

Ages and Stages

By law all child restraints must be approved (Australian Standards), properly positioned and fastened.

Rear-facing

Up to 3 - 4 years*

Legally - Until at least 6 months

Recommendation - At least 12 months of age and longer whenever possible. See our *Choosing a Restraint* brochure or webpage for more information.

Restraint types: Infant carrier, rear-facing 0-4/0-8 years car seat



Booster seat

Up to 10+ years*

Legally - Until at least 7 years of age

Reccomendation - At least 10 years of age and longer whenever possible.

Restraint types: Dickie seat, integrated booster, untethered booster, tethered booster to 7 years*, tethered booster to 10 years* all with either a lap/sash seatbelt or with lap-only belt with external/h-harness**

* All ages on car seats and booster seats are approximate and most restraints will take children past the minimum legal age

** External harnesses are no longer manufactured, use where available and check that the date of manufacture is less than 10 years old and that the harness has not been in an accident.



No car seat 10+ years*

Legally - From at least 7 years of age

Recommendation - Once a child meets all stages of the 5 Step Test.

Common questions

What if a baby or child has grown out of their car seat before the legally ready to move to the next stage?

There are a wide variety of car seats available in each stage that can be used well past the minimum legal age of each stage. If a child grows out of their current car seat or booster seat before the legal minimum age there should be a larger option on the market in the same stage to buy or hire. If they do not fit in **any** restraint on the Australian market they can be moved in to the next stage of restraint (i.e. rear-facing to forward-facing).

Does a child have to be in a car seat in a taxi?

Taxis are exempt from a number of car seat related road rules. The legal requirements for taxis are:

- Children must be in an approved, properly adjusted and fastened child restraint if one is available.
- If a car seat is not available a child under 1 year of age can sit in the lap of a passenger who is over 16 years of age, provided they are not in the front row (excluding vehicles with only one row of seats).
- Children 1 - 4 years of age must not be in the front seat (unless the vehicle has only one row of seats).
- Children 4 - 7 years of age must not be in the front seat *unless* the back row is taken up by children younger than them (unless the vehicle has only one row of seats).

You can request a child restraint when you book your taxi however there is no guarantee that one will be available for you. Where possible take your own restraint.

These rules also apply to hire cars and minibuses in the ACT, they do not apply to any other services (including ride sharing services). These laws vary in each State and Territory.

When can a child sit in the front seat?

It is recommended that a child is 12 years of age or over and meets the 5 Step Test. The front seat should be moved as far back from the airbag as possible. Legally it depends on the age of the child and the type of vehicle.

Cars with 2 or more rows of seats (i.e. sedans):

- 0-4 year olds must **never** sit in the front seat.
- 4-7 year olds must not sit in the front seat unless the back row is taken up by children younger than them. They must also be restrained in an Australian approved, correctly fitted child restraint. This also applies if you cannot fit three restraints across the second row of a vehicle.
- 7+ years olds can legally sit in the front seat.

Vehicles with one row of seats (i.e. utes):

- 0-6 month olds must only travel in the front seat if there is no airbag. Rear-facing carriers or car seats must not be used where there is an airbag regardless of the child's age.
- 6 months onwards normal rules apply.

Can a lap-only belt be used with a booster seat?

It is illegal to use a booster seat with a lap-only belt for children under 7 years of age, past this age it is legal but not recommended. If a child is under 7 years of age and in a booster seat they will need to also have an external harness/h-harness. Lap-only belt do not offer the same protection as a lap-sash belt in a crash and Kidsafe ACT recommends that no passenger uses them unless there are no other options. Where possible place a restraint with an in-built harness in any position with a lap-sash seatbelt to save the lap-sash seatbelt for other passengers.

Visit our website or contact us for more information

Glossary

Rear-facing: A car seat that is installed so that the child is reclined and facing the back of the car.

Forward-facing: A car seat that is installed so that the child is facing the front of the car and that has an in-built harness.

Booster seat: A restraint that is installed so that child is facing the front of the car and is held in by either a lap-sash seatbelt or a seatbelt with an external/h-harness.

Restraint: Is the overall word used to cover carriers, rear-facing, forward-facing car seats and booster seats.

Car Seat: Is the overall word used to cover restraints with an in-built harness (rear-facing and forward-facing).

In-built harness: also known as a 5-point or 6-point harness. This refers to a harness that is built into the car seat during manufacturing and can not be fitting to the car seat after purchase.

External/h-harness: a harness that is not made as part of the seat and is added on to booster seats or used by themselves (no longer manufactured).

Stage: Refers to the four ways children travel in the car: rear-facing, forward-facing, booster seat and in no restraint.

5 Step Test

- 1** The child can sit with their back against the vehicle seat back
- 2** The child's knees bend in front of the edge of the seat
- 3** The sash (shoulder) belt sits across the middle of the shoulder, not on the neck
- 4** The lap belt is sitting low across the hips and touching the thighs
- 5** The child can stay seated like this for the whole trip



Carrying Children Safely in Cars

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Car seat laws, safest practice and common questions

More Information

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