

How to Choose a Booster Seat for Your Child

What is a booster seat?

A booster seat is a firm cushion of foam or plastic that lifts the child up in the car to improve the position and angle of the shoulder belt. (If there are no shoulder belts in the back seat of your car, skip to the last two paragraphs at the bottom of this page.) There should be slots or hooks for the lap belt to keep it low, on the child's hips and thighs. There are backless, highback, and removable-back boosters. Most boosters include a shoulder belt guide or comfort clip that can be used, if necessary, to pull the shoulder belt slightly downward so it crosses the center of the shoulder and chest.

Choosing the best booster for your child

The ideal booster has a flexible, removable back with an adjustable headrest. Be sure to use the backrest if the seatback in your car is too low to protect your child from neck injuries in a rear collision. To provide head support for neck protection, the top of the vehicle seatback, booster, or headrest should be at or above the child's ears. An adjustable headrest helps keep a sleeping child positioned properly under the vehicle belt and positions the shoulder belt comfortably without preventing it from retracting properly. Backless boosters are lightweight and less expensive, which makes them convenient for carpooling and play dates. They work well as long as the child is able to sit upright throughout the trip and the head is supported by the vehicle seatback. For family vacations, a backless booster can be used in the car on the way to the airport and at the destination if it is packed in a carry-on bag. (Boosters may not be used on aircraft.) Combination seats, which are often marketed as "highback boosters," have a harness that can be used from 20-30 pounds up to 40-50 pounds, then removed to convert the seat to a booster (see cautions in next section).

How to tell if a booster fits

Try the booster with your child in your car(s). Make sure the lap belt is positioned low, touching the child's thighs and hips, and the shoulder belt crosses the middle of the child's shoulder, touching the chest.

Cautions: Some highback boosters and combination seats have high sides that hold the lap belt too high, which may allow the child to "submarine" (slide downward and forward) in a crash. They may also have a plastic shoulder belt guide, or "comfort clip," attached to the side of the backrest that grips the shoulder belt tightly. This type of clip could prevent the belt from retracting properly after the child leans forward or pulls on the belt, resulting in dangerous slack. If the shoulder belt fits properly, do not use the clip. If the clip is needed to keep the belt from crossing the neck or face, supervise the child very closely or select a different model.

When a booster should not be used:

If your car does not have shoulder belts in the back seat, a booster seat cannot be used. You may be able to have shoulder belts installed in an older car for the outboard (side) seating positions. Check with your vehicle dealer or call SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. for a list of shoulder belt retrofit kits available from vehicle manufacturers (#640 at www.carseat.org). If a retrofit kit is not available, consider installing a harness* to protect older children and adults in the back seat. If your child is too large for a safety seat with its own harness and is under 3-4 years old or extremely active, he or she is probably not ready to sit still in a lap and shoulder belt with a booster. You need a larger seat or a travel vest to keep the child properly seated and secured (see list below).

Products for seating positions with no shoulder belts or for large children under age 3-4

Britax Marathon or Wizard (5-65 lb); Britax Husky (22-80 lb); Britax Laptop (30-65 lb; energy-absorbing shield without harness or tether; discontinued in 2002, but may be available); Car Seat Specialty Airway (harness fits up to 50 lb; remove harness to use as booster); E-Z-On Vest or Y-Harness* (various sizes available; tether anchor required); Ride Ryte Booster (may be used with E-Z-On harnesses).

(See other side for a list of boosters and manufacturer contact information)

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. P.O. Box 553, Altadena, CA 91003 www.carseat.org 310/222-6860, 800/745-SAFE (English) 310/222-6862, 800/747-SANO (Spanish)
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Belt-Positioning Booster Seats

Must be used with vehicle lap and shoulder belts (no internal harness). The child should be at least 3-4 years old and able to stay seated with the belts properly positioned (for large, young children, see other side).

Manufacturer	Model Name	Weight (pounds)	Features
Backless Boosters (acceptable if child's head is supported by vehicle seatback)			
Car Seat Specialty	Uno or Polo	33-80	Clip on strap allows belt to retract.
Car Seat Specialty	HighRide	33-80	Clip on strap allows belt to retract.
Car Seat Specialty	Ola	33-80	Clip on strap allows belt to retract.
Dorel	Cosco High Rise	33-80	Clip on strap allows belt to retract.
Evenflo	Right Fit	40-80	Clip on strap allows belt to retract.
ProRider	CNS Booster	33-80	
Removable-Back, Belt-Positioning Boosters (preferred if child's head is not supported by vehicle seatback)			
Britax	Roadster	40-100	Adjustable headrest positions belt.
Britax	Starriser with Comfy	30-80	Adjustable headrest positions belt.
Car Seat Specialty	Dreamer	33-80	Adjustable headrest positions belt.
Car Seat Specialty	Topper	33-80	Adjustable headrest positions belt; air bag shutoff device.
Combi	Apogee	33-100	Adjustable headrest positions belt.
Dorel	Cosco Protek	30-100	Adjustable headrest positions belt.
E-Z-On	Ride Ryte Booster	30-80	May be used with E-Z-On harnesses.
Evenflo	Big Kid	30-100	Adjustable headrest positions belt.
Graco	Turbo Booster	30-100	Adjustable headrest positions belt.
Highback, Belt-Positioning Boosters (see cautions on other side)			
Baby Trend	Baby Trend Booster	30-80	Comfort clip allows belt to retract.
Britax	Bodyguard	40-100	Adjustable headrest positions belt.
Dorel	Cosco Complete Voyager	30-80	
Dorel	Cosco Vista	30-80	
Evenflo	Sightseer	30-80	
Graco-Century	Brevera Ascend Sport	30-80	
Graco	My CarGo	30-80	
Jupiter Industries	Komfort Kruiser	33-100	Comfort clip allows belt to retract.
LaRoche Bros.	Grizzly Bear	40-95	Comfort clip allows belt to retract.
LaRoche Bros.	Polar Bear	30-100	Comfort clip allows belt to retract.
LaRoche Bros.	Teddy Bear	30-80	Comfort clip allows belt to retract.
Recaro	Start	30-80	Required shoulder belt clip prevents child from leaning forward.

Manufacturers and distributors of boosters and other restraints that fit children over 40 pounds

Note: Some vehicle manufacturers sell boosters through dealers or offer built-in boosters as an option.

Baby Trend (800) 328-7363	Dorel (800) 457-5276	Jupiter Industries (800) 465-5795
Britax (888) 427-4829	Evenflo (800) 233-5921	LaRoche Brothers (978) 632-8638
Car Seat Specialty (see Prev. Alt.)	E-Z-On (800) 323-6598	Prevention Alternatives (517) 927-7731
Combi (800) 992-6624	Graco (888) 224-6549	ProRider (800) 642-3123
		Recaro (800) 873-2276

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