

Car Seat Buying Guide

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Whether shopping for your first-time infant seat or making the switch from convertible to booster, the options are endless when it comes to car seats. What's more, a car seat can ultimately save your child's life, so it is extremely important to know the options that are available before you reach the store aisle or begin surfing the Internet. To say the least, the car seat buying process can be overwhelming, so I've consolidated some important tips to ensure you are "in the know" before you purchase.

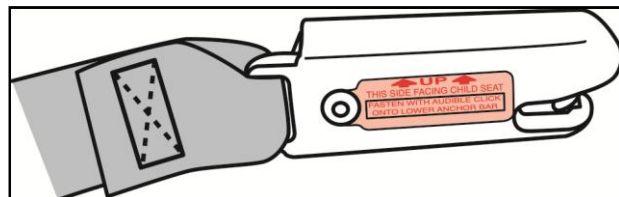
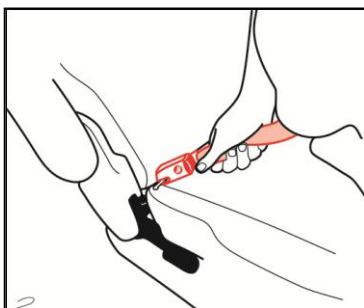
What to Look For

Height/Weight Requirements: There are three types of car seats - Infant, Convertible and Booster - and it is critical to realize which variety fits your child's needs. Below is a brief run-down to help determine which seat is best for your child.

- **Infant car seats** must be installed rear-facing. Children are required to sit rear-facing until they reach 12 months or 20 pounds; however, the longer you keep them rear-facing the safer they will be. It is highly recommended to keep children rear-facing until they reach 40 pounds.
- **Convertible car seats** can be installed rear- and forward-facing to accommodate infants and toddlers. It is important to pay attention to the specific height/weight requirements on a convertible seat, as this can vary between brands and models.
- **Booster car seats** are the final stage in the car seat lifecycle. They accept a child generally up to 80 pounds and in some cases up to 100 pounds. Combination booster seats are a great buy; they feature a forward-facing internal harness plus the ability to be used as a belt-positioning booster with the vehicle seat belt. It is critical to keep your child in a harness for as long as possible. Remember - we should *not* be rushing our children out of safety seats in the car!

Easy Installation: According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), as many as 85% of car seats on the road today are installed incorrectly. I always recommend going to a certified child passenger safety technician (call your local hospital, police station or Safe Kids Chapter to locate one near you), however, it shouldn't take an engineering degree to install a car seat. Look for ease of use features that leverage the LATCH system to make it as easy as possible for you to install the seat.

LATCH: What exactly is LATCH you ask? The acronym stands for **L**ower **A**nchors and **T**ethers for **C**hildren, a system with which all child safety seats and vehicles must be compatible. With LATCH, car seats are attached directly to the vehicle, rather than a seat belt, making installation easier and safer. Look for features such as a "One Click LATCH installation system," which allow for faster and easier installation when moving between vehicles.



Side Impact Protection: Car accidents, particularly side impact crashes, are one of my greatest fears. In fact, 1 in 3 crash fatalities involving children are side impact, nearly all of which involving head trauma. Safety 1st recently launched a new technology called Air Protect Side Impact Technology to address this very issue. Through the precise release of air, Air Protect compresses and shields children from side impact intrusion and immediately reduces crash forces at the most critical spot: around a child's head. Air Protect does this by extending ride-down, the amount of time it takes to slow a child's movement in a crash. For more information on Air Protect, click [here](#).

Shopping for a car seat is one of the most important duties you are tasked with as a parent, so it is important to ensure you are fluent in the various features and offerings. Remember, don't go it alone! There are a number of resources that are chock-full of detailed information to help you throughout the shopping and installation process. My go-to sites include www.NHTSA.gov and www.usa.SafeKids.org. Also, continue to browse around on www.Safety1st.com for more of my personal safety tips when it comes to traveling with your little ones.