

RSA



# Child safety in cars

## **A guide to driving safely with children on board**

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre  
Road Safety Authority

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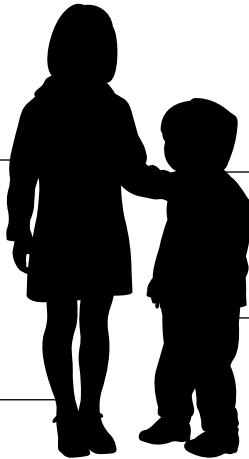
# Introduction

Children are one of the most vulnerable people in our society, and no parent or guardian would knowingly put a child's life in danger. However, an astonishing number of parents allow their children to travel in vehicles without being properly restrained, placing their lives and safety at risk.

Some statistics from the years 1996 to 2012 show the scale of the problem:

**262 children lost their lives** on our roads between 1996 and 2012.

Children were most at risk of being killed on the road from May to August and between 4pm and 6pm, with Friday being the high risk day of the week.



In almost one third of these child passenger fatalities, **no child restraints or seatbelts were being used.**

**1,107 children** were seriously injured during the same period.

More recent statistics show that over twice as many children were killed on the roads in 2014 compared to 2013.

Source - Road Safety Authority

In a crash at just 50km/h, a child not wearing a seatbelt or using a child car seat would be thrown forward with a force 30 to 60 times their body weight. They would be thrown about inside the vehicle, injuring themselves and, quite possibly, seriously injuring or even killing other people inside the vehicle. They are also likely to be ejected from the car through one of the windows.



## Important Note!

### **It is dangerous to hold a child on your lap.**

In a crash, the child could be crushed between your body and part of the car's interior. Even if you are using a safety belt, the child would be torn from your arms - you would not be able to hold onto them, no matter how hard you try. It is also dangerous to put a safety belt around yourself and a child (or around two children). The safest way for children to travel in cars is in a child seat that is suitable for their weight and height.



In Ireland, as many as 4 out of 5 child car seats are incorrectly fitted which can lead to serious injury or even death in a collision.



Seatbelt behind back



Not using seatbelt shoulder guide



Seatbelt under arm



Seatbelt over armrest



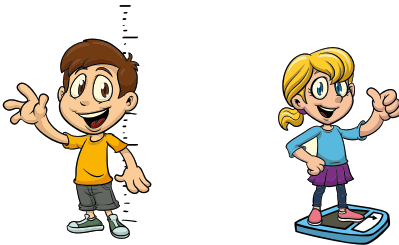
**Children are one of the most vulnerable categories of road user.  
Don't let your child be a statistic.**



# The law

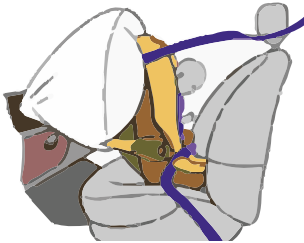
## Weight and height

- All children under 150cms in height or 36kgs (79lbs) in weight must use a child restraint system (CRS) suitable for their height and weight while travelling in a car or goods vehicle (other than a taxi). An example of a CRS would be a child car seat or booster cushion.



**150cm or 36kg**

- Rear-facing child car seats **must not be** used in passenger seats protected by an active frontal airbag. An airbag which deploys (opens up) in front of a rearward-facing child car seat can cause serious injury or even death if there is a collision.

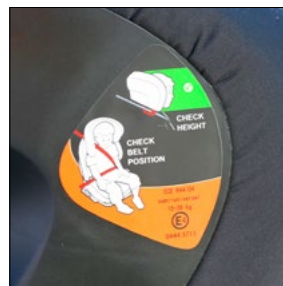


- There is no law against children sitting in the front seat, as long as they are using the right child restraint for their height and weight. However, as above it is illegal to use a rearward-facing child car seat in a passenger seat protected by an airbag. The deployment of an airbag where a rearward-facing baby seat is in place can cause serious injury to the child or even death.

- There is now a **penalty for drivers** who place a rearward-facing child car seat in the front where there is an active airbag. You may receive at least 3 penalty points on your driving licence as a penalty. Drivers have a legal responsibility to ensure that all passengers under 17 are appropriately restrained in the vehicle.
- Children should always travel in the back of the car, away from active airbags and the dashboard.
- Taxi drivers are exempt from supplying child car seats.

## Standards

- All seats sold in Ireland must meet EU standards UN ECE Regulation 4403/04 or Regulation 129. (See the paragraph on i-Size on page 7.) Look for the 'E' mark.



## What is ISOFIX?

ISOFIX is the international standard of built-in attachment points in a car's structure to fit a child seat. A child seat can easily be plugged into the ISOFIX system which greatly reduces the risk of fitting the seat incorrectly.

Many new vehicles have ISOFIX points built in when they are manufactured, and child seat manufacturers are more commonly producing child seats that suit the ISOFIX system.

See illustrations of ISOFIX system on pages 18 and 19.



## What is i-SIZE?

i-Size is a European standard – Regulation 129 – which was introduced in Ireland in September 2014. The key benefits of i-Size-standard seats are that they can be fitted to most ISOFIX systems and they provide increased support for the child's head and neck. They also provide better side-impact protection in the event of collisions. An i-Size seat also allows your child to stay rear-facing for much longer (up to 15 months in a rearward-facing baby seat). The categorisation of these seats is **based on height and size** rather than height and weight.

Both i-Size (Regulation 129) and Regulation R4403/04 (referred to earlier in the Law section) are both legal for use and will run alongside each other until the R4403/04 is phased out. However, this is expected to take several years to complete.





## Types of child car seats

A properly fitted child restraint system keeps the child in their seat, preventing them from being thrown about inside or being thrown from the vehicle. It also absorbs some of the impact force. This means that your child is much less likely to be killed or injured in a crash.

An appropriate child restraint is one which:

- conforms to the UN standard, ECE Regulation 44-03, or a later version of the standard, 44.04, or new i-Size (Regulation 129). Look for the E mark;
- is suitable for the child's weight and height;
- is correctly fitted according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Child restraints are categorised according to the weight of the children they are suitable for. These **weight categories** correspond broadly to different age groups, but it is the **weight of the child** that is most important when deciding what type of child restraint to use.

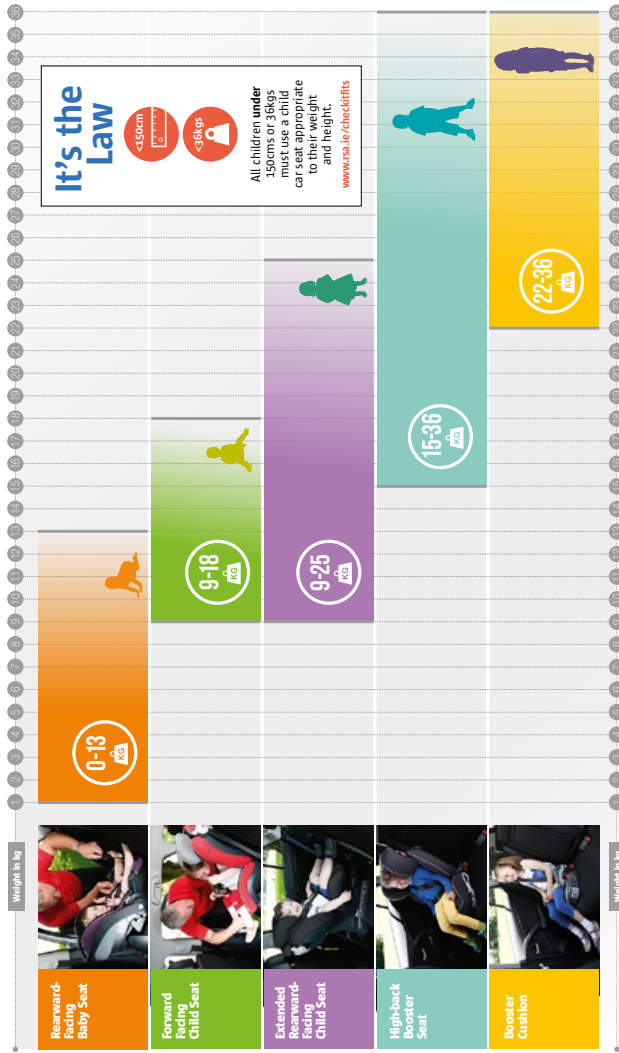
These categories are often called 'groups' by manufacturers and retailers. There are **four main child car seat groups – Groups 0, 1, 2 and 3**. However, **some child restraints systems are convertible** and can be adapted as the child grows. This means that the restraint system could fit into more than one group. For example, the high back of a Group 2 booster seat might be designed to be removed so that the seat works just as a booster cushion when the child reaches 22kgs (48lbs). This seat, therefore, falls into both Group 2 and Group 3.

<b>Group 0</b>	Rearward Facing Baby Seat	Birth – 10kgs (22lbs)
<b>Group 0+</b>	Rearward Facing Baby Seat	Birth – 13kgs (29lbs)
<b>Group 1</b>	Rearward or Forward Facing Child Seat	9 – 18kgs (20-40lbs)
<b>Group 1, 2, 3</b>	High Back Booster Seat with removable harness	9 – 36kgs (20-79lbs)
<b>Group 2</b>	High Back Booster Seat without harness	15 – 25kgs (33-55lbs)
<b>Group 2, 3</b>	High Back Booster Seat without harness	15 – 36kgs (33-79lbs)
<b>Group 3</b>	Booster Cushion	22 – 36kgs (48-79lbs)

Weigh your child and use the pull out chart at the back of the book to find out what seats are suitable for their weight.



**Weigh your child to find out what type of seat would suit them**



## Rearward-facing baby seats



These rearward-facing seats can be used in the front or rear of the car, but it is safer to put them in the rear.

**Never put your child in the front passenger seat if there is a passenger airbag.**

Rearward-facing seats provide greater protection for a baby's head, neck and spine than forward-facing seats. So, it is best to **keep your baby in a rearward-facing seat for as long as possible**. Only move them to a forward-facing seat once they have gone over the maximum weight for the baby seat, or the top of their head 'crowns' (is higher than) the top of the seat. Pay particular attention to the manufacturer's instructions about where to position the carrying handle of the car seat while travelling (for example: should the handle be to the front of the seat, the back of the seat or in the carrying position).



Seatbelt

## Extended rearward-facing child seats



Only move your child out of a rearward-facing baby carrier when their head has crowned the top of the seat, or they have gone over the maximum weight outlined by the manufacturer. Some extended rearward-facing seats can accommodate children up to 25kgs (55lbs) in the rearward position. They are larger than the Group 0 rearward-facing seats and, therefore, need to be fitted into the car. Make sure they can be fitted safely and securely into the car, as some cars may not be suitable.

A baby's head is five times heavier on their bodies than an adult head on an adult body. Therefore, babies need extra support to protect their neck and head from a whiplash-type injury. Because of this, rear-facing car seats provide more support for your baby than forward-facing seats. They protect your baby's head and neck much better than a forward-facing car seat does. This is because, in an impact, the force is spread out much more, rather than being focused completely on the baby's neck, as would be the case in a forward-facing child car seat. (See Child Safety in Cars DVD.) Children should use these rear-facing seats for as long as possible.





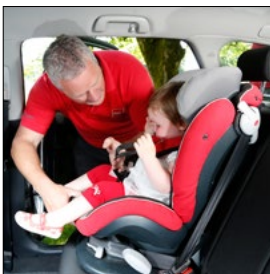
## Important Note!

Some parents think that children should progress to a forward-facing child car seat as soon as they have outgrown their rearward-facing baby seat. This is not the case. For the most protection, your child should remain rear-facing for as long as possible.

## Forward-facing child seat



Only move your child out of a rearward-facing baby carrier when their eye level is in line with the top of the seat, or they have gone over the maximum weight outlined by the manufacturer.



Seatbelt



## Convertible child seats

Some forward-facing seats are designed to be 'convertible'. This means that the seat can be adjusted as the child grows. Therefore, **it might fit into several groups**.

**For example**, a seat might be able to be converted to fit into groups 1, 2 and 3. It acts as a forward-facing car seat by using an internal harness like the picture below until the child reaches 18kgs (40lbs: Group 1). Then, the harness can be removed to convert the seat into a high-back booster seat (with back and head supports) that can be used with the normal adult seatbelt for a child up to 36kgs (79lbs: Groups 2 and 3).



With internal harness

With adult seatbelt

## High-back Booster seat



The Road Safety Authority recommend that you get a booster seat that gives as much protection as possible to a child's head, neck and spine. These seats are commonly called 'High-Back Booster Seats'. Booster seats raise the child up high enough so that the seatbelt is positioned correctly on their bodies (on the shoulder, not the neck; and on the pelvis, not the stomach).

Booster seats do not have an internal (built-in) harness. The adult seatbelt fitted in the car goes around the child and through the appropriate guides of the seat. It is important that the seatbelt is correctly adjusted so that it is correctly positioned on the child's shoulder and pelvis, and that there is **no slack in the seatbelt when it's fastened**.

Some booster seats are designed to be converted into a booster cushion later on by detaching the back rest.



Seatbelt



When there is no child in the car and the seat is not held in place by ISOFIX, the seatbelt should be buckled to hold empty seats in place (like picture 3) so that they don't cause any harm to passengers in the car in the event of a crash or hard braking.

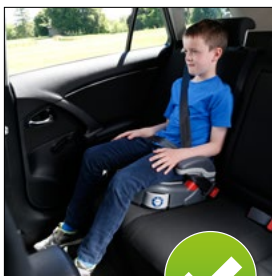


## Booster cushion



Booster cushions are available for children from 15kgs (33lbs) however the RSA does **not recommend** using booster cushions for children under 22kgs (48lbs) because they do not provide as much protection to the child as a high back booster seat that has head, neck and back protection. The adult seatbelt goes around the child and through the appropriate guides of the seat, so it is important that the safety belt is correctly adjusted and that there is no slack in the seatbelt when fastened.

Booster cushions raise the child up high enough so that the seatbelt is positioned correctly on their bodies (on the shoulder, not the neck; and on the pelvis, not the stomach).



Seatbelt



Seatbelt in a dangerous position – booster seat needed

Children should use a high-back booster seat for as long as possible – up to 36kgs (up to 79lbs) – rather than the booster cushion by itself. The booster cushion on its own provides no back or head protection.



# Buying a child car seat

When choosing a new child seat, make sure that it fits in your car (or cars, if you use it in more than one) and is suitable for the height and weight of your child. Use the checklist at the back of this booklet to help you select the child seat that is most suitable for your child and your vehicle(s).

## 1. Is the child car seat suitable for my child?

It is very important to make sure that the child car seat is suitable for your child's **weight** and **height**. Refer to the manufacturers guidelines on each car seat.

## 2. Is the child car seat suitable for the type of car I drive?

The shape of car seats, the length of seatbelts and the position of seatbelt anchor points are different in different cars. So, **not all child seats fit all cars**. For instance, the seatbelt in a particular car may be too short to go around a particular child seat. Make sure you check that the child seat you buy will fit in your car and that it will fit in all the seat positions you intend to use it (for example, the back passenger side, the third row in people carrier, and so on). The manufacturer's instructions should help you fit the child car seat. However, when you buy it, it is always best to have it fitted by an expert, and to be shown how to fit it correctly yourself.

## 3. Did I get expert advice when I was choosing the car seat?

Make sure you get advice from a child car seat expert retailer or the RSA child car seat expert. Some retailers know more than others about suitable options of child car seats. An expert will be able to advise you on which type of car seat is suitable for your child's height and weight. You should also choose a retailer who can expertly fit the child car seat into your car to make sure it is a suitable match. They should also show you how the child car seat should be fitted into your car.

## 4. Does the seat I've chosen meet the correct EU standard?

Check that the seat you are buying meets the EU standard R4403 /04 or i-SIZE (Regulation 129). If it does, you should see a yellow or orange sticker with an 'E' mark and weight guidelines on the seat.

## 5. Are the instructions easy to understand and follow?

Make sure the child car seat comes with an instruction manual. Try to have the car seat fitted into the car before you buy it. Ask the expert to show you how to fit the car seat. If this is not possible, you should make sure that there is an easy-to-follow instruction manual with the seat and that you fully understand it.

## 6. Did I think about airbags?

It is very dangerous and an offence to place a rearward-facing child car seat in the front seat if the front seat is protected by an active frontal airbag. Make sure the child seat can be fitted in the back.

## 7. Does my car have back seats?

While it is recommended that children travel in the back seat away from airbags and the dashboard, if you must place the child car seat in the front, make sure that the seat is appropriate to the child's weight and height. **A rearward-facing child car seat must not be used in the front seat where there is an active airbag.** Remember to choose the biggest and strongest child to go in the front.

Think carefully about driving with a child in the front seat – even in the forward position. You must make sure that the passenger seat is rolled back as far away from the dashboard as possible. This could help to reduce the severity of injuries that may be caused to your child if the airbag is released. Remember – airbags are designed for adults. A child, even in a child car seat, does not replicate (copy) the typical position of an adult in the passenger seat.

## 8. Does my car have the ISOFIX or i-Size system?

Check if your vehicle(s) has an ISOFIX system suitable for the seat. Ask whether an additional **top tether** on the seat is needed for extra stability. A top tether is connected to the top of the child car seat and is attached to extra anchor points in the car – for example, in the boot. Some seats have a **'foot'** that extends to the vehicle floor for stability. If this is the case, check that it does not rest on the cover of an underfloor compartment as this may be unsafe.



### Important Note!

When plugging the ISOFIX connectors into the connection points, make sure the appropriate indicators turn green, as in the illustration on the next page. Green indicators let you know the connection is safe.



ISOFIX connection points in the back seat  
 (Some are not clearly marked, so you should consult your car manual for advice in this case.)



ISOFIX connectors on the  
 child car seat



Plugging in the ISOFIX  
 connectors into the  
 connection points



**Red** indicators to tell you  
 it's **not properly** connected



**Green** indicators to tell you  
 it's **properly** connected



ISOFIX foot to provide stability



Top tether strap to provide extra restraint and stability



Anchor point for attaching the top tether strap to



**i-Size** is a European standard 'Regulation 129' which was introduced in Ireland in September 2014. The key benefits of **i-Size seats** are that they **can be fitted like ISOFIX seats** and they provide increased support for the child's head and neck and they provide better side-impact protection in the event of collisions. An i-SIZE seat also allows your child to stay rear-facing for much longer (up to 15 months in a rearward-facing baby seat). The categories of these seats is **based on height and size** rather than height and weight.

Both i-Size (Regulation 129) and Regulation R4403/04 (referred to earlier under 'Law') are **both** legal for use and will run alongside each other until the R4403/04 is phased out. However, this is expected to take several years to complete.

## 9. Should I buy a second-hand car seat?

It is better to buy a new car seat. However, if you decide to buy a second-hand car seat, you need to be aware of certain risks and ask some important questions. For example:

- **How old is the seat?** Generally, manufacturers recommend use of car seats for no more than 5 years due to wear and tear and possible weakened parts. Check the manufacturer manual for advice.
- **Has the seat ever been in a crash?** You should be satisfied about the history of the child car seat. Damage might not be visible, so you should inspect it thoroughly and make sure the frame has not been weakened or damaged. If there was more than bumper damage caused to the car, you should consider replacing the child car seat.
- **Are there parts missing?** You should be certain that all the parts required to fit the seat safely are there and intact – for example, lock-off clips, tensioning wheels, and so on.
- **Does it meet the EU standards?** You should investigate whether the seat conforms to EU standards. Remember to look for the E-mark.
- **Will it fit my car?** You should also be certain that the seat is suitable for your child and is compatible with your car.
- **Does it still have the manual and fitting instructions?** You should make sure that the seat comes with a manufacturer's manual and fitting instructions.



### Important Note!

The benefits of buying a new seat are that you know the standard of compliance, the condition of the seat, and you can talk to an expert about its suitability for your child and your car. Also, you will have peace of mind that there are no missing pieces.

## 10. If it was involved in a crash, has it been inspected thoroughly?

A car seat which has been involved in a crash should be carefully inspected and if there was more than bumper damage caused to the car, you should consider buying a new seat.

Damage or weakened points may not be visible and the child car seat may not perform as well as it should in a collision.

# Fitting child seats

## Where should I fit the child car seat?

Ideally, fit your child's car seat in the back seat. This means that they are away from airbags and the dashboard. If you must place the child car seat in the front, make sure that it is suitable for the child's weight and height.

Do not use a **rearward-facing child car seat in the front seat where there is an active airbag. Chose the biggest and strongest child to go in the front.**

## How do I fit the child car seat?

You should always choose a retailer who can fit child car seats for you, and who can show you how to fit it correctly yourself. You should also make sure you get the instruction manual with your car seat on how to fit it safely in your car. The RSA has also published a helpful new DVD which gives examples of how to fit some child car seats. You can order your **free copy** online at [www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie)

## How do I know if the child car seat is fitted correctly?

Once you have followed the instructions on how to fit the child car seat, it is easy to test if it is fitted correctly. The child car seat should sit firmly on the back seat with **no forward or sideways movement when tested**. You can simply push the seat to test this, or you can fasten the harness straps and pull it from the centre as if to exert a similar force a child would in the event of heavy braking. If you are in any doubt, you should visit the Road Safety Authority Child Car Seat Checking Service  
– **Check it Fits** [www.rsa.ie/checkitfits](http://www.rsa.ie/checkitfits)

## What is 'Buckle Crunch'?

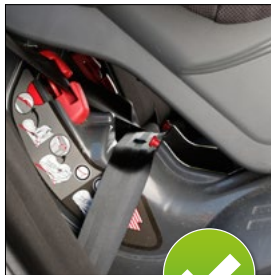
Car seats that use the adult seatbelt to secure the seat should not have the seatbelt buckle sitting on the child car seat. 'Buckle Crunch' is **where the buckle of the seatbelt is resting on the frame of the car seat**. The movement of the car while travelling **could cause the buckle to open**. Also, on impact, the buckle could be broken causing the child car seat to become loose or detached in the car, giving little or no protection to the child in the seat. The webbing of the seatbelt is much stronger and it should hold the seat in place.

The photo below shows how to recognise Buckle Crunch.



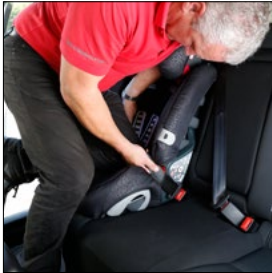
**Before you fit a child car seat, remember:**

- Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully. If you have lost your manual, you should get a replacement from the retailer or manufacturer.
- The seatbelt must pass through all the required seatbelt-routing guides (red or blue) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Remember, some guides are only intended to be used on one side or the other, depending on what side of the car the seat is being fitted on.



### Helpful tips for fitting child car seats

- First, you should kneel into the seat exerting your **full weight**. Then, tighten the seatbelt as much as you can to remove all the slack. This ensures that the seat is fitted as tightly as possible.
- Hand pressure is not enough when you are securing the child car seat with the seatbelt.



- It is safer to fit a child car seat in the back. If fitting a child car seat into the front seat, roll the seat itself back as far as it can go away from dashboard
- If you take the child seat out of the car, make sure you fit it properly every time you put it back in.
- If your car seat stays in the car permanently, you should still check it regularly to make sure it is securely held and there is no slack in the seatbelt.
- Never adjust or modify the seat or seatbelt. A child seat should be suitable for the child and be compatible with the car. Therefore, modifications (changes) to either should not be necessary.
- Get a child car seat expert to fit the child car seat or check it for you if you are in any doubt.
- The safety belt buckle should not rest on the frame of the child seat causing Buckle Crunch.

### What are the common fitting errors?

To be effective, child restraint systems (seats, cushions and so on) must be fitted and used correctly. Surveys have consistently shown that a high proportion of child restraints are incorrectly fitted, usually for one or more of these reasons which are easy to watch out for:



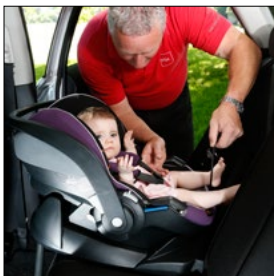
- **Safety belt has too much slack** in it causing the fitting to be very loose.
- Safety belt **not routed** through child seat correctly.
- Buckle resting against the frame of the child car seat, causing '**Buckle Crunch**' which may cause the buckle to open.
- **Handle on baby seat not positioned properly.**
- The child seat is **too big or too small for the child.**
- Child seat **not compatible with the car.**
- Child seat has **exceeded the manufacturer's recommended guideline** for duration of use and is in bad condition.

### How do I secure my child into a car seat?

- Your child should use the child seat for every single journey – no matter how short.
- Take time to get the child comfortably strapped in.
- Make sure the seat's harness or seatbelt is correctly adjusted for your child.
- The harness or seatbelt should be quite tight.

If a harness is being used in **rearward-facing seats**, it should be tight enough so that only two fingers can fit between the top of the child's shoulders and the harness but your fingers should be unable to rotate (turn) in that position.

If a harness is being used in **forward-facing seats**, it should be tight enough so that only two fingers can fit between your child's breastbone and the harness, but your fingers should be unable to rotate in that position.



- Clothing can affect how snugly the harness fits, so you should use blankets instead of bulky jackets in the winter. This makes sure that the harness is making contact with your child's body and you should check this before every journey.



- If you are using a booster seat or cushion, the adult seatbelt restrains both the child and the seat or cushion. Where the seat has routing guides, these should be used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- **Never** tuck the seatbelt under the child's arm or behind their back.
- Some children go through a phase of slipping out of the harness or releasing the buckle. You should **make sure that the harness is adjusted correctly** and that your child is comfortable.

### Remember:

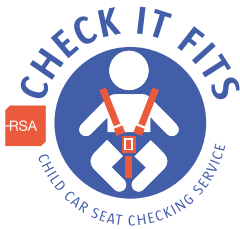
**Do not use any device that changes the mechanism required by law that allows for the buckle to be undone in one action.** Modified straps can affect the performance of the child seat itself. When modification is made to straps, the design and load-bearing points of the straps are altered which can lead to serious injury.



### Important Note!

Children learn from you, so always set a good example by wearing your own seatbelt.

# Check it Fits Service



The Road Safety Authority has introduced 'Check it Fits' in response to a frightening statistic that shows that as many as **4 out of 5 child car seats are incorrectly fitted**. Incorrect fitting can result in serious injury or a fatality in the event of a collision.

The RSA 'Check it Fits' Service is a full-time, nationwide, free, expert service which aims to put parents', grandparents' and guardians' minds at ease that their child's car seat is safely and securely fitted in their car.

A survey of 5,000 checks, which were recorded at the RSA's 'Check it Fits' Service, showed that over 4,000 of the child car seats checked needed some type of adjustment. Worryingly, most of those seats required a major adjustment. One hundred and fifty of the seats checked were condemned – they were not fit for purpose, meaning they could have caused injury or even death if there was a collision.

The Check it Fits service is quick, easy and free of charge. It's travelling around the country, and our experts will advise on how to fix any problem. They will demonstrate how to fit the restraints correctly and answer any questions you might have.

You can check when the Check it Fits service is in your area by logging on to [www.rsa.ie/checkitfits](http://www.rsa.ie/checkitfits) or phoning 1890 50 60 80.



Log onto [www.rsa.ie/checkitfits](http://www.rsa.ie/checkitfits) to see when Check it Fits is in your area.

You can also follow us on social media:



RSA Ireland



RSA Ireland

# Adult seatbelts

The position of a seatbelt on the body is very important. A simple correction to the position of the seatbelt on your body can make a significant difference to the severity of injuries in a collision.

Seatbelts are designed for those who are 150cms (about 5ft) in height and taller. Don't let your child start using the seatbelt on its own too soon as this can cause serious injuries to the child if there is a collision. Three-point safety belts (lap and diagonal) provide greater protection than lap belts. However, lap belts are better than no belt at all.

## How to buckle a seatbelt;

1. Allow plenty of excess strap and plug the seatbelt into buckle.
2. Position the lap section of the belt on the pelvic region / tops of thighs – **not on the stomach.**
3. Pull the slack on the lap section of the belt and feed up to the shoulder.
4. Position the diagonal section of the belt across the torso (chest) and on the shoulder – **not the neck.**

Some cars have seatbelt shoulder-height adjusters to help position the seatbelt on top of your shoulder.

The same positioning applies to children using adult seatbelts with their child car seat (high-back boosters).

# Wearing a seatbelt during pregnancy

Pregnancy does not automatically exempt you from wearing a seatbelt. You are excused from using a seatbelt during pregnancy only if you have an exemption granted by a doctor for medical reasons.

The **safest way** for pregnant women to wear a safety belt is to:

- Place the diagonal section of the belt across the torso (chest area) with the strap resting over the shoulder, not the neck.
- Place the lap section of the belt flat on the thighs, fitting comfortably beneath the baby bump, and over the pelvis (not the bump).
- Wear the seatbelt as tightly as possible as in this way, the forces applied in a sudden impact can be absorbed by the body's frame.



### Remember:

If pregnant, **you should avoid wearing 'lap-only' seatbelts instead of a regular seatbelt** (lap and diagonal belts). Lap-only belts can cause serious injuries to unborn children if the car brakes suddenly or is in a collision. Mother and unborn child are both **much safer if a lap and diagonal safety belt is being worn correctly.**



## Premature and low birth-weight babies

If you have a premature or low birth-weight baby, ask the hospital to assess if it is safe for the baby to travel in a baby seat before you are discharged. If you are in any doubt at all about your child travelling in the car, **consult the hospital or your GP for further advice.**



## Choosing a family car

If you are thinking about buying a new car for the family, you should examine closely all the safety information relating to the model of car you're thinking of buying. One source of this kind of information is **Euro NCAP** (New Car Assessment Programme). It will give you a realistic and independent assessment of the safety performance of some of the most popular cars sold in Europe.

Information can be found at: [www.euroncap.com](http://www.euroncap.com)

**Some people don't know if they have ISOFIX connectors in their car.** You should ask about these, as sometimes these are not labelled or visible at first glance.

You should also be aware of where the airbags are in the car and how they are controlled. Remember, it is **illegal to place a rearward-facing child car seat in the front of the car where there is an active airbag.**

You should also consult your car manual to find out areas of the car are suitable for fitting child car seats. For example, you may not be able to fit ISOFIX seats in places where there are underfloor storage boxes. Also, some back seats do not allow a child car seat to be fitted in the middle.

## Problem behaviour

Some children go through a phase of constantly slipping out of the child seat harness or safety belt, or incorrectly adjusting straps or seatbelts, or releasing the buckle during journeys. This can be very worrying and frustrating for parents or guardians. It could be serious or even fatal for a child if the manufacturer guidelines are not carefully followed.

You should check that:

- the harness or seatbelt is adjusted correctly to your child, in line with the manufacturer's guidelines, and
- your child is comfortable.

Incorrectly adjusted harness straps may cause your child to be uncomfortable leading them to push straps off or open buckles.

Here are some typical problem behaviours with advice on what you can do.

If your child:

- **Slips their arms out of the harness...** make sure the shoulder straps are resting on, or slightly above, your child's shoulders in a forward-facing seat.
- **Pushes the safety belt under their arms, behind their back or moves it into an incorrect position...** make sure the seatbelt is correctly positioned on your child's shoulder and pelvic area and that they are comfortable.
- **Releases buckles...** make sure buckles are correctly fastened at all times.



### Remember:

It is most important for the driver not to be distracted by children adjusting straps or seatbelts mid-journey. Pull over until you have re-fastened the straps. If the problem persists, consider taking another adult as a passenger to help watch the children.

## Dangers of leaving children unattended in a vehicle

Infants or young children should never be left unattended in a motor vehicle.

A variety of hazards can arise, even if you are only away for a short while.

These include:

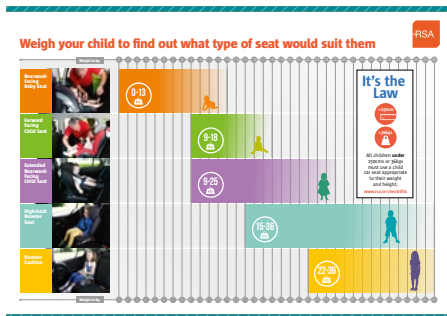
- an outbreak of fire,
- breathing problems on warm days,
- accidental trapping of children in electronically operated windows, and
- leaving your car keys in your car when you are not in it.

For further information on child safety in cars, see [www.rsa.ie/childsafetyincars](http://www.rsa.ie/childsafetyincars)

## Further information



Child Safety in Cars DVD



Pull out chart

[www.rsa.ie/childsafetyincars](http://www.rsa.ie/childsafetyincars)

[www.rsa.ie/checkitfits](http://www.rsa.ie/checkitfits)

**1890 50 60 80**



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## Choosing a child car seat checklist

### What I need to know when choosing a child car seat for my child?

	YES	NO
1. Is the child car seat suitable for my child?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Is the child car seat suitable for the type of car I drive?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Did I get expert advice when I was choosing the car seat?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Does the seat I've chosen meet the correct EU standard?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Are the instructions easy to understand and follow?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Did I think about airbags?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Does my car have back seats?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Does my car have the ISOFIX or iSize system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Should I buy a second hand car seat?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. If it was involved in a crash, has it been inspected thoroughly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**If you are unsure about anything on this checklist, you should ask a child car seat expert for advice.**

# Working to Save Lives

March 2016



**Plain English**  
Approved by NALA

## Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre Road Safety Authority

Páirc Ghnó Ghleann na Muaidhe, Cnoc an tSabhaircín, Bóthar Bhaile Átha Cliath,  
Béal an Átha, Co. Mhaigh Eo.

Moy Valley Business Park, Primrose Hill, Dublin Road, Ballina, Co. Mayo.

local: 1890 50 60 80 tel: (096) 25 000 fax: (096) 25 252

email: [info@rsa.ie](mailto:info@rsa.ie) website: [www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie)