

Confused About Using a Booster Seat? Don't Be.



A December News Release from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) may have raised concerns with parents, caregivers and CPS Technicians. They recently rated booster seats to take the guesswork out of selecting boosters most likely to provide good lap and shoulder belt fit in a range of vehicles.

“We're confident we're giving consumers a solid overview of what they'll find when they shop for their children.” says Anne McCartt, Institute senior vice president for research, adding that, “Parents don't need to dig deep into their pocketbooks to buy a booster with good all-around belt fit.”

BEST BETS and GOOD BETS include several affordable choices starting at about \$20 and ranging up to \$250 or more. Big box retailers stock most of them in stores and online, and the rest can be found at specialty baby-gear sellers.

Thirty-four seats aren't BEST BETS, GOOD BETS, or on the list of boosters the Institute doesn't recommend. These seats can provide good protection for some kids in some vehicles, but not in as many cases as top-rated boosters.

The top 23 in this category provide good lap belt fit across all vehicles. Some parents may find the shoulder belts fit their kids just fine in these boosters. If so, they should provide good protection. Lap belt fit is the problem for the bottom 9 boosters that just miss the not-recommended list.

These provide poor lap belt fit most of the time.

How types compare:

The Institute doesn't recommend backless over highback boosters and vice versa. Backless ones generally provide better lap belt fit, and highbacks generally do a better job of positioning shoulder belts correctly in all vehicle configurations.

SAFE KIDS USA Responded with the following:

Real children are not like crash test dummies, so every seat can fit differently. Booster kids come in all shapes and sizes, so take your child to pick out the booster that fits him or her best.

Don't panic if your booster seat shows up on a "not recommended" list. The seat that does not fit the crash dummy may fit your child perfectly and all boosters on the market meet federal crash test standards.

The most important factor is how a booster fits your child:

- Does the shoulder belt rest on the shoulder bone? You may have to raise the booster seat's head rest to adjust the fit for your child.
- Does the lap belt lay across the upper legs or thighs? Be sure the lap belt is under both armrests.
- If both lap and shoulder belt fit as directed, you have a "recommended" seat because it is a good fit for your child.

The numbers tell the truth: booster seats save lives. The latest research from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia shows that children who use a belt positioning booster seat in a back seat are 45 percent less likely to be injured in a crash than those who use just a safety belt.

Most kids under 4 feet 9 inches tall, who weigh between 80 and 100 pounds are likely to need a booster seat to get a good fit of the adult seat belt. That means that many kids will start riding in a booster seat between the ages of 4 to 8 and remain in it until they are between 8 and 12 years old.

Don't guess. Use a correctly fitted booster seat to keep a child safe in the vehicle.

Full press release from IIHS at: www.iihs.org/news/rss/pr122209.html.