

Car Seat Basics: 4 Simple Steps

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Car crashes remain the number one killer of children ages 3-14 in the United States. Safe Kids Buckle Up recommends the following four steps to determine the correct seat for children in vehicles on every ride.

STEP 1 - Infants

Use a rear-facing car seat to at least age 1 and 20 lbs. Use your rear-facing car seat longer if the seat has higher weight and height limits. Take the next step to a forward-facing car seat when your child is at least one year old and you answer “yes” to either question:

- Does your child exceed the car seat’s rear-facing height and weight limits?
- Is your child’s head within one inch of the car seat top?

STEP 2- Toddlers

Use a forward-facing car seat (convertible or combo seat) until the harness no longer fits. Take the next step to a booster seat when you answer “yes” to any of these questions:

- Does your child exceed the car seat’s height and weight limits?
- Are your child’s shoulders above the car seat’s top harness slots?
- Are the tops of your child’s ears above the car seat?

STEP 3 - Boosters

Use a booster seat with the vehicle lap and shoulder safety belts until your child passes the Safety Belt Fit Test. Take the next step to the safety belt when you answer “yes” to these questions:

- Does your child exceed the booster seat’s height and weight limits?
- Does your child pass the Safety Belt Fit Test in all vehicles used:

1. Have your child sit all the way back on the vehicle seat. Do his or her knees bend at the front edge of the seat?

If they bend naturally, go to #2. If they don’t, return to the booster seat.

2. Buckle the lap and shoulder belt. Be sure the lap belt rests on the upper legs or hips. If it does, go to #3. If it rests on the stomach, return to the booster seat.

3. Be sure the shoulder belt rests on the shoulder or collarbone. If it does, go to #4. If it’s on the face or neck, return to the booster seat. Never put the shoulder belt under the child’s arm or behind the child’s back.

4. Check whether your child maintains the correct seating position for as long as you are in the car. If your child slouches or shifts positions so the safety belt touches the face, neck or stomach, return your child to the booster seat.

STEP 4 - Safety Belts

Once your child passes the Safety Belt Fit Test, require him or her to use safety belts in a back seat in every vehicle on every ride, whether or not you are there. A lap and shoulder belt provides the best protection to your child and helps him or her to maintain the correct seating position.



If you have questions regarding your child and how to properly restrain them while in a vehicle, consult the vehicle’s owners manual, the car seat owner’s manual or call the **Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department at 763-767-4003** for a car seat appointment.