

# Child Passenger Safety: What You Should Know—Belt-Positioning Booster Seats

## Belt-Positioning Booster Seat



Once children outgrow their forward-facing car seat, secure them in a belt-positioning booster seat with a lap and shoulder belt until the seat belt fits properly, typically when a child is approximately 4 feet 9 inches and between 8 and 12 years of age. All children younger than age 13 should ride in a back seat.

### Here's What to Do:

- ◆ Use a belt-positioning booster seat in the back seat until the seat belt fits.
- ◆ Belt-positioning booster seats raise and position a child so the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt fit properly over the strong parts of a child's body.
- ◆ The lap belt must be snug across the hips/upper thighs.
- ◆ The shoulder belt must be snug across the shoulder and chest.



## Belt-Positioning Booster Seat

*Booster seats lower the risk of injury for children age 4 to 8 years by 45% compared to children using the seat belt alone.*

### Belt-Positioning Booster Seat Checklist:

- The belt-positioning booster seat is ALWAYS used with the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt.
- Shoulder belt is snug across the center of the child's shoulder and chest.
- Lap belt is low and snug across the child's hips/upper thighs.

### Here's Why:

- ◆ A belt-positioning booster seat raises the child up so the seat belt rests on the strong parts of the body which reduces stomach, neck and spine injuries.
- ◆ The correctly positioned shoulder belt keeps children from putting the shoulder belt under their arm or behind their back, which is harmful in a crash.

*Note: Most children need to ride in a booster seat until age 10 - 12.*

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**Right Seat + Right Time + Right Use = Reducing Car Crash Injury.**

## How Belt-Positioning Booster Seats Protect Children

Children who have outgrown their forward-facing car seat by height or weight, but are still too small to ride safely in the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt, should be properly restrained in a belt-positioning booster seat. A belt-positioning booster seat elevates the child so the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt fit properly over the strong bones of the child's body. A booster seat helps to position the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt across the center of the child's shoulder and chest, and the lap belt low and snug across the hips providing a safe transition between the car seat with a harness and the vehicle's seat belt. There are 2 types of belt-positioning booster seats.

### ◆ Backless Belt-Positioning Booster Seat

- ◆ Use only with a lap and shoulder belt in a vehicle seating position with a tall seat back or head restraint so the child's head can be supported, up to the top of the ears.



### ◆ High-Back Belt-Positioning Booster Seat

- ◆ Recommended for vehicles that do not provide head restraint or support for the child's head to provide head, neck, and back support.
- ◆ Many designed with large side "wings" that provide head protection during an impact. They help to contain the head during an impact, and often contain foam designed to absorb energy in a crash.



## Tips to Achieve Correct Use of a Belt-Positioning Booster Seat



### Car Seat Selection

- Select a belt-positioning booster seat only when the child has outgrown a forward-facing car seat with a harness.
- Read the booster seat instructions and/or label for the weight ranges and guidance on correct use.



### Correct Direction

- Place the belt-positioning booster seat forward-facing and flat on the vehicle seat.



### Seating Location

- Select a seating position with a lap and shoulder belt.
- Confirm the child has appropriate head support from either the vehicle seat/head restraint or the belt-positioning booster seat back.
- Move the front seat back as far as possible if a booster seat is used in the front seat.
- Secure all children younger than 13 years in the back seat of vehicles for best protection.



### Tight Installation

- Use only with a lap and shoulder belt.
- Thread the vehicle's lap and shoulder belts through the correct belt path and buckle.



### Snug Harness

- Confirm the lap and shoulder belts are laying flat against the child's body, positioned across the center of the chest and low and snug across the hips.

# Child Passenger Safety: What You Should Know—Seat Belts

## Seat Belt



When children outgrow their belt-positioning booster seat, secure them in a properly fitted lap and shoulder belt. A lap and shoulder belt fits properly when the lap belt lays low and snug across the hips/upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the center of the chest and shoulder. All children younger than age 13 should ride in a back seat.

### Here's What to do:

- ◆ Use a correctly fitted lap and shoulder belt in the back seat for children when they outgrow the booster seat.
- ◆ Use the seat belt when the child is:
  - Tall enough to sit on the vehicle seat without slouching.
  - Able to keep their back against the vehicle seatback.
  - Able to keep their knees naturally bent over the front edge of the vehicle seat.
  - Able to keep their feet flat on the floor.
- ◆ The lap belt must be snug over the hips/upper thighs, not the stomach.
- ◆ The shoulder belt must be snug across the shoulder and the chest.



## Seat Belt

*Lap and shoulder seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 45%.*

### Seat Belt Checklist:

- Seat belts can be used safely when the child is:
  - Able to sit with their back and hips against the vehicle seat back without slouching.
  - Able to easily bend their knees over the front edge of the vehicle seat.
  - Able to keep their feet flat on the floor.
  - Able to place the snug shoulder belt across the center of the chest and shoulder.
  - Able to place the lap belt low and snug across the hips/upper thighs.
  - Able to stay in position for the entire ride.

### Here's Why:

- ◆ A seat belt:
  - Keeps the child in the vehicle.
  - Spreads the crash forces.
  - Protects the head and spine.
- ◆ The back seat is:
  - Nearly two times safer.
  - Away from frontal crash forces and frontal air bags.

*The lap and shoulder belt should always be used for optimal protection.*

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## Recommendations for Children in Seat Belts

Seat belts can be safely used to secure children who are big enough for the seat belt to fit correctly. Seat belts are designed so that the strongest areas of the body, the bones of the hips and shoulder, absorb the forces in a crash. Seat belts prevent occupants from being thrown inside the vehicle, into each other, or from being ejected from the vehicle.

When you can answer 'yes' to all of the following questions, your child is ready to safely sit on a vehicle seat using a lap and shoulder belt without a booster seat:

1. Can your child sit with their lower back against the vehicle seat back?
2. Do your child's knees bend comfortably at the front edge of the vehicle seat and do their feet touch the floor?
3. Does the vehicle shoulder belt cross the center of your child's chest and shoulder?
4. Does the lap belt stay low and snug across the hips near the top of the thighs?
5. Can your child stay comfortably seated with the lap and shoulder belt correctly positioned for the entire trip?



## Tips to Achieve Correct Use of a Seat Belt



### Selection

- Use a lap and shoulder belt.
- Select a lap belt only seating position if necessary. A lap belt provides no upper body protection, but is better than no restraint.



### Correct Direction

- Secure the child seated forward-facing on the vehicle seat.



### Seating Location

- Select a seating position with a lap and shoulder belt.
- Confirm the child has appropriate head support from the vehicle seat/head restraint.
- Secure all children younger than 13 years in the back seat of vehicle.
- Move the front seat back as far as possible if a front seat is used.



### Tight Installation

- Use a lap and shoulder belt that is buckled.
- Confirm that a child is seated in the proper position for the length of travel.



### Snug Harness

- Confirm the lap and shoulder belt are laying flat against the child's body, positioned across the center of the chest and low and snug across the hips.
- Confirm the shoulder belt is not placed under the arm or behind the back.