

Boosters to Fit the Child and the Vehicle



Quite frequently the Child Safety Seat Resource Center receives calls pertaining to child restraint selection. Parents and caregivers will ask if we have any recommendations, or which one is the best. Our answer always is, "The best child restraint is the one that fits the child and the vehicle properly." We often recommend that they go to a retail store where they can try installing the seat in their vehicle in the parking lot.

Safe Ride News recently compiled measurement information from booster seat manufacturers, and composed a summary chart. This chart is an excellent tool to help consumers find the right booster seat for their child and vehicle.

Parents and caregivers should keep in mind:

- Before purchasing a booster consider ALL family vehicles in which the booster will be used.
- Know how to determine correct belt fit while using a booster seat and when the child is too big for a booster.
- Check the booster seat instructions to see if the vehicle seat may be slightly reclined or if it must be in the upright position at all times.
- Consult manufacturer instructions regarding use of LATCH (lower attachments or the tether strap) to anchor the booster itself, if attachments are provided, or storage, if LATCH attachments are not being used.
- Know that weight limits on LATCH anchors do not apply when used for a belt-positioning booster as the seat belt bears the crash forces, not the anchors.
- ALWAYS secure an unoccupied booster seat either by buckling the seat belt across it or using the lower LATCH attachments as stated in the booster manufacturer instructions.

Check seat belt fit with the booster when the child sits with buttocks against the booster or seat back:

- Lap belt should go across the top of the thighs, not up on the belly.
- Shoulder belt should cross the center of the shoulder and contact the body.
- Check these points as the child grows, to make sure the belt still fits well.

To fit the vehicle, a booster must:

- Always be used in a seating position with a lap-shoulder belt.
- Position the lap-shoulder belt correctly when child is seated.
- Not hang over the edge of the vehicle seat.
- Not rock or tilt due to contoured or uneven vehicle seats.
- Fit between the lap belt insertion points of that seating position.
- Fit with its back against the vehicle seatback.
- Not obstruct access to other occupants' seat belts.
- Be used with the vehicle seat in an upright position unless otherwise stated in the booster manufacturer instructions.

Other selection considerations:

- Inner width of the booster for the particular child-booster capacity for a child's shoulders and hips varies considerably and growth must be taken into account.
- If the vehicle seatback is low, a few high-back booster models cannot be used when the child's head (ears or center of head) is above the vehicle seatback, as the booster headrest may not provide adequate support.
- If three child restraints and/or boosters are to be installed on one bench seat, check the entire outer width of the booster.

To view the summary chart visit www.saferidenews.com, or www.actsoregon.org/boosterSeats