# Child Passenger Safety

Car crashes are the leading cause of death for children, and in many cases, could have been prevented had children been properly restrained in car seats, boosters and seat belts. In 2016, 35 percent of children under the age of 13 killed in a car crash were not in a car or booster seat, or wearing a seat belt.

In passenger cars, car seats reduce the risk of an infant being killed in a crash by 71 percent, and toddlers by 54 percent. While many children are buckled in properly, more than half (59 percent) are not.

The proper installation and use of car and booster seats will reduce injuries and deaths, as well as ensure that children are riding as safely as possible every time they get in the car. The California Office of Traffic Safety offers tips for parents and caregivers so they can be sure their child is safe and secure when traveling by car.

## What the Law Says

Children under 2 years old, weighing under 40 pounds and under 40 inches tall must ride in a rear-facing car seat.

Children under the age of 8 must be secured in a car or booster seat in the back seat.

Children who are 8 years old OR have reached a height of 4'9" may be secured by a booster seat, but at a minimum must be secured by a safety belt.

## Choosing a Car Seat

When it comes to selecting the right car seat for your child, one size does not fit all.

There are four types of car seats: rear-facing, forward-facing, booster and the standard seat belt.

### Rear-facing car seat (birth-24 months)

- Child under two should be in a rear-facing car seat, but should ride rear-facing as long as possible.
- There are different types of rear-facing seats: infant-only, convertible and all-in-one. Infant-only is strictly for rear-facing. Convertible and all-in-one seats typically have bigger height and weight limits, allowing you to keep child in a rear-facing seat longer.

### Forward-facing car seat

- Once your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, your child is ready to travel in a forward-facing seat with a harness and tether, which limits forward movement during a crash.

### Booster seat

- When your child reaches the top height or weight limit in a forward-facing seat, it is time to move up to a booster seat.
- Keep your child in a booster seat until he or she is big enough to fit in a seat belt properly.

### Seat belt (8 years and up)

- A properly fitted seat belt must lie across the upper thighs, not the stomach. The shoulder belt should lie across the shoulder and chest.

Learn more about finding and correctly using the right car seat at https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats.

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