

# car seat CHEAT SHEET

Not sure which safety seat you need when? Our reference guide breaks it down.

BY KAREN ROBOCK

## WHO'S RIDING?



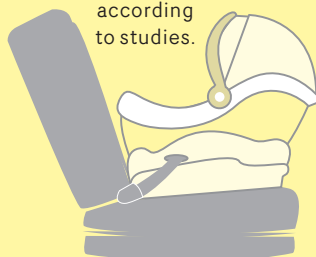
## SAFEST USE



## NEXT STEPS



**TIP**  
Riding rear facing is five times safer than forward facing, according to studies.



**rear-facing seats**  
(UNTIL 22 TO 50 LB.)

**FYI**  
View from the front of a five-point harness system.



**forward-facing seats**  
(UNTIL 40 TO 65 LB.)



**1** Babies who weigh less than 22 lb. (10 kg) should **always ride in a rear-facing seat designed for infants**. Most seats accommodate little ones as small as four or five pounds and come with removable padding to help secure them safely.

**1** Toddlers should remain rear facing for as long as possible. **Many experts agree that keeping them rear facing until they're at least two, and even as old as four, is safest.** It's time to turn kids around when they reach the height or weight limits of their seat. At this point, they're ready for a forward-facing seat with a harness, which will see them through their preschool years.

**2** Infant seats for newborns must be tilted back as far as the seat allows (approximately 45 degrees—use the seat's levelling guide for reference) and installed in the back seat, ideally in the centre position if it installs well there, says Jen Shapka, an instructor-trainer with the Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada, but see how your family uses the vehicle. **"A properly installed seat on the side is safe, and if you have more than one child, the centre position often isn't practical or possible."** Make sure the chest clip is at armpit level and the harness is snug on her shoulders, so no excess strap can be pinched horizontally at the collarbone. See the manufacturer's instructions for the approved positioning of the car seat handle.

**2** According to Transport Canada guidelines, forward-facing seats are installed with a tether strap attached to an anchor point that's approved by the car manufacturer, and a universal anchorage system (UAS) belt or seat belt (and locking clip, if necessary, according to car manufacturer's guidelines). **The seat-belt method must be used once the combined weight of your child and the seat exceed 65 lb. (30 kg).** Buckle him into the harness the same way as in the rear-facing seat, with the chest clip at armpit height and no excess webbing at the collarbone, straps positioned at or just above the shoulders. Make sure the back of the seat extends up past his ears.

**3** Laws vary, requiring babies to be at least 20 lb. (9 kg) and, in some places, also a year old and walking unassisted, before switching to forward facing. But don't rush the transition. **Experts recommend keeping kids rear facing as long as possible;** this position distributes the impact in case of a collision, better protecting the head, neck and spine. Once she hits the height or weight limit of her infant seat, upgrade to a rear-facing toddler seat (that converts to forward facing) with higher height and weight restrictions. Some go up to 50 lb. (22.6 kg).

**3** Again, don't rush. Kids must stay in this style of seat until they're at least 40 lb. (18 kg), but **many seats accommodate kids up to 65 lb. (30 kg).** Use this seat until he reaches the height or weight limit, but delay the move to a booster until he's developmentally ready.

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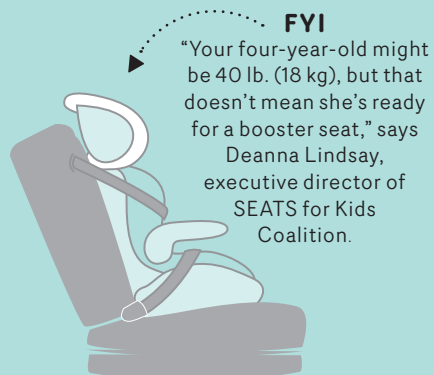
## WHO'S RIDING?



## SAFEST USE



## NEXT STEPS



**booster seats**  
(40 TO 120 LB.)



**seat belts**  
(80+ LB.)



**1** Even if they've met the guidelines, **kids need to be mature enough for this upgrade.** Ensure she can sit properly in the seat (without pushing the shoulder belt off to reach for toys). Many kids can't do this until they're five or six, so if she's outgrown her harnessed seat but isn't mature enough for a booster, shop for a taller, higher-weight harnessed seat for the interim.

**1** Once kids reach either eight years, 80 lb. (36 kg) or 4'9," they're deemed ready by law to move out of the booster seat in most regions. But experts say that of the three, **height is the best indicator of readiness.** (The guideline is nine or ten years old in some provinces, but there is no legislation in several parts of the country.)

**2** High-back boosters support kids' heads if they nod off and provide a better fit for the shoulder belt. **The lap portion should lie flat across the hips, not the belly** (which decreases the risk of internal injuries in a crash). The shoulder belt should sit across her collarbone without pinching her neck or sliding down.

**SOME REGIONS DON'T REQUIRE THE USE OF BOOSTER SEATS, BUT *THEY'RE RECOMMENDED BY SAFETY EXPERTS.***

**2** According to Transport Canada, **kids should also be able to sit up against the back of the seat with their legs bent comfortably over the edge at a 90-degree angle.** The shoulder belt should lie flat over his collarbone without pushing against his neck or face, and it should never be tucked behind his back or under his arm. The lap belt should be secured over his hips, not his stomach. Once he meets all of these criteria and can sit like this for an entire car trip, he's ready to ride without the booster.

**3** Stick with the booster until she's big enough to sit properly unassisted. **You may face some resistance from your child** if she starts to feel self-conscious around kids in the carpool who are no longer using boosters. A backless booster in a favourite colour might help.

**3** Kids older than 12 can sit up front, but according to safety experts, **the back seat remains the safest place for pre-teens.**

**"I SEE A 99% MISUSE RATE WITH ALL TYPES OF CAR SEATS."**

—Jen Shapka, instructor-trainer,  
Child Passenger Safety  
Association of Canada