

A Parent's Guide to

Child Car Restraints



britax

www.kidsafewa.com.au

The information contained in this booklet is derived from child injury data and consultation with Kidsafe professional advisers.

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Second Edition 2026

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Background

Transport-related injuries are the leading cause of death and the third most common reason for hospitalisation among children aged 0–14 years in Western Australia. Most of these injuries happen in motor vehicle accidents.

To protect your child, it's essential that they are always seated in the correct child car restraint for their age and size whenever they travel in a vehicle.

This guide explains:

- What the Australian law says about child car restraints
- Best practice tips to keep your child safe on the road

It's important to note that the law outlines the minimum requirements for transporting children. The best practice guidelines provide parents and caregivers with more steps to take to ensure they travel safely with their children.

For more detailed information and support, visit www.kidsafe.com.au and select your local Kidsafe state or territory website.



Child car restraint standards

Kidsafe Australia works in collaboration with Standards Australia to help ensure that child car restraint laws remain current and reflect best practice.

Through ongoing advocacy and expert guidance, Kidsafe WA supports the development and implementation of safety standards that protect children when travelling in vehicles.

The goal of child car restraint laws is to align legislation with best practice guidelines, ensuring every child is secured in the safest and most appropriate restraint for their age and size.

- Prior to the introduction of the 2010 edition of AS/NZS 1754, restraint types were recommended based on the weight of the child. Current restraints use the child's age and height to determine suitability for use.
- Always check the age and history of older and second hand restraints. They should be less than 10 years old and have never been involved in a severe crash.

Which child car restraint do I use?

- Use an approved child car restraint which meets the mandatory requirements of the Australian/New Zealand Standard (AS/NZS 1754) for child car restraints. Restraints complying with the standard will have AS/NZS 1754 printed on the restraint labelling.
- Do not use child car restraints purchased in other countries. Only Australian Standards compliant child car restraints can be sold and used in Australia.
- Always refer to and follow the manufacturer's instructions for your restraint.

Remember:

Always use your child car restraint until the child has reached its maximum size limits before progressing to the next type of restraint. It is important that you follow the manufacturer's instructions for your particular child car restraint when deciding when to move your child to the next stage.

Access the **Best Practice Guidelines for the Safe Restraint of Children Travelling in Motor Vehicles** or view our Passenger Safety Animation. Both resources are available on the Kidsafe Australia website.



CHILD CAR RESTRAINT BY AGE



Children under 6 months

Must use an approved:

- Rearward-facing child car restraint with an inbuilt harness
- Properly fitted to the vehicle
- Adjusted to fit the child's body correctly

Children under 6 months of age are not permitted in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats.

It is recommended to:

Keep your baby in a rearward-facing child car restraint until they outgrow it. This will be when they have reached the maximum size limits.



Children 6 months to 4 years

Must use an approved:

- Rearward-facing child car restraint with an inbuilt harness, OR
- Forward-facing child car restraint with an inbuilt harness
- Properly fitted to the vehicle
- Adjusted to fit the child's body correctly.

Children under 4 years of age must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats.

It is recommended to:

Keep your child in a child car restraint with an inbuilt harness until the child reaches the maximum size limit (height) of the restraint. Extended rearward-facing options are available on some child car restraints, which have the ability to take a child rearward-facing up to 2-3 years (30 months) of age.



Children 4 to 7 years

Must use an approved:

- Forward-facing child car restraint with an inbuilt harness, OR
- Booster seat with a properly fastened and adjusted adult seatbelt.

Children aged 4 to 7 years must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats unless all the back seats are occupied by other children who are also under 7 years.

It is recommended to:

Keep children in the most appropriate restraint until they reach the maximum size limit (height). If your child is over 7 years of age and still fits in a child car restraint/booster seat, keep using it.

Child car restraint models are now available with inbuilt harnesses to accommodate children up to approximately 8 years and booster seats that accommodate children up to approximately 10 years. When deciding whether your child who is seven years of age or older is ready to sit on the vehicle seat do the “five step test”. See the “Child Restraint Guidelines” publication on the Kidsafe Australia website.



5 Step test

The **5 step test** should be used to determine whether a child can safely use an adult seatbelt or if a child car restraint is still needed, even if they have turned 7 years of age.

5 Step Test

1. **Back:** Can the child sit all the way back against the vehicle seat back?
2. **Knee:** Do the child's knees bend comfortably over the front edge of the vehicle seat?
3. **Lap belt:** Is the lap belt sitting low across the hip bones touching the thighs?
4. **Sash belt:** Does the sash (shoulder) belt sit across the middle of the shoulder, not on the neck or out near the arm?
5. **Stay:** Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?



CHILD CAR RESTRAINT INSTALLATION



Rearward-facing ISOFIX



Step 1: Position the Restraint

Place the child car restraint in the correct rearward facing position. If your seat has a stabilising bar, make sure it is engaged.

Next, locate the ISOFIX anchor points in your vehicle and attach the ISOFIX connectors from the restraint—you'll hear a "click" when they're securely connected. A small green indicator on each connector will show when it's properly engaged. Repeat this step on the other side.



Step 2: Tighten the ISOFIX Straps

Apply pressure to the centre of the car seat and pull the ISOFIX strap to tighten. Check the green indicator on each connection point—it should be fully visible to confirm the correct tension. If the indicator isn't green, repeat the tightening process. Do this for both sides.



Step 3: Check for Movement

To test the installation, gently move the restraint at the base. If it feels loose, recheck the ISOFIX connections. Keep in mind that child restraints are not designed to be completely rigid—some movement at the top of the seat is normal.



Step 4: Attach the Top Tether Strap

Locate the anchorage point in your vehicle (refer to your owner's manual if you're unsure). Connect the top tether strap from the restraint to this point. Pull the strap to remove any slack, but avoid over-tightening, as this can lift the restraint off the seat base.

Rearward-facing seatbelt



Step 1: Position the Restraint

Place the child car restraint in the correct rearward-facing position. If your seat includes a stabilising bar, make sure it is engaged.

Fully extend the seatbelt and follow the blue seatbelt pathway, ensuring the belt is not twisted. The seatbelt should pass under the fabric cover and not interfere with the harness straps.



Step 2: Thread the Seatbelt

Guide the seatbelt through the blue rearward-facing pathway as indicated on the restraint.



Step 3: Remove Excess Slack

To tighten the lap section of the seatbelt, pull the sash section up above the buckle and then, firmly pull the remaining sash toward the seatbelt retractor.

You may also use a child car restraint accessory, such as a **gated buckle**, to help prevent the seatbelt from loosening over time.



Step 4: Attach the Top Tether Strap

Locate the anchorage point in your vehicle (refer to your owner's manual if needed).

Connect the top tether strap from the restraint to the anchorage point. Pull the strap to remove any slack, but avoid over-tightening, as this can lift the restraint off the seat base.

Forward-facing ISOFIX



Step 1: Position the Restraint

Place the child car restraint in the correct forward-facing position.

Locate the ISOFIX anchor points in your vehicle. Attach the ISOFIX connectors from the restraint to these points—you'll hear a "click" when they're securely connected. A small green indicator on each connector will confirm that it's properly engaged. Repeat this step for the other side



Step 2: Tighten the ISOFIX Straps

Apply firm pressure to the centre of the restraint and pull the ISOFIX strap to tighten.

Check the green indicator at each connection point—it should be fully visible to confirm the correct tension. If the indicator isn't green, repeat the tightening process. Do this for both sides.



Step 3: Check for Movement

Test the restraint by gently moving it at the base. If it feels loose, recheck the ISOFIX connections.

Note: Child restraints are not designed to be completely rigid. Some movement at the top of the seat is normal.



Step 4: Attach the Top Tether Strap

Locate the anchorage point in your vehicle (refer to your owner's manual if needed).

Connect the top tether strap from the restraint to the anchorage point. Pull the strap to remove any slack, but avoid over-tightening, as this can lift the restraint off the seat base.

Forward-facing seatbelt



Step 1: Position the Restraint

Place the child car restraint in the correct forward-facing position.

Fully extend the seatbelt and follow the yellow seatbelt pathway, making sure the belt is not twisted. The seatbelt should follow the yellow seatbelt pathway and not interfere with fabrics and pass behind the harness straps.



Step 2: Thread the Seatbelt

Guide the seatbelt through the yellow forward-facing pathway as shown on the restraint.



Step 3: Remove Excess Slack

To tighten the lap section of the seatbelt, pull the sash section up above the buckle and then, firmly pull the remaining sash toward the seatbelt retractor.

You may also use a child car restraint accessory, such as a **gated buckle**, to help keep the seatbelt secure and prevent it from loosening over time.



Step 4: Attach the Top Tether Strap

Locate the anchorage point in your vehicle (refer to your owner's manual if you're unsure).

Connect the top tether strap from the restraint to the anchorage point. Pull the strap to remove any slack, but avoid over-tightening, as this can lift the restraint off the seat base.

COMMON INSTALLATION ERRORS



ISOFIX attachments

Incorrect

A common error we commonly see is loose ISOFIX attachments. The ISOFIX indicator on the side of the restraint must appear green. If the indicator is black/red when pressure is applied to the seat, ISOFIX attachments must be tightened.



Correct

Ensure the ISOFIX attachment is pulled tight and the indicator remains green.



Angular adjustment

Incorrect

A common installation error results in the child car restraint sitting at an incorrect angle. This error can occur when the vehicle seat sits at a different angle than the child car restraints manufacturer requires.



Correct

We correct the angle by using a towel to level off the area. The position of the towel creates a better angle for the child car restraint to rest against.



Seatbelt pathways

Incorrect

A common error we see is where the seatbelt pathway is threaded through the wrong section of the seat.



Correct

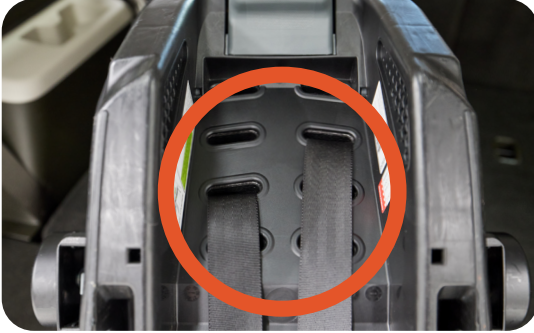
You must ensure that the seatbelt travels through the correct pathway for your configuration. In this instance, the rearward-facing pathway is blue, forward-facing pathway is yellow and booster seat pathway is red.



Harness/Headrest configuration

Incorrect

Another common error we see is misalignment with the manual adjustment system. The harnesses are designed to move up as the child grows, and occasionally, the harness can be misaligned. Though they may appear to be aligned from the front, the harness can be feeding through a different level at the back.



Correct

Simply rethread the harness through so that they are on the same level.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Frequently asked questions

When can I turn my child forward-facing from rearward facing?

In child car restraints, height markers are made by the manufacturer to display when the child is ready to progress to the next seat. The child must meet the height requirements set out by the manufacturer before progressing to the next child car restraint stage.

Height markers must be followed. Moving your child from rearward-facing to forward-facing before they reach the height marker is not encouraged.

What age do children no longer require a child car restraint?

Children must use a child car restraint until at least seven years old. Once they reach this age and have outgrown their booster seat they can then move to using an adult seatbelt.

If you're not sure if your child is ready to use an adult seatbelt, it's best to use the 5 Step Test listed on page 9.

My child keeps taking their harness off, what can I do?

It's important in every car trip that you can remind children to always wear their seatbelt. The best thing an adult can do is show positive, repetitive behaviour by wearing their seatbelt.

It can also be helpful to ensure the harness has been adjusted correctly after placing your child into their seat. To do this, you can use the pinch test. To do this test, pinch the harness at the child's shoulders. If you can grab the harness, it is too loose and needs to be tightened further.

Can I use ISOFIX and the seatbelt path at the same time?

When installing a child car restraint, you must only use one installation method. This can be ISOFIX for any 0-4 years seat that has this installation method OR the seatbelt pathway installation process.

It is not safe to use both installation methods at the same time. Always refer to your child car restraints manual if any point you are unsure.

Frequently asked questions

What is safer, ISOFIX or seatbelt pathway?

Both seatbelt and ISOFIX installation methods are equally safe when used correctly. The choice often comes down to personal preference, vehicle compatibility, and what works best when installing multiple restraints.

It's important to note that only one installation method should be used at a time, never both together. Using both can compromise the safety and effectiveness of the restraint.

If you're ever unsure about how to install your child car restraint, always refer to the manufacturer's instructions provided in the manual. For added peace of mind, consider having the restraint checked by an accredited child car restraint fitter.

Does it matter where I place the child car restraint?

When considering where to place your child car restraints it's always important to consider the driver's comfort. By placing a large, bulky rearward-facing car seat behind the driver often means the driver has less space. An uncomfortable driver can lead to a higher risk on car accidents.

If you are unsure please call Kidsafe WA on (08) 6244 4880.

Where can I place my child's car restraint in my single-cab ute?

You can only place a child car restraint in the front row of seats if an anchorage point is available. If your vehicle does not have one available, you can have this installed by a Type 2 Fitter. Visit your local transport website to find your nearest service.

A rear-ward facing child car restraint must not be used in the front seat if a passenger airbag is active.

Where can I get my child car restraint checked?

To get your child car restraint you can book online with Kidsafe WA or give us a call on (08) 6244 4880. We have multiple service locations to suit your needs that include:

- Kidsafe WA (140 Railway Parade, West Leederville)
- Various Bunnings locations
- Mobile service (location of your choice within the metropolitan area)

Frequently asked questions

Can I clean my car restraint?

Yes! Please refer to your child's car restraint manual and follow the manufacturer's recommendations on how to clean your car seat.

Can my child wear their thick jacket in their car seat during winter?

It is not recommended for children to wear thick jackets whilst travelling in a child car restraint in a vehicle. This is because the child is not secured in the car seat as firmly as they would be without a thick jacket. This can lead to an improper fitting harness.

It is recommended to remove the jacket, fit the child into the car restraint harness and if additional warmth is needed the jacket may be used as a blanket or alternatively use the heating of the vehicle.

Can my child sit in the front seat of my car?

Kidsafe WA recommends that children under 12 years old sit in the back seat of the car whenever required. Front passenger airbags are designed to protect adults and can be dangerous for younger children. In a crash, the airbag inflates quickly and with significant force. This force can cause serious injuries to a child, even when they are correctly wearing a seatbelt.

Can I use my car seat on a plane?

Yes! Some seats are suitable for use on the plane. This will be indicated by green text on the side of the car seat. Please confirm with your airline before flying to see if they allow the use of a child car restraint on the plane.

For more information

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Britax Australia

Kidsafe WA would like to thank our sponsor, Britax, for the funding of this child car safety project and their ongoing commitment to road safety. Their support has helped us provide vital resources and education to families, ensuring safer travel for children across our community. We value this partnership and look forward to continuing our work together to make roads safer for everyone.



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Special thanks

Kidsafe WA would like to thank Hyundai Western Region for their generous support in providing a location and vehicle for the photo shoot featured in this booklet. These images play a vital role in promoting child car safety and educating families. We greatly appreciate Hyundai's commitment to road safety and look forward to continuing our partnership to keep children safe.





Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia

Western Australia

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