

Useful Links

www.childcarseats.org.uk

www.rospa.com

www.protectchild.co.uk

www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/

www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/arrivealive/

www.highwaycode.gov.uk/

www.roadsafetyni.gov.uk

www.larsoa.org.uk

www.capt.org.uk

www.britax.co.uk

www.graco.co.uk

www.recaro.com

www.maxi-cosi.com

www.halfords.com

www.mothercare.com

www.london-taxis.com

ROSPA
The Royal Society for the
Prevention of Accidents

Carrying Other People's Children Safely

Advice about child car seats and seat belts for anyone who transports other people's children in a car, taxi, coach or bus



SAMPLE NO: MS303



The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
Edgbaston Park, 353 Bristol Road, Birmingham B5 7ST
Telephone: 0870 777 2171/0121 248 2000
Fax: 0870 777 2199/0121 248 2001

Registered Charity No. 207823
VAT Registration No. 655 1316 49

www.rospa.com



Produced with the support of the Department of Transport

Duty of Care

Any organisation or individual who carries other people's children has a legal duty to ensure they carry them safely.

Every year around 25 children under 12 years old are killed and 8,000 injured while travelling in cars in Great Britain. Many of these deaths and injuries can be prevented if children travel in baby seats, child seats or booster seats that are suitable for their size and weight, suitable for the car and are securely fitted.

Seat belts on their own are less effective for children because they are primarily designed for adults. In a crash, a child may slide under an adult belt because the lap strap is too high over their abdomen, or it could cause serious internal injuries.

As part of its health and safety system, any organisation that transports children must ensure its drivers are fit and competent, vehicles are safe and suitable, passengers are carried safely, and journeys are properly planned. Advice on these issues is available from www.rospa.com/roadsafety/resources/employers.htm

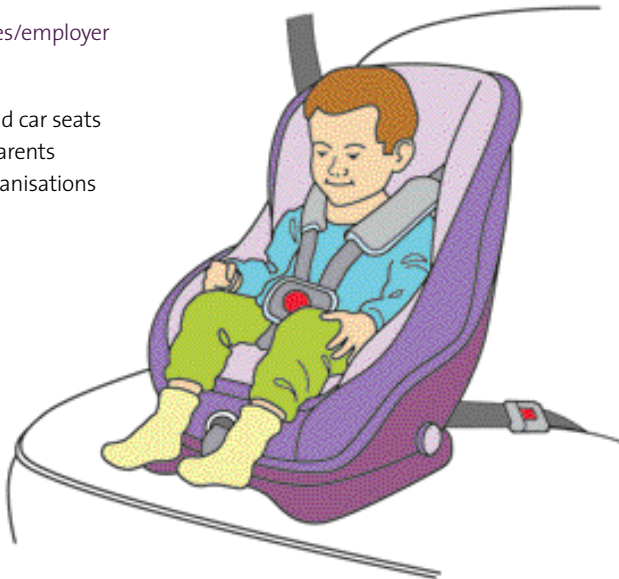
This leaflet gives advice on using child car seats and seat belts, which is relevant to parents sharing the school run as well as organisations providing a transport service.

Providing Child Restraints

Organisations or individuals who carry other people's children in cars, vans and other goods vehicles must make sure they provide appropriate child restraints (See "Using the Right Restraint") for each child carried until s/he is able to use an adult seat belt on its own. Child restraints are rearward facing baby seats, forward facing child seats, booster seats and booster cushions. Different rules apply in buses/coaches - see 'other vehicles'.

If you do not normally carry children, but know that, on occasion, you may need to do so at short notice, consider how you can make arrangements to have access to child restraints in such situations.

If you use other people's child restraints, get them to talk you through the manufacturer's instructions whilst showing you how to fit the seat first, so that you are sure you can fit it correctly.



Duty of Care

Training

Staff need to be trained to assess that the child restraints provided are appropriate for the child and the vehicle, and to fit them, or at least check they are correctly fitted.

Some child seat manufacturers and retailers provide training and/or will check seats (See Useful Links).

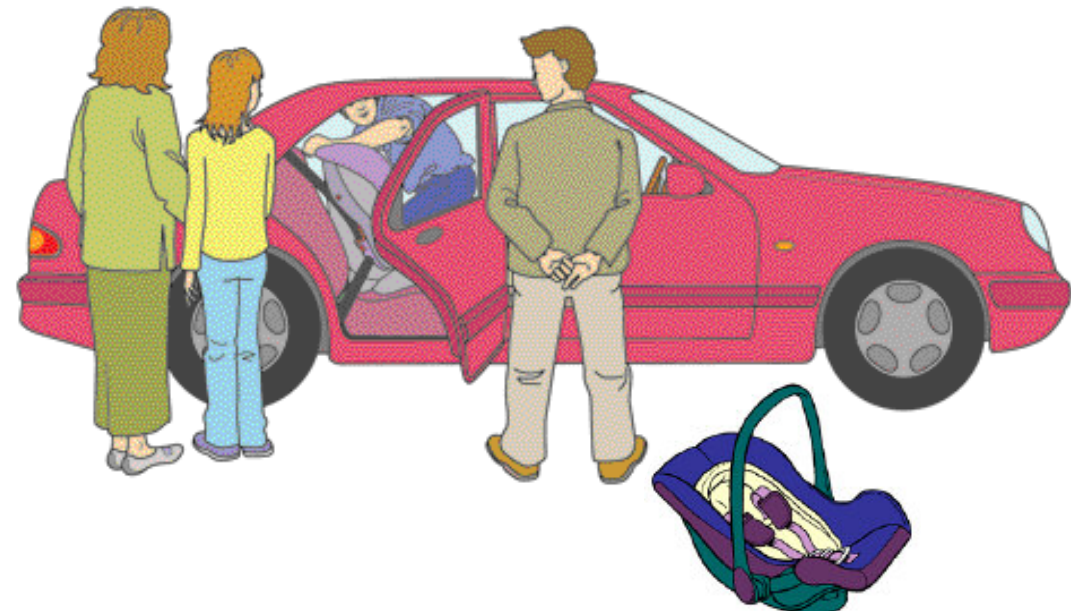
The Road Safety Unit of the Local Authority or Police Force may be able to offer such training or a seat checking service, or recommend other training providers. Many also run Child Seat Check days at local venues, such as supermarkets.

Insurance

Organisations should declare in writing to their insurers that they carry children in their vehicles, and keep a copy of relevant paperwork with their insurance documents.

Using Taxis, Buses and Coaches

Safety measures also need to be considered when hiring taxis, private hire vehicles, minicabs, minibuses, buses or coaches (See Other Vehicles).



Child Seat and Seat Belt Laws

From 18th September 2006, the law requires all children in cars, vans and other goods vehicles to be carried in an appropriate child restraint from birth until either they are 135 cms (4' 5") tall or have reached the age of 12 years (whichever comes first) with very few exceptions. They must then use a seat belt (although it would be preferable to use a booster seat or booster cushion until they are 150 cm (5') tall).

Children under 3 years

Must use an appropriate child restraint when travelling in the front or rear of a vehicle. They cannot be carried in a car that does not have seat belts because it will not be possible to fit a child restraint in such vehicles.



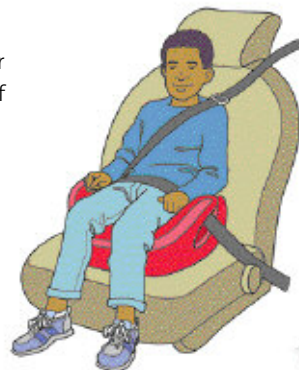
Children aged 3 years to 1.35m in height (approx 4'5") and who are also under 12 years old

Must use an appropriate child restraint when travelling in the front seat of a car, van or other goods vehicle and when travelling in the rear if seat belts are fitted.



Children aged 12 years and over (or younger children over 1.35m tall)

Must wear a seat belt if fitted in the front or rear of a car, van or other goods vehicle.



It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that children under 14 years old use an appropriate child restraint or wear their seat belt.



Child Seat and Seat Belt Laws

Exceptions

Unexpected Necessity

If an appropriate child restraint is not available, children over 3 years old may travel in the rear using an adult seat belt. This exception is for emergencies and unplanned situations. For example, when someone has to carry a child due to an "unexpected necessity" over a short distance, and where not carrying the child (because a child restraint is not available) might leave him or her at risk. It does not apply to trips that could have reasonably been planned (e.g., a school run), nor to 'long' journeys or to children under 3 years old.

When three child restraints cannot be fitted in the rear

If it is not possible to fit three child restraints in the rear of a car, then two children up to 135 cms in height must travel in child seats and the third child may use an adult seat belt on its own. This exemption does not apply to children under 3 years old.

It may be better for the third child to sit in a child restraint in the front rather than use the adult seat belt in the rear. If there is an active passenger airbag, check with the vehicle manufacturer or the handbook about using a child restraint in the front. If you do, move the front seat as far back as possible on its runners.

A rearward facing baby seat must not be used in the front if there is an active front airbag.

Licensed Taxis (including private hire vehicles and minicabs)

If a child restraint is not available, children under 3 years must travel in the rear, but may be unrestrained. Children 3 years and over, up to 135 cms tall must sit in the rear and use an adult seat belt. Children aged 12 years or more, or over 135 cms tall, may travel the front, but must wear the seat belt. (See Other Vehicles).

Emergency Vehicles

Children may be carried in vehicles being used by the police or other emergency services, if appropriate child restraints are not available.

Using the Right Child Restraint

Child restraints must be:

- Suitable for the child
- Suitable for the vehicle
- In a safe condition

Choosing Child Restraints

Don't rush the decision. Look through manufacturers' catalogues and websites or in shops to assess a range of seats. Find a retailer who will let you 'Try Before You Buy'. Ask if they have trained staff and check that one will be available before you visit the store. Good retailers will check whether a restraint is suitable for the car or cars in which it will be used, will demonstrate how to fit it and will allow you to try to fit it yourself.

Contact child seat manufacturers to check what seats they recommend for the vehicle(s) you are using.

Ask your local Road Safety Unit if they have an advice, checking or fitting service.

Use www.childcarseats.org.uk for further advice and information.

Suitable for the Child

Child restraints are designed for specific weight ranges of children. These broadly match different age groups, but it is the weight that is most important. Many can be converted as the child grows and so fit into more than one group. Note that manufacturers may use names different to those mentioned below.

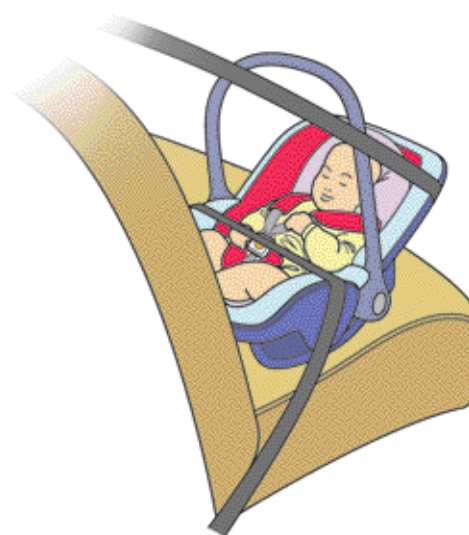
Type	Weight	Approx Age
Rearward-facing baby seat	Group 0 up to 10 kgs (22 lbs) ¹ Group 0+ up to 13kg (29lbs)	birth to 6-9 months birth to 12-15 months
Combination seat	Group 0+ to 1 0-18 kgs (20-40 lbs)	birth - 4 years
Forward-facing child seat	Group 1 9-18 kgs (20-40 lbs)	9 months - 4 years
Booster Seat ²	Group 2 15 - 25 kgs (33 - 55 lbs)	4 to 6 years
Booster Seat	Group 2 and 3 15 - 36 kgs (33 - 79 lbs)	4 to 11 years
Booster Seat	Group 1, 2 and 3 9 - 36 kgs (20 - 79 lbs)	9 months to 11 years
Booster Cushion ²	Group 3 22 - 36 kgs (48 - 79 lbs)	6 - 11 years

¹ Group 0 (0 – 10 kg) baby seats are no longer produced.

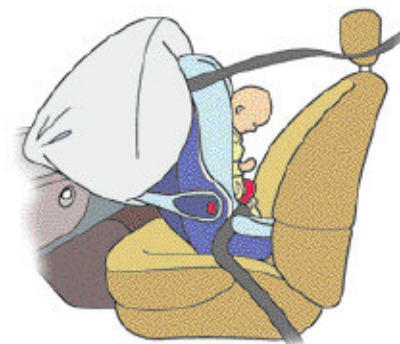
² Booster seats that only fit into Group 2 or only into Group 3 are no longer produced. All now fit into either Group 2 and 3 (15 – 36 kg) or Groups 1 to 3 (9 – 36 kg).

Using the Right Child Restraint

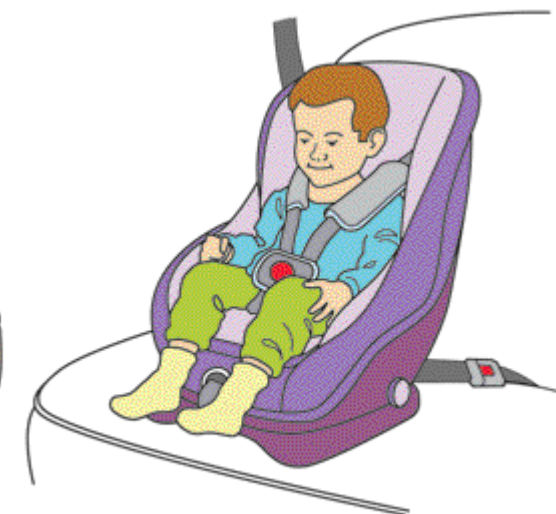
Babies



Babies must be carried in rearward-facing baby seats. They are designed for babies up to 13 kgs (29 lbs) in weight. It is best to keep babies rearward facing for as long as possible because this provides much better protection for their head, neck and spine. They should only be put in a forward-facing seat when they have exceeded the maximum weight for the baby seat and can sit up unaided or the top of their head is higher than the top of the baby seat.



Young Children



It is dangerous and illegal to place a rearward-facing baby seat in the front if there is an active frontal passenger airbag because the airbag would strike the baby seat with considerable force if it went off.

Children weighing 9 - 18 kgs (20 - 40 lbs), roughly from 9 months to 4 years, should travel in a forward-facing child seat. They have an integral 5-point harness which should include a 'crotch strap' to prevent the child from sliding out feet first in an accident. The top of the harness should be at shoulder height and it should only be possible to fit two fingers between the harness and the child's chest. It is important to check the harness every time it is used. Keep children in this type of seat until they are too heavy for it.

Using the Right Child Restraint

Older Children

Children over 135 cms tall or aged 12 years and above.

A child who is 135 cms tall or who is 12 years or older, can travel using the seat belt on its own. It is better for children to continue to use a booster seat until they are 150 cms tall.

If a child is heavier than the maximum weight (36kg) for a booster seat, but not yet tall enough to use an adult seat belt on its own, it is better to keep them in the booster seat or cushion until they have reached 135 cms in height.



Booster seats and booster cushions are for children from 15 kgs (33 lbs) to either 25 Kgs (55 lbs) or 36 kgs (79 lbs). Some start from 9 kgs (20 lbs).

They are mainly designed to raise children so that the adult seat belt fits them properly, but many also provide protection from side impact. The adult seat belt goes around the child and the seat (some have an integral harness for younger children). The lap belt must go under the arms of the seat and as low as possible over the child's pelvis, not up over their tummy. The diagonal strap should rest over the shoulder, not the neck. Many have an adjustable clip to help position the belt on the shoulder.

Booster seats have a high back, which can be removed on many models to convert it into a booster cushion when the child is big enough.

Using the Right Child Restraint

Suitable for the car

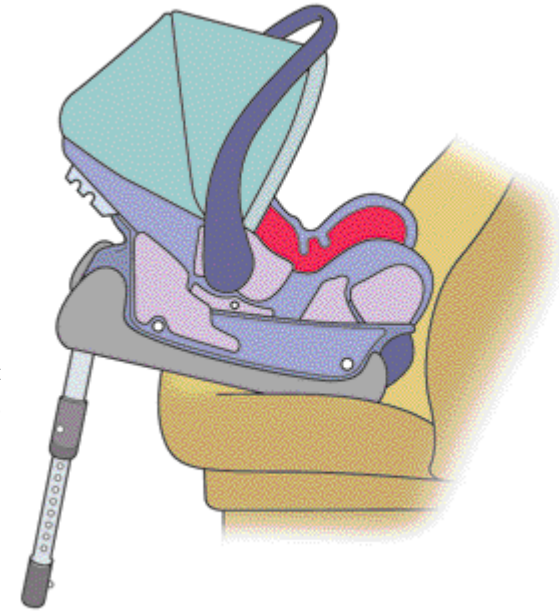
Whether a child restraint can be fitted in a particular car will depend on the shape and length of the car's seats, the position of the seat belt buckles and the size and shape of the child restraint. It is essential to make sure that any child restraint being used can be properly fitted in the car(s) in which it is used. An incorrectly fitted seat will not provide the protection it should do and may even cause injuries.

One of the most common mistakes is to leave the child seat too loose. Make sure that it has been fitted according to the manufacturer's instructions and that it does not move about when pulled by hand. If it has a device to prevent the seat belt slipping once it has been tightened, make sure this is in the locked position. Remember, always try out a child seat in your car before purchasing it.

ISOFix

ISOFix is intended to make fitting child seats into cars quick and simple. All new cars have ISOFix points installed when they are manufactured. Child car restraints that have ISOFix attachments can be plugged into them.

However, check that the ISOFix child seat will fit the vehicle(s) in which it is being used. Ask whether an additional top tether on the seat is needed. Some seats have a 'foot' that extends to the vehicle floor, in which case check it does not rest on the cover of an underfloor compartment.



Using the Right Child Restraint

Safe Condition

It is also important to check that child car seats are in a safe condition.

They must conform to the UN ECE R44.03 or later standard (e.g. R44.04), and display an "E" mark with the weight range of child for which it is designed.



Older ones that conform to a British Standard or to an earlier version of R44 are still in use. From May 2008, all child restraints in use will legally have to meet R44.03 or later standards.

Replacing Seats

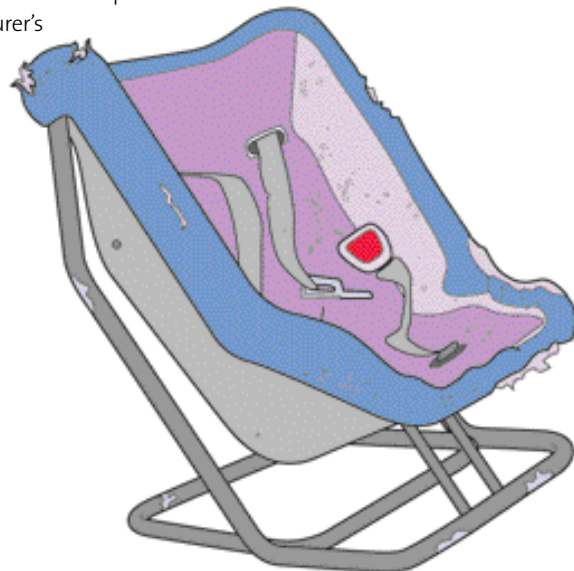
Child car seats suffer from wear and tear, especially if they are constantly being put into and taken out of cars. They should be replaced according to the manufacturer's

recommendations or about every five years.

If they are not used regularly, store them out of direct sunlight and where they are not likely to suffer accidental damage.

Child car seats and adult seat belts that were in a vehicle involved in a crash should be replaced, as they may have suffered damage that is not visible to the naked eye, and would not provide protection in a second crash. The replacement cost is normally included as part of any insurance claim.

Beware of a second-hand child restraint as it may not be possible to be certain of its history. It may have been involved in an accident and have hidden damage. It is likely that the instructions will be missing. Second-hand seats are also likely to be older, to have suffered more wear and tear and may not be designed to current safety standards.



Other Vehicles

The law does not require child restraints to be provided in taxis, private hire vehicles, minibuses, buses or coaches, although they must be used if available.

Seat belts must be worn, if fitted.

Taxis (including private hire vehicles and minicabs)

When booking a taxi, make sure it has seat belts and ask whether a child restraint can be provided or whether you can use your own. Organisations that use taxis regularly should provide their own child restraints if necessary. Some black cabs have an integral booster cushion in the rear for older children.

If the seat belts cannot be used (because the buckle is hidden under the seat, for example) ask the driver to fix it. If it cannot be fixed, do not use the vehicle – ask for a replacement.

If child restraints are not available, then children under 3 years may travel unrestrained in the rear and those 3 years to 135 cms in height must use an adult belt in the rear seat.

Children may travel in the front if they use the correct child seat/booster. The driver is responsible in law for making sure that children under 14 years use seatbelts or child seats/boosters as required.



Minibuses, Buses and Coaches

In small buses, up to 2,540 kg unladen weight (these are usually minibuses), children over 3 years old must wear seat belts, or use child restraints, if available.

On larger buses and coaches, all seated passengers aged 14 years and above must wear seat belts if they are fitted. The driver (or a conductor or similar person) must notify passengers when they board that they have to wear their belts and/or signs must be displayed at every seat. Regulations to require children aged 3 years to 13 years to use seat belts will follow as soon as possible.

Operators are not required to provide child restraints, but if they are available and if they can be fitted properly, they must be used. When booking a minibus, bus or coach, make sure it has seat belts and ask whether child restraints can be provided or whether you can use your own. But be aware that it may not be possible to fit them properly because the seats and seat belts are different from cars. In some of these vehicles it is possible to adjust the height of the seat belt so that they fit child passengers better.

