **Harness straps lay flat, without any twists, and are snug enough that you cannot pinch any extra webbing at the child's shoulder.**



Harness retainer / chest clip too low:

A retainer clip that is too low can allow the child to slip out of the harness.

- ◆ **The retainer clip holds the shoulder straps together in the proper position over the child's chest, which keeps the child secure during a crash or sudden stop. Place the retainer clip at armpit level.**

Car Seat Harness: Rear-Facing vs Forward-Facing

The harness is designed to keep the child in the car seat during a crash. It is designed to contact the strongest parts of the child's body and spread the crash forces. The harness can best manage the crash forces when it is correctly positioned on the child. Correct shoulder harness height is critical to being fully secured and reducing the child's movement in the event of a sudden stop or crash. The less movement that occurs, the less violent forces the child feels in the collision. Always read and follow the car seat instructions guidance on correctly using the harness.

The harness straps should be positioned differently for rear-facing and forward-facing because crash forces affect your child's body differently depending on the direction the child is facing. As the child grows, it's important to regularly check the harness fit and adjust as needed to provide the best protection during a crash.

Rear - Facing



When the child is rear-facing during a frontal collision, the most common type of collision, the crash forces will cause the child's back to be pressed against the back of the car seat. As the child is pressed into the seat back, it is very important to keep the child's body from sliding upwards. The harness straps, positioned **at or below** the child's shoulders, will hold the child down in the car seat.

If the harness straps are above the child's shoulders when rear-facing, the child would ride up the back of the car seat possibly exposing the child's head above the car seat shell, increasing the potential for a head injury. Placing the harness in a slot above the shoulder has a similar effect as not fully tightening the harness.

Correct Use: Snugly secure the harness at or below a rear-facing child's shoulders to better restrain the child from sliding upwards.



Correct Position

The harness straps are positioned snugly below the rear-facing child's shoulders holding the child securely in place.



Incorrect Position

If the harness is positioned above the shoulders, the child will slide upwards in a crash.



DO NOT use harness slots that are above your child's shoulders. In a rear-facing car seat, if the shoulder straps are too high, they will not hold your child securely in a sudden stop or crash.

Forward - Facing



When the child is forward-facing during a frontal collision, the crash forces will cause the child's body to be thrown forward with sudden force. The harness straps, positioned **at or above** the child's shoulders would be most effective in decreasing the amount of distance the child will travel when thrown forward. Less movement results in less violent forces the child will experience in the crash.

The harness must be at or above the child's shoulders, in the **reinforced harness slots**. **Read the car seat instructions to determine which harness slots are reinforced**. Some convertible car seats require the use of the top slots for forward-facing. This is because only the top slots are reinforced.



NEVER use the middle or bottom harness slots on a convertible car seat for forward-facing unless the car seat instruction manual permits their use.

All harness slots are reinforced on combination car seats. Use the harness slots that are closest to the child and are located **at or above** the child's shoulders.

If the harness straps are below the child's shoulders when forward-facing, the shoulders can be compressed allowing the head to travel further forward in the crash.

Correct Use: Snugly secure the harness at or above the forward-facing child's shoulders to better restrain the child from moving forward.