

Stage 1 Birth - Approximately 2 years



Children younger than 2 years old are best protected riding in a rear-facing car seat. Most convertible seats accommodate rear-facing up to 35 pounds.

- **Seat type:** infant seat or rear-facing convertible
- **In vehicle:** rear-facing in the back seat, never in front of an active air bag
- **Harness straps:** at or below shoulder level
- **Harness clip:** always at armpit level
- **Straps:** snug with no slack, "pinch test"
- **Angle:** 45-degree recline (use pool noodles or a tightly rolled towel to achieve the angle)
- **Installation:** less than one inch of movement when tested at the seat belt path

When using a rear-facing convertible seat, be sure to:

1. Use the rear-facing seat belt path
2. Make sure the seat is in the reclined position

When to turn baby forward-facing?

Keep baby rear-facing up to the maximum limits of the infant car seat. Children who reach these limits before 2 years old should transition to a rear-facing convertible seat. Always follow directions from the manufacturer.

Stage 2 Approximately 2 - 4 years



Children should use a harness until they outgrow it. Many go to 50, 60 or even 80 pounds. Check the label on the seat.

- **Seat type:** forward-facing convertible or forward-facing only combination
- **In vehicle:** forward-facing in the back seat
- **Harness straps:** at or above shoulder level
- **Harness clip:** always at armpit level
- **Straps:** snug with no slack, "pinch test"
- **Angle:** check car seat owner's manual for specific requirements
- **Installation:** less than one inch of movement when tested at the seat belt path

When using a forward-facing convertible seat, be sure to:

1. Use the forward-facing seat belt path
2. Switch the recline adjuster to the upright position.

Stage 3 Minimum 40 lbs - 4'9"



Booster seats help protect children by lifting them so the lap and shoulder seat belt connects with their strong bones. Children should remain in a booster seat until the seat belt fits correctly without it.

- **Seat type:** high-back booster or forward-facing only combination with harness straps removed
- **In vehicle:** in the back seat
- **Seat Belt:** always use a lap and shoulder belt with a booster

Use the shoulder belt adjuster if the belt touches the child's neck. It should cross the collar bone and not touch the neck or be off the shoulder.

Stage 4 Minimum 4'9"



Your child is ready for the lap and shoulder seat belt if you can answer "yes" to each of the following questions:

1. Is your child 4 feet, 9 inches?
 2. Does the lap belt sit low across the upper thighs?
 3. Does the shoulder belt lie across the collar bone - not touching the neck and not off the shoulder?
 4. When the child's bottom is scooted all the way back against the seat, do his or her knees bend at the edge of the seat?
 5. Can the child stay seated that way for the entire trip?
- **Restraint type:** lap and shoulder seat belt
 - **In vehicle:** children younger than 13 years old should always ride in the back seat



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