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Car crashes are the #1 preventable cause of death for children and young adults . . .

as well as a major cause of permanent brain damage, seizures, and paralysis. A sudden stop at 30 miles per hour could cause the same crushing force on your child's brain and body as a fall from a 3-story building. Fortunately, by buckling up children, we can prevent most of these deaths and serious injuries.

Safety seats save lives and prevent injuries.

It can happen to anyone at any time. Out of nowhere, a pickup truck driver ran a red light, slamming into the vehicle in which SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. Board Member Laura Simmons was riding in back with her daughter Perrin, 4 months old. The crash force seriously injured the front seat adult passenger, now recovered. Perrin was "completely unharmed as she was in the rear middle seat in a child restraint installed tightly using the safety belt and her harness secured snugly by her very protective Child Passenger Safety Technician mama," Laura wrote about "the scariest moment of my life." Today, Perrin is a lively 3 year old riding in a convertible seat, rear facing for best protection. (See cover.)

Boosters reduce injuries and are needed until ages 10-12.

Buckling up right is key! Boosters reduce injuries and are needed until the belt really fits. When my daughter Kerstin was born in 1970, it was hard to find a crash-tested safety seat, which led to my involvement in child passenger safety. Kerstin rode in the first crash-tested seat, forward facing with a large shield, until she weighed 50 pounds at age 7. By the time her twins, Kaja and Tavi, were born in 2002, rear facing until age 2 was possible, and boosters kept them safe up to age 10! Today, Alicia Gomez, age 10, pictured on the cover, shows how important it is to use a booster to keep the lap belt on the thighs and the shoulder belt between the neck and the shoulder while sister Olivia, age 5, uses a seat with a 5-point harness.

Stephanie Tombrello, LCSW, CPSTI
Executive Director, SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.
Founded January 1980

(Questions & Answers continued from inside)

■ Why should children ride in the back seat?

The back seat is almost twice as safe as the front, whether or not the vehicle has air bags. Some research shows that children should ride in the back seat until they reach age 15.

■ How do I install my child's safety seat?

Check the vehicle owner's manual and the safety seat instruction booklet to learn about using the safety belt or LATCH system. Look on the safety seat label for the weight limit for lower connectors. If you install your safety seat with a vehicle belt, make sure it is buckled and locked (see instructions) to keep it from loosening during normal driving. If you install your safety seat with LATCH, attach the pair of lower connectors (either rigid or on a strap) that came with the safety seat to the anchors in the car. Most cars have two pairs of lower anchors (small bars in the crack between the seatback and seat cushion) in the back seat. After buckling the belt or attaching the lower connectors, press down on the safety seat while tightening the lap portion of the vehicle belt or LATCH strap. To check your installation, grasp the safety seat near the place where the belt or strap is threaded. Push toward the front and sides of the vehicle. It should not move more than one inch. All forward-facing seats with harnesses should be anchored to the car with the top tether strap, if possible (check instructions). If your car is pre-2002, call SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. for more information about tethering.

■ Should I wear a safety belt while I'm pregnant?

Yes. Too many babies die because of injuries to expectant mothers who fail to buckle up properly. Keep the lap belt low, below the bump. Place the top part of the belt over the shoulder and across the chest, never under the arm. Slide your seat back as far as possible from the steering wheel, dashboard, or air bag. Be a passenger when possible.

■ What else do I need to know?

Every year, thousands of children are injured or die in parking lots or driveways due to heat stroke, being strangled by a power window, or being run over because they can't be seen by the driver. Never leave a baby or young child alone in a car or around parked cars. Another risk is from unused safety belts that can be reached by a child. Children have pulled belts all the way out, which makes the retractor lock, and wrapped them around their necks. In a few cases, the child died before the driver could stop the car and cut the belt. Unused belts should be buckled, tightened, and locked, if possible. Finally, make sure that everything in the car – people, pets, groceries, strollers – is buckled up or tied down with cargo straps. Being hit by a loose object or passenger during a crash is a common cause of injury or death.

Call SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. for information about child restraints sold by vehicle dealers, car beds for babies who must lie flat, products for children with special needs, air travel, risks to children of impaired drivers.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A., Box 553, Altadena, CA 91003
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THE PERFECT GIFT
Your Child's Safety

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT CAR SAFETY SEATS

■ How can I tell if my child's seat is a "safe" one?
All safety seats must pass crash tests and meet government safety standards. When you buy a new seat, register online or mail in the registration card. The manufacturer will contact you ONLY if there is a recall. Keep the instruction booklet with the seat and download an extra copy for home use. Look at the date the seat was made (on a computer-created sticker, next to the model number) and write it on your copy.

■ Are used safety seats safe?
Avoid buying a used safety seat at a thrift shop or garage sale. It could be missing parts or have invisible crash damage. If you already have a safety seat, be sure that (a) it has stickers with the model number and date made; (b) it is not too old – most expire in 6-10 years; (c) it has all of its parts, including the instruction booklet; (d) it has not been recalled (check the list at www.carseat.org).

Five Rules for Auto Safety

1. Choose a safety seat that fits your child.
2. Check that it fits tightly in the car.
3. Remove all slack from harness or safety belt.
4. Follow instructions exactly.
5. Buckle up children in the back seat.

■ Which safety seat is the "best?" The "best" seat is the one that…

Fits your child
Children should ride facing the back of the car until at least age two, longer if possible, to protect the spine and brain. Rear-facing-only seats usually have a detachable base. Convertible seats fit longer and can be changed from rear facing to forward facing. Use a convertible seat rear facing until the child is too heavy (according to the weight limit in the instructions) or too tall (the child's head is within an inch of the top edge of the seat). The next step is a forward-facing convertible seat or a forward-facing-only seat with a harness. When the harness is outgrown, either by weight or shoulder height, a booster is needed until the safety belt fits properly. Most kids need a booster until age 10-12.

Fits your car(s)
Try before you buy! Read and follow both sets of instructions: the booklet included with the safety seat and the "child restraint" section in your vehicle owner's manual. Make sure the safety seat you have chosen fits in the back seat of the car, matches the shape of the vehicle seat cushion, and can be firmly attached with the vehicle belt or LATCH.*

Fits the needs of your family
Choose a seat that is easy to use correctly, including installing it in your car(s) and adjusting the harness. The "best" safety seat for your family is the one you and your child will be comfortable using on every ride.

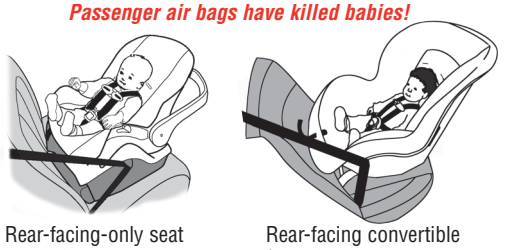
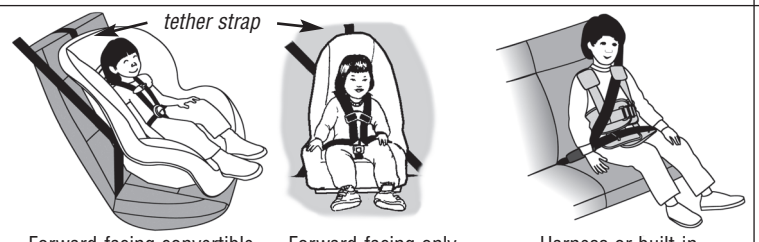
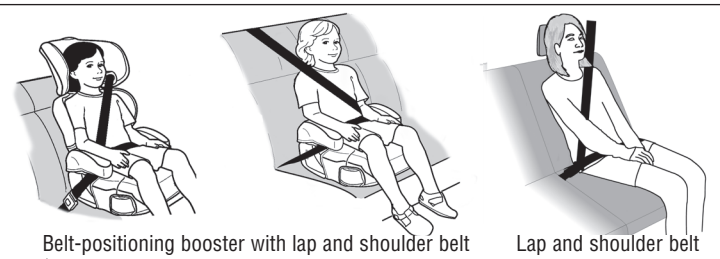
Lower **Anchors and **T**ethers for **CH**ildren. All new cars and many made since 2000 have special hardware to attach child safety seats.*

■ Which features are most important?
Check and compare weight limits (lower and upper) and shoulder strap level (lowest and highest) to make sure the seat will fit your child as he or she grows. Read carefully, since some seats have a different weight limit when they are used as a booster (without the harness). If you are expecting a baby, choose a rear-facing-only or convertible seat with low shoulder strap slots and two or more slots for the crotch buckle. Some seats have a removable infant insert that improves fit and comfort. Make sure the harness is easy to loosen and tighten. You may want to get a seat with shoulder straps that are easy to slide up and down to stay level with the child's shoulders, especially if you use the seat for more than one child. Some features for easier installation are belt lock-offs and click-on LATCH connectors (instead of hooks), and, to reduce movement of rear-facing seats in crashes, anti-rebound bars or load legs. Read about special testing and extra safety features provided by some manufacturers.

■ How can I keep my child in the safety seat?
- Start a lifelong habit with baby's first ride.
- Strengthen the habit by never making an exception.
- Encourage good passengers with praise, singing, games.
- Keep a bag of special soft toys and books in the car.
- Make regular stops to stretch.
- Introduce your child to a new safety seat with a short trip for fun.
- Always wear your own safety belt!

(Continued on back panel)

HOW TO CHOOSE AND USE CAR SAFETY SEATS

	Newborns and Toddlers Face rear as long as possible (until age 2 or more)	**Young Children** Use harness & tether as long as possible (check weight & height limits)	**Older Children** Use belt-positioning booster until child can pass 5-Step Test (see below).
Type of Safety Seat	***Passenger air bags have killed babies!***  Rear-facing-only seat (Most fit up to 30-40 lbs.) Rear-facing convertible (Rear facing up to 35-50 lbs.)	*tether strap*  Forward-facing convertible (Most fit up to 50-80 lbs.) Forward-facing only (Converts to booster) Harness or built-in (Weight limits vary)	 Belt-positioning booster with lap and shoulder belt (For children who have outgrown seats with a harness) Lap and shoulder belt
How to Use	• Safety seat is firmly installed (1-inch test). • Safety seat is tilted about halfway back. • Newborn's head does not flop forward. • Child's head is at least 1" below top edge of seat. • Straps are in slots at or below shoulder level. • Harness is adjusted snugly before adding blankets. • Final step: Chest clip at armpit level.	• Safety seat is firmly installed (1-inch test). • Child sits upright or slightly tipped back. • Top tether strap is hooked to anchor in vehicle. • Straps are in slots at or above shoulder level. • Harness is very snug (cannot pinch strap between fingers). • Chest clip is at armpit level.	Try the **5-Step Test** to find out if the child is ready for belt only. 1. Does the child sit all the way back against the auto seat? 2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the auto seat? 3. Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and arm? 4. Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs? 5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip? **If you cannot answer "yes" to all 5 questions, the child needs a booster.**
Errors to Avoid	• **Never** face baby forward. • **Never** place baby in front of active air bag. • **Never** use household carrier in car.	• **Never** let the straps slip down on the arms. • **Never** leave any slack in the harness ("pinch test"). • **Never** let the child out of the seat "just this once".	• **Never** put two people in one belt. • **Never** put shoulder belt under arm or behind back. • **Never** use only lap belt with a booster.
	Never allow a child to ride with an impaired driver.		