



STEP  
4

## SEAT BELT

A seat belt should lie across the upper thighs and be snug across the shoulder and chest to restrain the child safely in a crash.

A child is ready to ride with only a lap and shoulder seat belt when they are at least 8 years of age and you can answer “yes” to all of the following:

- Can my child’s knees bend over the front of the vehicle seat?
- Is the lap portion of the seat belt low and across the hips, not across the belly?
- Does the seat belt rest on the child’s shoulder and not their neck?
- Can the child maintain that correct position for the entire ride?



If you answered “no” to any of the above, use a booster seat.

## Did you know 1 out of 2 car seats are used incorrectly?

Proper use of your child’s car seat can mean the difference between life and death. Tragedy can be avoided by following these simple rules:

### Car Seat Basics:

- Use the vehicle seat belt or lower anchors to install car seats. Do not use both unless allowed by both the car seat manufacturer **and** the vehicle owner’s manual.
- If a forward-facing car seat is being installed with lower anchors, a top tether must be used. Always use top tethers, when available, to install forward-facing car seats.
- Car seats should be installed snugly and not move more than one inch when checked at the belt path.
- Harness straps should be tight enough so that webbing cannot be pinched at the shoulders.
- **Never** place a rear-facing car seat in front of an active air bag.
- Carefully read and follow the installation instructions for all car seats.
- Consult your vehicle owner’s manual for seat belt and car seat installation information.
- Children under the age of 13 should ride in the back seat.



OKLAHOMA  
State Department  
of Health



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# Ride Right

at every age  
and every stage



OKLAHOMA  
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STEP  
1

## REAR-FACING

A rear-facing car seat is the best seat for your young child to use. It has a harness which, in the event of a crash, cradles your child and moves with them to reduce the stress to the child's fragile neck and spinal cord.

Keep children  
**REAR-FACING**  
as long as possible.



STEP  
2

## FORWARD-FACING

A forward-facing car seat has a harness and tether that limits your child's forward movement during a crash.



STEP  
3

## BOOSTER SEATS

A booster seat positions the seat belt so that it fits properly over the stronger parts of your child's body.

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends parents should keep children rear-facing as long as they fit within the height and/or weight limits set by the manufacturer of their car safety seat.
- Rear-facing car seats should **never** be placed in front of an active air bag.
- Recline rear-facing seats at a 30-45° angle, according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Position the harness straps at or **below** the shoulders and ensure a snug fit.
- Adjust the chest clip to the armpit level.
- The child's head should be more than 1" below the top of the car seat or according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- It's okay for the child's feet to touch the vehicle seat.

- Children who are at least 2 years of age, or have outgrown the height and/or weight limits for their rear-facing car seat, should be placed in a forward-facing car seat.
- Position the harness straps at or **above** the shoulders and ensure a snug fit.
- Adjust the chest clip to the armpit level.
- Keep children in a 5-point harness as long as possible, to the upper height and/or weight limits of the car seat.
- Children under 4 years old but over 40 lbs. would benefit from using a car seat with a higher weight limit harness.

- Children who are at least 4 years of age and have outgrown the harness for their forward-facing car seat should ride in a belt-positioning booster seat.
- Booster seats should **only** be used with lap/shoulder belts and **never** with a lap-only seat belt.
- The lap belt should fit snugly across the upper thighs/hips – not the belly.
- The shoulder belt should fit snugly against the chest, resting across the shoulder – not the neck.
- Children should never place the seat belt under their arm or behind their back.
- Booster seats are typically recommended for children who are at least 4 years old and who weigh a minimum of 40 lbs.

Select the right car seat based on the age, weight, height and developmental level.