

Safety around the car

Be careful that your child's fingers are not caught in windows or doors when they are getting in or out of the car. Teach small children to keep their arms well tucked in when you close the doors and do not let them play with windows – use locks if you have them.

Accidents can and do happen when reversing on driveways or manoeuvring in car parks. Make sure your child is either in the car or with an adult before you move the car. Teach young children that cars can be dangerous even when they are moving very slowly. Hold your toddler's hand in car parks just as you would when crossing the road.



A quick guide to the law

The law applies to cars, vans and other goods vehicles.

Child under three years

You must always use a child restraint appropriate for the child's age, height and weight whether the child is travelling in the front or rear of the vehicle. If an appropriate restraint is not available, it is illegal for a child to travel in the vehicle. The only exception is in a taxi if the correct child restraint is not available.

Child aged 3 – 11, but less than 135cm in height

You must use an appropriate child restraint for the child's age, height and weight in the front seat and, if seat belts are fitted, in the rear seat. The only exceptions to this are where the correct child restraint is not available in the following situations:

- ✎ in a taxi where the correct child restraint is not available
- ✎ for reason of unexpected necessity over a short distance
- ✎ two occupied child restraints prevent a third from being fitted.

In these cases an adult seat belt must be used.

Child over 135cm, or 12 years and over

An adult seat belt must be worn if fitted.

Further information about choosing a child car seat can be obtained from www.childcarseats.org.uk



capt is a charity committed to reducing childhood injury.

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how safe is your child in the car?

a safety guide for parents and carers



Every year around 7,000 children under 10 years old are injured and around 30 killed as car passengers on British roads.

Understanding car seats

Child car seats are classified by group (0-III). You will need to know which group to look for when buying a new seat.

Age ranges are given as guidance only – the weight and physical development of your child will tell you which car seat you need. Follow the advice below to help you make a safer choice.

Babies

New babies must be carried in a rear-facing baby seat. These may be group 0 or 0+. However, please note some leading manufacturers are phasing out group 0 seats. It is safest for babies to travel rear-facing for as long as possible.

Don't be tempted to move a baby to a forward facing restraint just because their feet are pressing against the adult seat back.

If your baby is too heavy for a group 0 seat but not yet ready to move to a forward-facing seat you can try a group 0+ seat – these are larger rear-facing seats.

If you must travel with your baby in the front seat, it is essential that you switch the passenger air bag off, otherwise it will harm your baby when it activates in a crash. However, we recommend that you always travel with your baby on the back seat of the car.

Toddlers and young children

When babies are able to sit up on their own for prolonged periods they can safely be transferred to a forward-facing car seat. These are called group I seats and can be used until your child is about three or four years old.

It is safest to keep your child in a child car seat for as long as possible. You should only move your child from a child seat when their eye line is above the child seat back. At this stage, you should transfer to a booster seat (group II and III).

Toddlers and young children are safest if they travel in the back seat.

Older children

Many booster seats 'grow' upwards and outwards with your child so they are suitable from 15kg to 24kg (covering group II and III). These seats can provide side protection and support.

Like booster seats, booster cushions – seats without a back and sides – make sure the seat belt lies across the pelvis (hip bone to hip bone) and shoulders – not across the neck but they give no side protection and support.

Remember that seat belts are designed for adults, not children. To keep safe, older children should use a seat belt with a booster seat.

A quick guide to child car seats

type of seat	group	weight of child	approx age*
rear-facing baby seat	0	up to 10kg	birth to 6-8 months
rear-facing baby seat	0+	up to 13kg	birth to 12-15 months
forward-facing child seat	I	9-18kg	9 months (ability to sit) to 3-4 years
booster seat	II and III	15-36kg	from 3-4 years upwards

* the age range is given for guidance only – it is the size and weight of your child that should tell you which seat you need.

Buying your baby or child car seat

Buying second-hand car seats is not recommended because they may have been damaged in an accident. If you do use a second-hand seat, try to make sure you know its history, have the manufacturer's instructions and check that there is no damage and no parts are missing.

Not every seat will fit properly in every car. Try the baby or child seat in your car before you buy it. Make sure it can be fitted exactly to the manufacturer's instructions. The seat should be secure. If it wobbles it is either wrongly fitted or not suitable for your car. If your car has ISOFIX attachments, consider buying an ISOFIX seat.

Do not choose a seat that is difficult to fit. If it is awkward you might be tempted not to bother with it on short journeys. It is vital that you use your child car seat on every journey – most accidents happen within a short distance of home.

Make sure the seat you buy fits in the back – it is generally safer for your child to travel in the back seat of the car if possible.