

## Stage 4: Seat Belt

- Best practice is to remain boosted until the seat belt fits better without the booster than with, typically AFTER 4'9".
- Once your child can pass the '5-Step Test' in whichever seating position s/he is in (and it might be different in each seat, or in different cars!), s/he can safely ride in a seat belt only. If the answer to any of the below is 'NO' then s/he must continue to use a booster seat.



- Does the child sit all the way back in the vehicle seat?



- Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the vehicle seat?



- Does the shoulder belt lay across the collarbone, not riding up on the neck or slipping off the shoulder?



- Does the lap belt sit low and flat across the tops of the thighs, not riding up onto the belly?



- Can the child remain seated like that the whole trip, even when sleeping?

- The back seat is the safest place for children 12 and under.
- A lap/shoulder belt is much safer than a lap-only belt for children AND adults.
- Ensure there is head support up to at least the tops of the ears for children AND adults.

Authored by Vancouver Island Car Seat Techs, November 19 2014

## General Car Seat Tips

- Read your car seat manual, and the seat belt, car seat, and air bag sections in your vehicle manual.
- A seat permitted for use in Canada has the National Safety Mark (circle sticker with maple leaf); US seats are not legal.
- Install with either UAS or seat belt (not both at the same time unless restraint and vehicle manuals state otherwise).
- Read your vehicle manual to ensure it's okay to install a car seat in the spot you want it; UAS installs are often not permitted in the centre.
- The centre rear is the safer seating position, but a solid outboard installation always trumps a poor centre installation.
- NEVER install a rear-facing seat in front of an active air bag.
- There is a weight limit when installing with UAS. Find out what it is for your vehicle and child restraint, and once your child reaches the limit, install with the seat belt.
- If installing with a seat belt, it must LOCK in some way: at the retractor, at the latch plate, with a locking clip, or with built-in lock-offs on the car seat.
- Seat must have 1" or less of movement at the belt path.
- Check that you're using the correct belt path (separate ones for rear and forward facing).
- You MUST top tether to an APPROVED anchor point when forward facing in a harnessed seat.
- Never use an expired/recalled/crashed seat, or one with an unknown history. Consult the manufacturer to discuss what constitutes a crash; car seats are 'one crash' items only.
- Consult your manual for washing instructions; do not machine wash the harness, or use cleaners on it.
- Tighten the harness enough so you can't pinch a horizontal fold at the collarbone: the "pinch test."
- Chest clip must be at armpit level.
- Don't over dress your child – use thin warm layers (like fleece) and cover with blankets. Bulky clothing can result in your child being ejected in a crash.
- Remove projectiles from the vehicle, and tie down or stow anything that you wouldn't throw at your child. This includes unrestrained passengers and pets.
- Do not use unregulated aftermarket products - your seat was not crash tested with them.
- Be very wary if buying a used seat – you are trusting the previous owner with your child's life.
- Get your installation checked by a certified technician.



THE CHILD PASSENGER  
SAFETY ASSOCIATION  
OF CANADA



L'ASSOCIATION POUR  
LA SÉCURITÉ DES ENFANTS  
EN VOITURE DU CANADA

## THE CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

The Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada (CPSAC) is an organization of Canadian specialists who have come together to create a cohesive national training program dedicated to the safety of children and youths traveling in motor vehicles.

Motor vehicle collisions are the number one cause of fatal injury among children, and correctly selecting, installing, and using a child restraint is the best thing you can do to protect your child in the car.

This brochure is not intended to replace a child restraint manual or vehicle manual, and focuses on best practice rather than legal bare minimums. Consult provincial or territorial law for specifics in your area.

**The BEST car seat is the one that fits your child, your budget, and your vehicle, and that you will use properly EVERY time.**

For local assistance, contact:

[www.cpsac.org](http://www.cpsac.org)  
[www.canadiancarseatnetwork.com](http://www.canadiancarseatnetwork.com)

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## Stage 1: Rear Facing

- Best practice is to remain rear facing to the limits of the seat -- preferably until a minimum of age two.
- In an infant 'bucket' style carrier, or an infant/child seat.
- Harness at or BELOW shoulder level.
- Fully reclined for newborns (to approximately 45° - see indicators on seat); possibly as upright as 30° for toddlers (consult your manual for what's allowed for your seat).
- Legs touching the back of the seat is fine - kids can sit in ways that would be uncomfortable for us.

- Harness tight - cannot pinch a horizontal fold of harness at the collarbone.
- Chest clip at armpit level.



- No unregulated aftermarket products (head positioners, bunting bags, harness covers, etc) - your seat wasn't crash tested with them.
- 1" or less of movement at the belt path; installed with either UAS or seat belt (not both at the same time unless restraint and vehicle manuals state otherwise).

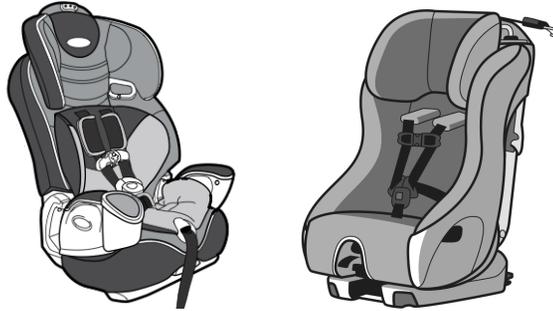
- Outgrown when the child approaches the height or weight limits for the seat, or has 1" or less of hard shell above the head (consult your manual for specifics).



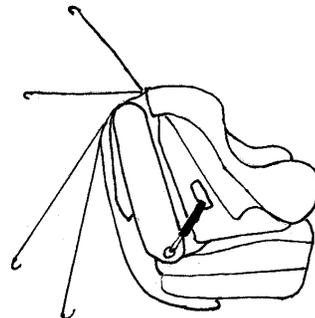
- When using an infant seat, check for approved in-vehicle handle position(s).

## Stage 2: Forward Facing

- Best practice is to remain rear facing to the limits of the seat, until at least age two. Once forward facing, best practice is to remain harnessed to the limits of the seat, and until at least 40lbs and developmentally ready to move to a booster.
- Harnessed forward facing in an infant/child seat, child/booster seat, or infant/child/booster seat.



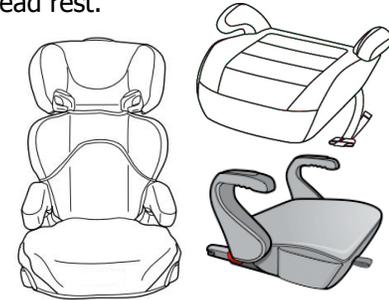
- Harness at or ABOVE shoulder level.
- Outgrown when the child approaches the height or weight limit of the seat, OR the tops of the ears are level with the top of the hard shell, OR when the top position of the harness is no longer at or above the shoulder level (consult your manual for specifics).
- 1" or less of movement at the belt path; installed with either UAS or seat belt (not both at the same time unless restraint and vehicle manuals state otherwise).
- Harness tight - cannot pinch a horizontal fold of harness at the chest/collarbone area.
- Chest clip at armpit level.
- Top tethered tightly to an approved anchor point in the vehicle (consult dealer for retrofit on older vehicles).



## Stage 3: Booster Seat

- Best practice is to remain harnessed until at least 40lbs and developmentally ready to move to a booster. Once boosted, best practice is to remain boosted until the child passes the 5-step test (see next stage). Height is most important for proper fit of adult seat belt.
- If your child has outgrown the harnessed seat by height or weight but is not heavy enough, or developmentally ready, for a booster, look for a taller, higher-weight harnessed seat.
- When transitioning to a booster, start with a high-back booster; it gives many kids a better sense of security, provides head support while sleeping, often provides better shoulder belt fit, and is required in vehicles without adequate head and neck support. Some high-back boosters also require a vehicle head rest.

- High-back boosters have head support and belt guides to position the shoulder belt. Backless boosters do not have head support and a child must have in-vehicle head support up to at least the tops of their ears. Some high-back boosters also require a vehicle head restraint.



- Boosters must be used with a lap/shoulder belt and NEVER with a lap belt only.
- The child must remain seated in position at all times, even when sleeping, for the seat belt to protect them.



- The lap belt should be low and flat across the upper thighs, never riding up on the belly; the shoulder belt should sit across the collarbone, not riding up on the neck or slipping off the shoulder.