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# Carrying Other People's Children Safely in Cars

**THINK**  
Road Safety

# Carrying Other People's Children Safely



**This guide provides advice about using child car seats and seat belts for anyone who transports other people's children in a car, such as parents sharing the school run and organisations providing a transport service.**

- Advice about carrying children safely in other vehicles is provided in “Carrying Children Safely in Taxis, Buses, Coaches and Minibuses”.
- Children must be carried in an appropriate child seat from birth until either they are at least 135cm (4'5”) tall or 12 years old, whichever comes first. They must then use a seat belt if one is fitted (although it would be better for them to continue to use a booster seat until they are 150cm (5') tall).
- Child car seats are a very effective way of reducing risk for child car passengers. Children using an appropriate child seat are significantly less likely to be killed or injured in a crash than unrestrained children or children wearing adult seat belts.
- Seat belts on their own are less effective for children because they are primarily designed for adults. Due to their smaller size, in a crash, a child may slide under an adult belt because the lap strap is too high over their abdomen, or the diagonal strap could cross the child's neck. Both of these could cause serious injuries. This is why it is far better to carry children in approved child seats.
- Any organisation or individual who carries other people's children has a duty of care to ensure that they carry them safely. They must make sure its drivers are fit and competent, their vehicles are safe and suitable, their passengers are carried safely, and that journeys are properly planned.



For more details see the following resources: '**Types of Child Seats**', '**Choosing and Using Child Car Seats**' and **films** on [www.childcarseats.org.uk/](http://www.childcarseats.org.uk/) or '**Child Car Seats: the Rules**' on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). Different rules apply in taxis, buses, coaches and minibuses (See the 'Carrying Children Safely in Taxis, Buses, Coaches and Minibuses' guide).

# Carrying Other People's Children Safely



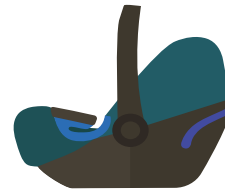
## Providing Child Car Seats

If you do not normally carry children, but you know that, on occasion, you may need to do so at short notice, consider how you can make arrangements to provide child seats in such situations.

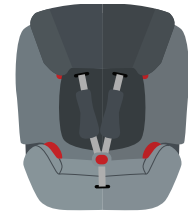
If you use other people's child seats, get them to talk you through the manufacturer's instructions and show you how to fit the seat in your car first, so that you are sure you can fit it correctly. If it is an Isofix seat, make sure your car has Isofix attachment points.

If your organisation regularly transports children, consider buying a number of different child seats that are compatible with the vehicles you use and the age and size of the children you carry.

### Four main types of seat



Rear-facing



Forward-facing



High-backed booster



Booster cushion



R44 seats use a child's weight



iSize seats use a child's height

## Insurance

Organisations should inform their insurers in writing that they carry children in their vehicles, and make sure this is covered by their insurance. Keep a copy of relevant paperwork in their vehicle. If a member of staff uses their own vehicle to carry children for the organisation, they must declare this to their own motor insurer and make sure that their motor insurance includes business use cover and child passengers. They should keep written confirmation in their vehicle.

## Train Staff

Staff need to be trained so they know how to assess that the child car seats provided are appropriate for the child and the vehicle, and are able to fit them correctly, or at least to check they are correctly fitted. There are a number of options:

- RoSPA's **Child Car Seat Training Course** (see page 8 of this guide) is a free downloadable two hour presentation for organisations who carry children in their vehicles or in their staff's own vehicles as part of their work
- Some child seat manufacturers and retailers provide training and/or will check seats (See the **Links** section)
- The Road Safety Unit of the local council may be able to offer training or a seat checking service, or recommend other training providers. Some run Child Seat Check days at local venues, such as supermarkets.

# Child Seat and Seat Belt Laws



Children in cars, vans and other goods vehicles must be carried in an appropriate child seat from birth until they are at least 135cm (4'5") tall or 12 years old, whichever comes first. There are very few exceptions. They must then use a seat belt (although it would be preferable to use a booster seat until they are 150cm (5') tall).

## Children under 3 years

Children under 3 years old must use an appropriate child seat in the front or rear of a car. They cannot be carried in a car that does not have seat belts because it is not possible to fit a child seat in such a vehicle, unless it is an ISOFix child seat and the car is fitted with ISOFix points into which the child car seat fits. However, vehicles with ISOFix points will also have seat belts.

It is illegal to carry a child in a rearward-facing baby seat in the front if there is an active front passenger airbag. The airbag must be deactivated or the rearward-facing child seat must be placed in the rear of the car.

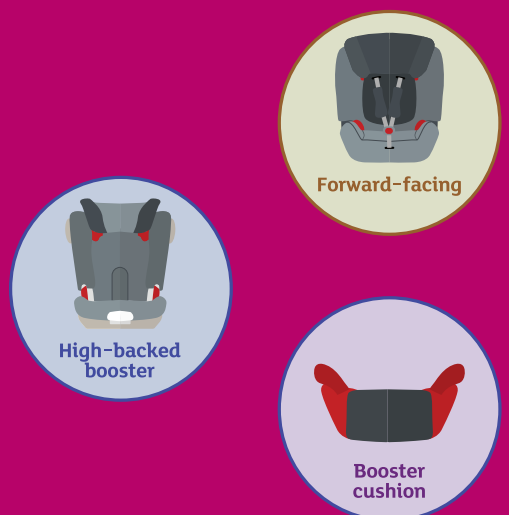


## Children aged 3 years to 135cm tall (approximately 4'5") or their 12th Birthday

Children aged between 3 and 12 years old or who are more than 135 cm tall (whichever comes first) must use an appropriate child car seat when travelling in a car, van or other goods vehicle.

## Children aged 12 years and over (or younger children over 135cm tall)

Children aged 12 years or older (or younger children over 135 cm tall) must wear a seat belt if fitted in the front or rear of a car, van or other goods vehicle.



It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that children under 14 years old use an appropriate child car seat or wear their seat belt.

# Exceptions



There are a small number of exemptions for specific purposes.

## Unexpected necessity over a short distance

If an appropriate child seat is not available, children over 3 years old may travel in the rear of a car using a seat belt in emergencies and unplanned situations. For example, when someone has to carry a child due to an “unexpected necessity” over a short distance, and where not carrying the child (because a child car seat is not available) might leave him or her at risk.

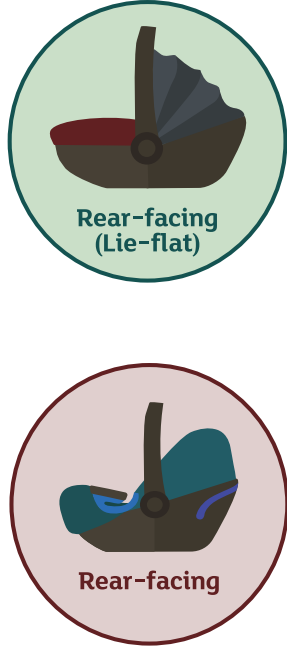
This does not apply to:

- Trips that could have reasonably been planned (e.g., a school run)
- ‘Long’ journeys
- Children under 3 years old.

You cannot take children under 3 years old in a vehicle unless they are using an appropriate child car seat.

## When three child seats cannot be fitted in the rear

If it is not possible to fit three child seats in the rear of a car, then two children up to 135 cm in height must travel in child seats and the third child may use a seat belt on its own. This exemption does not apply to children under 3 years old, who must be carried in an appropriate child car seat.



Rear-facing (Lie-flat)

Rear-facing

A rearward facing baby seat **must not be used** in the front if there is an active front airbag.

In this situation it may be better for the third child to sit in a child seat in the front rather than wear the seat belt on its own in the rear. If there is an active passenger airbag, check with the vehicle manufacturer or the car handbook about using a child seat in the front. If you do, move the front seat as far back as possible on its runners to maximise the distance between the child and the dashboard.

# Exceptions



## Licensed Taxis (including private hire vehicles and minicabs)

If a child seat is not available, children under 3 years must travel in the rear, but may be unrestrained. This is not a safe option; it is better to book a different taxi with child seats provided.

Children 3 years and up to their 12th birthday (up to 135cm tall) must sit in the rear and use a child seat if one is provided or the seat belt on its own if a child seat is not available. However, this is not a safe option; it is better to book a different taxi with child seats provided.

Children aged 12 years or more, or younger children over 135cm tall, must wear a seat belt.

## Emergency Vehicles

Children may be carried in vehicles being used by the police or other emergency services without using child seats, if appropriate seats are not available.



See **“Carrying Children Safely in Taxis, Buses, Coaches and Minibuses”** guide for more detail.

See **Child Car Seats: The Law** or **Child car seats: the Rules** for more information.

# Using the Right Child Seat



## A child car seat must:

- Meet either the R44 or R129 safety standard
- Display an “E” mark to show it meets R44 or R129
- Be suitable for the child’s weight or height
- Be suitable for the vehicle
- Be in a safe condition
- Be correctly fitted according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

## Choosing Child Car Seats:

- Don’t rush the decision
- Look through manufacturers’ catalogues and websites or shops to assess a range of seats.

## Suitable for the Child

Child car seats are designed for specific weight ranges and/or heights of children. Many (but not all) child car seats can be converted as the child grows. The weight and height ranges broadly match different age groups, but it is the weight and/or height that is most important, so make sure your child is within the range specified for the seat.

## Suitable for the Car(s)

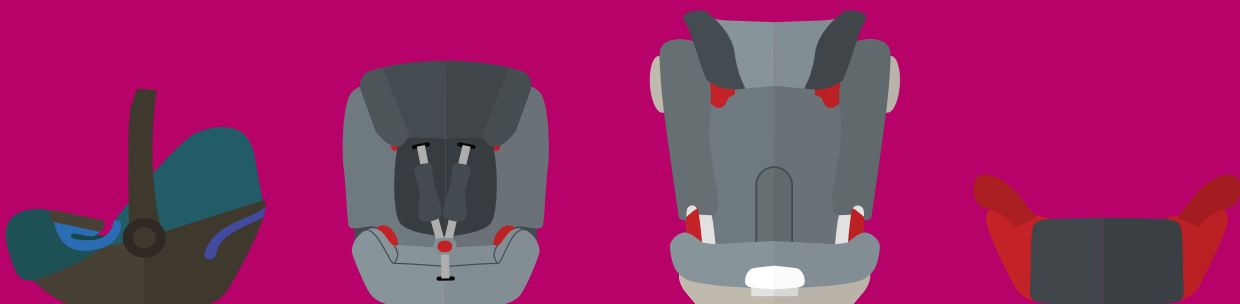
Find a retailer who will let you ‘Try Before You Buy’. Good retailers will check whether a child car seat is suitable for the car or cars in which it will be used, will demonstrate how to fit it and will allow you to try to fit it yourself. But not all their staff may be trained to do this, so ask if they have trained staff and check that one will be available before you visit the store.

Ask the local Road Safety Unit of your local council if they have an advice, checking or fitting service.

Only buy a child car seat online if you are sure it is compatible with your vehicle and your child.

Contact child seat manufacturers to ask what seats they recommend for the vehicle(s) you are using - see the **Useful Links** section of this Guide or [www.childcarseats.org.uk](http://www.childcarseats.org.uk) for contact details of child car seat manufacturers and retailers.

For more information, see the **Types of Child Seats** section of [www.childcarseats.org.uk](http://www.childcarseats.org.uk) or **Child car seats: The Rules**.



# Using the Right Child Car Seat



## Safe Condition

Check that child car seats are in a safe condition. Look for signs of damage or wear and tear. Make sure it has the manufacturer's fitting instructions and labels.

Child car seats must conform to the R44.04 (or R44.03) or R129 (i-size) safety regulations and display an "E" mark. Older child car seats that conform to a British Standard or to an earlier version of R44 cannot be used.

## Replacing Seats

Child car seats suffer from wear and tear, especially if they are frequently put into and taken out of vehicles. They should be replaced according to the manufacturer's recommendations or about every five years.

If they are not used regularly, store them out of direct sunlight and where they are not likely to suffer accidental damage.

Child car seats and adult seat belts that were in a vehicle during a crash should be replaced, as they may have suffered damage that is not visible to the naked eye, and would not provide protection in a second crash. The replacement cost is normally included as part of an insurance claim.

If the seat belt or child seat was not being used when the collision occurred, and it was a very minor impact, it may not be necessary to replace them, but it is very difficult to be sure whether or not they need replacing.

So, if there is any doubt, replace them. Some manufacturers offer advice on the circumstances in which a child car seat should be replaced.



Avoid using a second-hand child car seat. It may have been involved in an accident and have hidden damage. Older second-hand seats will not have been designed to current safety standards, are likely to have suffered more wear and tear, and will not be legal to use unless they conform to R44.04 or R219 (i-size) standards. It is also likely that the instructions will be missing.

There is a letter that can be downloaded from the **Child Car Seats** website ([www.childcarseats.org.uk](http://www.childcarseats.org.uk)) to send to insurance companies if they resist including the cost of a replacement child car seat in an insurance claim.



# Child Car Seat Training Course



**Many child seats are not compatible with every vehicle, so it is hardly surprising that many are fitted incorrectly. It is important to train staff so they know how to assess that the child car seats provided are appropriate for the child and the vehicle, and are able to fit them correctly, or at least to check they are correctly fitted.**

This short presentation is aimed at people who carry children in their own vehicle or a company vehicle as part of their work. It is free to download and use and outlines:

- Why children need to use car seats that are designed for their specific weight, height and age
- The difference between rearward-facing, forward facing and high backed booster seats
- The difference between R44 and R129 (i-Size) seats
- How to advise parents and carers about choosing, installing and using car seats

The presentation comes with speaker notes and a lesson plan so you do not need to be an expert to deliver it. Alternatively, RoSPA may be able to deliver it for you subject to our work commitments.

For further information contact  
[info@childcarseats.org.uk](mailto:info@childcarseats.org.uk).

## Download the Child Car Seat Training Course

To **download** the presentation follow the instructions below. Alternatively, we may be able to supply it on a memory stick if you contact us on [info@childcarseats.org.uk](mailto:info@childcarseats.org.uk).

It is a large presentation (~600mb) which has been zipped to speed up the download time. It is recommended that you download it in advance rather than when you are about to deliver it.

Click **Download** the Child Car Seat Training Course above.

1. Click Save as Compressed (zipped) Folder
2. Choose the location where you wish to save the folder and click Save
3. Once downloaded, open the zip file by double clicking on it or right click (command-click on a Mac) and select extract the zip file's contents
4. Save the zip file's contents to the folder of your choice on your computer.

# Useful Links

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## Road Safety Organisations

[RoSPA Road Safety](#)

[Think Road Safety](#)

[The Highway Code](#)

[Department for Transport](#)

[Road Safety GB](#)

[Good Egg Car Safety](#)

[In-car Safety Centre](#)

[Road Safety Scotland](#)

[Road Safety Wales](#)

[Child Accident Prevention Trust \(CAPT\)](#)

[Confederation of Passenger Transport \(CPT\)](#)

[London Road Safety Council \(LRSC\)](#)

[Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety \(PACTS\)](#)

[Trading Standards Institute](#)

[Road Safety Knowledge Centre](#)

[Transport for London](#)

[Community Transport Association \(CTA\)](#)

[RAC Foundation](#)

## Child Car Seat Manufacturers and Retailers

[Bebe Confort](#)

[Bettacare Ltd](#)

[Brevi](#)

[Britax Excelsior Ltd](#)

[Chicco UK Ltd](#)

[Cosatto](#)

[Graco](#)

[Mamas & Papas Ltd](#)

[Maxi-Cosi](#)

[Multimac](#)

[Recaro UK Ltd](#)

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