

Booster seats

From around 4 years old and 40 pounds to 8–12 years old and 80–100 pounds (depending on the seat), and at least 4'9". A booster seat positions your child so that your vehicle's lap-and-shoulder belt fits properly.



If your car has low seat backs or no headrests, use a high-back model (not pictured here). These seats can also offer extra side-impact protection, though it can be a struggle to keep older kids in them.

Always use both the lap and the shoulder belt, and never allow your child to put the shoulder strap behind his back or under his arm.

The shoulder belt should cross his shoulder midway between the neck and the arm. To get the right placement, use your vehicle's built-in shoulder-belt height adjuster or the shoulder-belt positioner that comes with your seat.

The lap belt should rest below your child's hip bones (not on his abdomen) and touch the top of his thighs.

Ready to lose the booster?

Yes, if *all* of these boxes are checked:

- Your child can sit all the way back against the seat.
- He can bend his knees comfortably at the edge of the seat.
- The seat belt crosses his shoulder between his neck and his arm.
- The lap belt sits low on his hips, touching his thighs.
- Your child can stay seated like this for the entire car trip.

Even if your child is ready for the safety belt alone, experts now say he's still safest in the backseat until he's 15. For tips on making the back more bearable, visit twensafety.org.

SPECIAL SEATS FOR SPECIAL KIDS

If your child is:

Premature

Consider a: **Car bed.**

Very small infants, and those with special medical needs, might need to travel lying down. Talk to your doctor or visit carseat.org/resources/173_spec_needs.pdf for more info.

If your child is:

Big for his age or overactive

Consider a:

Bigger safety seat.

Go to www.aap.org/family/carseatguide.htm for detailed information on safety seats with upper weight limits of 65 to 100 pounds and booster seats that fit kids up to 100 pounds. You'll also find info there on travel vests, another option.

For the best online resources

for choosing and using safety seats, as well as the most current product recalls, go to Parenting.com/carseats. You can also print out this article to take shopping or share with a friend.

Parenting.com

Sources: The American Academy of Pediatrics; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; Nancy Rodriguez, safety expert at the New York City Department of Transportation; SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. (carseat.org)

Deborah Carpenter has two kids, ages 6 and 4, who believe the car won't start until they're buckled into their booster seats.