



BOOSTER SEATS

KEEPING YOUR BIG KIDS SAFE

Most States,

Washington, DC,
and Puerto Rico

REQUIRE BOOSTER SEATS

for children who
have outgrown their
car seats but are
still too small for
adult seat belts.¹

Booster seats are an essential step between car seats and seat belts.

Vehicle seat belts are designed for adults, not for children.

WHO SHOULD USE A BOOSTER SEAT?

All children who have outgrown the height or weight limit of a harnessed forward-facing car seat.

WHAT KIND OF BOOSTER SEAT SHOULD MY CHILD USE?

Combination and All-in-One Car Seats in Booster Mode



- Transitions from a harnessed car seat to a booster seat by removing and/or storing harness straps
- May be used in vehicle seats that do not have head restraints or high seat backs
- **MUST BE** used with lap-and-shoulder seat belt

All-in-One in Booster Mode shown.

High Back Booster Seat



- Provides neck and head support
- May be used in vehicle seats that do not have head restraints or high seat backs
- May ease the transition from a harnessed car seat by having a similar structure
- **MUST BE** used with lap-and-shoulder seat belt

Backless Booster Seat



- Does **NOT** provide head and neck support
- Must be used in vehicle seats that have head restraints or high seat backs
- May have a shoulder belt positioner
- **MUST BE** used with lap-and-shoulder seat belt

Integrated (Built-In) Booster Seat



- Pulls out of vehicle's rear seat and can be stowed when not in use
- **MUST BE** used with lap-and-shoulder seat belt

BOOSTER SEATS KEEPING YOUR BIG KIDS SAFE

Children under 13 should always ride in the back seat.

HOW LONG SHOULD MY CHILD USE A BOOSTER SEAT?

There isn't a set age — laws vary by State. Best practice is for your child to stay in a booster seat until they're big enough to use the vehicle seat belt correctly. That means the lap belt fits across the upper thighs – low on the hips, and not across the stomach; and the shoulder belt fits snugly across the shoulder and chest, not on the neck or face. This usually happens between the ages of 8 and 12 and may vary by vehicle and seating position in the vehicle.

WHY CAN'T MY BIG KID JUST USE A SEAT BELT?

Seat belts are designed for adults. When adults allow children to use seat belts too soon, they're putting their children in danger. The lap portion of the seat belt may ride up in a crash, putting the child at an increased risk for severe abdominal injuries. When a child is too small or is not mature enough to keep the shoulder belt in place, you might find it off the child's shoulder, under the child's armpit, or behind their back. These incorrect shoulder belt positions would provide little to no upper body protection during a crash.

THE BOOSTER BATTLE

"Mom, why do I have to use this thing? My friend's mom lets him use a seat belt. This isn't fair."

Sound familiar? Often as caregivers, when we know better, we do better. If your big kid thinks ditching the booster is a rite of passage, try one of these solutions:

SAY IT	Tell your child that booster seats help lap-and-shoulder belts protect big kids in case of a crash, since seat belts are designed for adults.
PROVE IT	Show your child some cool crash test videos at YouTube.com/SaferCarTV or talk to them about what your State law says about booster seats.
OWN IT	Remember, you're in charge of your child's safety in the car. Your child's safety is not up for negotiation. Be consistent and make sure your child is buckled up in the correct seat every trip, every time.

Have questions?

Find a nationally certified Child Passenger Safety Technician at cert.safekids.org or find an inspection station at [NHTSA.gov/CarSeatInspection](https://www.nhtsa.gov/CarSeatInspection).



Seat Belt

BOOSTER SEATS REDUCE

the risk for
serious injury by

45%

for children
4 to 8 years old
when compared to
seat belt use alone.²



Backless Booster Seat



U.S. Department of Transportation
**National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration**



² Arbogast, K. B., Jermakian, J. S., Kallan, M. J., & Durbin, D. R. (2009). Effectiveness of belt positioning booster seats: an updated assessment. *Pediatrics*, Nov 124(5), e1281-86. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/124/5/1281.full.pdf>