



Child Seat Safety

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for children nationwide. In 2008, 19 of those killed on Kentucky roadways were children age 15 and under. Eleven were unrestrained.

Top ten questions about child safety seats

1. What is Kentucky's child safety seat law?

Children 40 inches or less must be properly restrained in a federally approved safety seat. Children younger than seven and between 40 and 50 inches must be properly secured in a booster seat.

2. What is the first thing I do when installing a child seat?

Always read the child seat instructions AND the section on child safety seats in the vehicle owner's manual.

3. When can my child go forward-facing?

A child must be kept rear-facing to a minimum of 20 pounds and one year of age, with best practice being 18 to 24 months. When using a convertible seat, it is best to keep the child rear-facing until the maximum rear-facing weight limit according to the manufacturer's instructions.

4. Which slots should I use for the harness straps?

When rear-facing, the harness straps should be *at or below* the child's shoulders, according to the manufacturer's instructions.

When forward-facing, the harness straps should be *at or above* the child's shoulders, according to the manufacturer's instructions.

5. What is the clip located on the harness strap?

This is called the retainer clip and should be kept at armpit level. This enables the harness to stay in the proper position.

6. How tight should the harness straps be on the child?

No more than one finger should fit between the child's collar bone and the harness strap. The straps should be snug against the child's shoulders so you cannot pinch any excess webbing.

7. How tight should my child seat be in the vehicle?

The child seat should not move more than one inch side-to-side or back-and-forth when pulling at the belt path.

8. How do I know if my car seat needs to be replaced?

If the seat is older than six years or has exceeded the manufacturer's expiration date, it must be replaced. Also, if your seat has been involved in a crash, it must be replaced. First check with your insurance company before you purchase a new seat.

9. Should my child be in a booster seat?

Please reference Kentucky law in question #1. However, Safety Belt Safe USA recommends children up to 80 or 100 pounds be in a booster. Since seat belts are made for adults, it is best to keep children in a child seat for a longer period of time. (See information on back page.)

10. When can my child sit in the front seat?

The risk of injury is greater in the front seat for children, with or without an airbag. Research shows it is best for children ages 12 and under to ALWAYS ride in the back seat.



Types of child safety seats

Infant seat

- Use rear-facing only, from birth until upper weight limit (check seat label).
- A child must remain rear-facing to a minimum of 20 pounds and one year of age, with best practice being 18 to 24 months.



Convertible seat

- May be used both rear-facing and forward-facing.
- Use until the upper rear-facing weight limit on the seat (check seat label).
- Use forward-facing for children over one year of age and 20 pounds, until the upper forward-facing weight limit on the seat (check seat label).

Forward-facing seat with harness

- For children over one year of age and over 20 pounds, up to 40 pounds or more (check seat label).

Combination forward-facing seat with harness/booster

- Use with the harness for children over one year of age, up to 40 pounds or more (check seat label).
- Remove harness at weight limit and use as a booster seat.

Booster seat

- Safety Belt Safe USA recommends using with children over 40 pounds, up to 80 pounds or more (check seat label).
- Must be used with a lap-shoulder belt.



Research shows child safety seats are 71% effective in reducing fatal injury for infants (less than one year old) and 54% effective for toddlers (one to four years old) in passenger cars. In light trucks, the effectiveness is 58% for infants and 59% for toddlers.

The use of belt-positioning booster seats lowers the risk of injury to children by nearly 60% compared to the use of seat belts alone.

When can my child safely use a seat belt?

1. Can your child sit straight against the back of the vehicle seat?
2. Can your child's legs bend at the knee on the edge of the vehicle seat?
3. Can your child sit comfortably in the vehicle seat without slouching?
4. Does the lap portion of the seat belt sit down on your child's hips, touching the thighs?
5. Does the shoulder belt stay at the center of your child's shoulder, crossing the collarbone?

If you answered YES to ALL FIVE questions, your child is ready to use a seat belt.

For Additional Information:

- Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP): www.chop.edu
- CPS Safety: www.cpsafety.com
- National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/childpas.htm
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA): www.nhtsa.dot.gov
- National Injury Prevention Foundation "ThinkFirst": www.thinkfirst.org/kids/
- National Safety Council: www.nsc.org/traf/sbc.htm
- SAFE KIDS Coalition: www.usa.safekids.org
- Safety Belt Safe USA: www.carseat.org

