

Your Grandchildren & Car Seats



Driving your grandchildren on fun outings or to help your family? Great! Be sure you're up-to-date on car seat safety with these questions and answers.

Q: Should I buy a new seat or is a used one okay?

A: Only use a second hand seat from someone you know and trust. A seat that was in a crash or cleaned improperly might not be safe. Make sure the seat is not expired.

Q: When can my grandchild face forward? I'm worried about their legs.

A: Keep children rear facing until they reach the car seat's weight or height limit. Rear-facing protects their head, neck, and spine. Children are very flexible and will be comfortable, and leg injuries are very rare for children facing the rear.

Q: When can my grandchild switch to a booster seat?

A: Children can move to a booster when they are at least 5 years old, meet the booster's weight and height minimums, and can sit with the seat belt properly positioned for the whole ride.

Q: Can my grandchild ride in the front seat?

A: No. It's dangerous for a child who is in a rear-facing car seat to be in front of an active air bag. All children under age 13 are safest in the back seat.

Q: I worry that the harness is too tight. How can I tell when it's right?

A: Do the pinch test. The harness should be snug enough that you cannot pinch the webbing at your grandchild's collarbone.

Q: What else should I know about harnessing?

A: Here are other harnessing basics:

- ▶ Child's back and bottom against the back and bottom of the seat
- ▶ Crotch buckle buckled, in the correct slot according to the instruction manual
- ▶ Chest clip buckled and at armpit level
- ▶ For rear-facing, harness at or below shoulders (read manual to confirm)
- ▶ For forward-facing, harness at or above shoulders (read manual to confirm)

Q: Do I really need to take my grandchild's winter coat off in the car?

A: Yes. In a crash, a heavy winter coat or snowsuit can flatten out or compress, causing the car seat harness to be too loose to provide the best protection. Even older children and adults should avoid wearing a bulky coat because it can cause space between the body and the seat belt. To keep your grandchild warm, cover them with blankets, or a coat on backwards, over the harness.

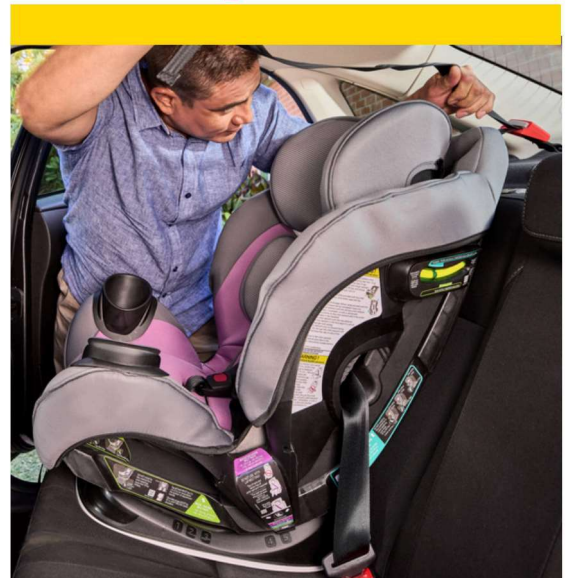
Q: I use one seat for multiple grandchildren. What should I looking out for?

A: Here are things to consider: Is each child within the weight and height limits of the seat? Are the harness straps properly positioned (see above)? Are you using the tether as required by manual? (Tethers are usually only used when forward facing)

Q: This is complicated. How can I get help?

A: Meet with a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST) at a car seat inspection (fitting) station or seat check event. Find a CPST:

- ▶ Vermont: beseatsmart.org
- ▶ New York: trafficsafety.ny.gov/child-passenger-safety
- ▶ Some car seat manufacturers offer virtual checks—see their websites
- ▶ The National Safety Council also offers virtual appointments—safety-connection.org/caregiver/



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