

Child Seat Safety

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death and disability for children nationwide. In 2015, 31 children age 15 and under were killed in motor vehicles on Kentucky roadways. Seventeen (55 percent) of those were unrestrained.

“Top Ten” questions about child safety seats

1. What is Kentucky’s child safety seat and booster law?

The law was enhanced in 2015 to increase the height requirement to 57 inches and the age requirement to 8 years old. Children younger than 8 but taller than 57 inches will not have to ride in a booster seat.



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

Always read the child seat manufacturer 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 one year of age and 20 pounds, with best practice being two years of age and 30 pounds. When using a convertible seat, it is best to keep the child rear-facing until the maximum rear-facing weight limit (reference instructions or seat label).

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 (reference instructions).

When forward-facing, the harness straps should be *at or above* the child’s shoulders (reference 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 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. If the seat has been involved in a crash, it must be replaced. First check with your insurance company before you purchase a new seat. Using a seat with unknown history is not recommended.

9. Should my child be in a booster seat?

Please reference the law in question one, but keep in mind Safety Belt Safe USA recommends children be in a booster as long as possible since seat belts are made for adults. (See information on back page.)

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

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

Types of child safety seats

Infant seat

- Use rear-facing, from birth until weight limit (reference instructions or seat label).
- A child must remain rear-facing to a minimum of one year of age and 20 pounds, with best practice being two years of age and 30 pounds.



Convertible seat

- May be used both rear-facing and forward-facing.
- Use rear-facing until weight limit (reference instructions or seat label).
- A child must remain rear-facing to a minimum of one year of age and 20 pounds, with best practice being two years of age and 30 pounds.
- Use forward-facing until weight limit on harness or until the child outgrows the harness slots (reference instructions or seat label).

Forward-facing seat with harness

- For children at least one year of age and 20 pounds, with best practice being two years of age and 30 pounds.
- Keep child in harness until weight limit (reference instructions or seat label).

Combination forward-facing seat with harness/booster

- Use harness for children at least one year of age and 20 pounds, with best practice being two years of age and 30 pounds.
- Keep child in harness until weight limit (reference instructions or seat label).
- Remove harness and use as a booster until weight limit (reference instructions or seat label).



Booster seat

- Use with children over 40 pounds, up to 80 pounds or more (reference instructions or seat label).
- Must be used with a lap-and-shoulder belt.

Research shows child safety seats are 71 percent effective in reducing fatal injury for infants (less than one year old) and 54 percent effective for toddlers (one to four years old) in passenger cars. In light trucks, the effectiveness is 58 percent for infants and 59 percent for toddlers. Booster seats lower the risk of injury to children by 60 percent 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

