

## Ten essential steps

1. **The use of any restraint is preferable to not using a restraint.** It is the law that each person in a motor vehicle has their own restraint.
2. **Infants are safest if they remain in their rear facing restraint as long as they still fit in their rear facing restraint.** While the law allows children over 6 months to use either a rear facing restraint or a forward facing restraint, the rear facing restraint offers better protection as long as the child fits in it.
3. **Once a child is too tall for their rear facing child restraint, they should use a forward-facing child restraint (with built-in 6 point harness) until they are too tall for it.** While the law allows children 4 years and older to use either a forward-facing child restraint or a booster seat, the forward-facing child restraint offers better protection as long as the child fits in it.
4. **Once a child is too tall for a forward facing child restraint, they should use a booster seat with a lap-sash seatbelt until they are tall enough to fit properly into an adult seatbelt.** While the law allows children 7 years and older to use either a booster seat or a seatbelt by itself, a booster seat offers better protection as long as the child fits in it.
5. **For a child in a booster seat or an adult seatbelt, use a seating position with a lap-sash (lap and shoulder) belt in preference to one with a lap-only belt.**



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6. **All child restraints and booster seats must be installed correctly and the child strapped in correctly** according to the manufacturer's instructions:
  - a. Always use a top tether strap for all rearward facing child restraints, forward facing child restraints and booster seats that have them.
  - b. Always thread the seatbelt through the correct path (follow colour coding available for newer restraints).
  - c. Ensure there is no slack or looseness in any part of the system. Check the harness straps around the child, the top tether, the seatbelt anchoring the restraint to the vehicle, and the seatbelt used by a child in a booster seat.
  - d. Check that the seatbelt is buckled before each trip.
7. **Children 12 years of age and under are safest in the rear seat.**
8. **Seatbelts should never be used with the sash belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back,** whether they are being used alone or with a booster seat.
9. **When planning any journey with children, use a motor vehicle which allows each child to be in the appropriate restraint for their size.**
10. **Regularly check that child restraints are correctly installed and that the restraint is adjusted properly for the child's size** according to the restraint users' manual. Using a restraint fitting service will help ensure that everything is used correctly and that your child is as safe as possible.

This is a summary of the National Guidelines for Safe Restraint of Children Travelling in Motor Vehicles, which have been approved by the National Health & Medical Research Council.

More detailed information on all aspects of child restraint use is available from:

**[kidsafe.com.au/crguidelines](http://kidsafe.com.au/crguidelines)**

## Child restraint guidelines

*Keeping children as safe as possible while travelling in motor vehicles*



A guide for parents and carers

## Children of different sizes and ages need different types of restraints



**Rearward Facing Child Restraint:**  
For children from birth, with a built-in 5 or 6 point harness, where the child faces the rear of the car. **Type A** in the Australian Standard.



**Forward Facing Child Restraint:** For children who have outgrown their rear facing restraint up until at least 4 years of age, with a built-in 6 point harness where the child faces the front of the car. **Type B** in the Australian Standard.



**Booster Seat:** For children who have outgrown\* their forward-facing restraint, up to at least 8-10 years of age, to position the lap and sash belts safely. Use of an add-on harness is not recommended. **Type E, F** in the Australian Standard.



**Lap sash seatbelt:** A seatbelt that has one part that goes across the lap and another that goes over the shoulder. Use when a child is big enough to meet all parts of the '5 step test'. **Only** use a lap only belt when there is no lap sash belt available.

**Convertible Restraint:** A child restraint that combines 2 or more restraint types.



**Rearward/forward facing convertible:** Can be converted from a rearward facing to a forward facing child restraint.



**Forward facing/booster convertible:** Can be converted from a forward facing child restraint to a booster.

## The 5 Step Test



Can the child sit with their back against the vehicle seat back?



Do the child's knees bend in front of the edge of the seat?



Does the sash belt sit across the middle of the shoulder?



Is the lap belt sitting low across the hips touching the thighs?



Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?

1. **Rearward facing restraints** come in three types: Type A1 for children up to 70cm tall (approx 6-9 months), Type A2 for children up to 80cm tall (approx 12 months), and a new category Type A4, for children up to 2-3 years of age.
2. **Forward facing restraints**, Type B, fit most children up to at least 4 years of age. A new forward-facing restraint, Type G, may soon become available which can be used up to approximately 8 years of age.
3. **Booster cushions** are boosters without the back and side wings that protect the child's head. They are being phased out, except for those built into cars.
4. **Newer restraints** have shoulder height markers to indicate size limits.