

# The safest ride for kids

Car crashes are one of the leading causes of death and injury in children. Pediatricians and injury prevention experts work together to find the best ways to keep kids safe. Use this guide to know which car seat is safest for your child.

		Age (Years)											
Birth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Rear-facing car seat													
		Forward-facing car seat											
				Booster seat									
								Seat belt					

**Proper fit and use is most important at every stage.**

## Rear facing

- Top of the child's head is at least one inch below the top of the car seat
- Harness straps at or below the shoulders and should be snug
- Chest clip is at armpit level.
- Buckle is in front of the child with no gaps



## Forward facing

- Top of the child's ears are below the top of the car seat.
- Harness straps are at or above the shoulders and should be snug
- Chest clip is at armpit level
- Buckle is in front of the child with no gaps



## Booster seat

- Top of the child's ears are below the top of the booster or vehicle headrest
- Shoulder belt lies flat and snug between the neck and shoulder
- Child sits back against the booster seat or if using a backless booster, against the vehicle seat back
- Lap belt lies flat and snug on the top of the thighs



## Seat belt

- Adjust headrest to the middle of the back of the head
- Shoulder belt lies flat on collarbone
- Lap belt lies flat and snug on the tops of the thighs, not the belly
- Children should ride in the back seat until age 13.



## Using car seats correctly

- Always check the car seat and vehicle owner's manual for the correct way to use and install.
- Check with the car seat manufacturer before using accessories that did not come with the seat. This includes headrests, blankets and padding.
- Once installed, the seat should move no more than one inch from side to side or front to back at the belt path.
- Do not use car seats that are old, expired or have been in a crash.

## Wisconsin law and safest practice

The Wisconsin child passenger safety law states the minimum requirements for safety. Pediatricians and injury prevention professionals recommend more than the minimum to protect children in a crash. This recommendation is the safest practice.

Type of seat	Wisconsin law	Safest practice
<b>Rear-facing car seat</b>	Children must ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are 1 year old <b>and</b> weigh 20 pounds.	Children should ride in a rear-facing car seat until at least the age of 2. Keep children rear facing as long as they are within the weight and height requirements for the car seat.
<b>Forward-facing car seat</b>	Children must ride in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until they are 4 years old <b>and</b> weigh 40 pounds.	Children should ride in a forward-facing car seat with a harness as long as they are within the age, weight and height requirements for the car seat.
<b>Booster seat</b>	Children must ride in a booster seat until they are 8 years old <b>or</b> weigh 80 pounds <b>or</b> are 4 feet 9 inches tall (4'9").	Children should ride in a booster seat until they are tall enough to sit on the vehicle seat without slouching, and the seat belt fits snugly across the top of the thighs and across the shoulder.
<b>Seat belt</b>	Children must be restrained in a seat belt when they outgrow the requirements of a booster seat.	Children should ride using a lap and shoulder belt once they have outgrown their booster seat.
<b>Back seat</b>	Children required to ride in a rear-facing or forward-facing car seat must be restrained in the back seat.	Children younger than 13 years of age should ride in the back seat using a lap and shoulder belt.

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