
Tips and Tricks

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We've compiled Tips and Tricks to help you with installations, keeping everyone happy in the car, and handling special situations.

{mospagebreak title=Preemies}

Tips for Preemies

Printable Premie Tip Sheet

More than 1 in 10 parents take home a baby weighing less than 10 lbs. Every year, more than 10,000 US babies go home weighing less than 4 lbs! Just like infant-sized clothes are too big for these tiny babies, infant-sized car seats are often also too big. Many infant car seats have a starting minimum weight of 5 lbs; only some fit babies 4 lbs or less. Some infant car seats also come with newborn inserts or positioners to improve the harness fit for very tiny babies.

It's important to note that ANYTHING in the box with your car seat has gone through rigorous crash testing and by law must meet certain standards. Other products sold separately, like infant or newborn head/body positioners, strap covers, fleece sleeping bags, etc, are not regulated and do not have to meet any standards or pass any crash tests. These 'aftermarket products' should NOT be used since they will make your baby less safe and void the car seat's warranty. NOTHING should be placed under your baby or under the straps. Once your baby is wearing a few thin layers of clothing and is buckled snugly, you can use blankets on top to keep the baby warm and rolled blankets on the sides for extra support.

- What makes a seat fit a preemie well?
- Isn't it true that most infant seats have a 5 pound minimum?
- What is the Car Seat Test?
- Who should get a Car Seat Test?
- Tips for passing the Car Seat Test
- Who needs a car bed?
- Which car beds are available?

- Traveling with medical equipment
- Tips for physicians and nurses

What makes a seat fit a preemie?

A few things:

1. Low shoulder strap slot. The closer the shoulder strap slots are to the baby's shoulders, the better. It is best to have the straps start **BELOW** the baby's shoulders when the baby is rear-facing. With preemies and even newborns, it is usually not possible to have the straps start below the shoulders, but getting a seat where the strap slot is as close as possible is important.

2. Close crotch buckle position

3. Small, short, and narrow chest clip. On some seats, the clip is so big that it pushes under the baby's chin. On other seats the clip is so wide that it pushes the straps so far apart that they fall off the baby's shoulders.

4. Narrow spacing between hip straps, on a 5-point harness seat.

Isn't it true that most seats start with a 5 pound minimum weight?

Yes. But there are some seats that can be used for babies under 5 pounds, as follows

No minimum weight

- Combi: Shuttle 22, Shuttle 33, Navette*
- Nania: BabyRide* (model with 4 shoulder strap settings)

3 lb minimum

- Combi: Coccoro (convertible, models manufactured 8/2011 and newer)

4 lb minimum

- Britax: Chaperone
- Chicco: Keyfit 22, Keyfit 30, Keyfit 30 Magic
- Cybex: Aton
- Graco: Snugride 30, Snugride 35 (certain models)
- Maxi Cosi Pria 70 (convertible)
- Orbit Baby: G2 Infant Car Seat
- Safety 1st: Comfy Carry, OnBoard 35, 35 Air

5 lb minimum

- Baby Trend: Flex Loc, EZ Flex Loc
- Evenflo: Embrace, Discovery, Serenade, SecureRide (some models)
- Graco: Snugride, Snugride 32, Snugride 35 (certain models)
- Maxi Cosi: Mico
- Peg Perego: Primo Viaggio SIP 30/30
- Safety 1st: Designer
- Teutonia: t-tario
- The First Years: Via470

*Note: Combi Navette and Nania BabyRide are available ONLY to agencies/institutions in industrial sized packs.

What is the "Car Seat Test?"

If your baby is born before 37 weeks or has a medical condition that may affect her breathing or her ability to maintain her oxygen level, before she leaves the hospital she will get a 'car seat test' as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. During the test, the baby will sit properly strapped into her car seat for 90 minutes to make sure that her heart rate, breathing rate and oxygen levels stay in a normal range. The semi upright position of the rear-facing child safety seat is a stressful position for a baby, compared to laying flat. A baby "fails" the test if his heart rate drops (bradycardia) OR his oxygen level drops (desaturation) OR he stops breathing (apnea).

The AAP recommends that babies who 'pass' the car seat test go home in a rear-facing car seat, NOT in a car bed, since the protection provided by a rear-facing car is better documented than that for car beds. Car beds should ONLY be used for babies who 'fail' the car seat test, meaning for those babies who cannot maintain a normal heart rate, breathing rate or oxygen level while in the car seat.

Who exactly should get a Car Seat Test?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all babies born before 37 weeks get a car seat test. Other

babies who should get a car seat test before going home are those:

- Going home on an apnea monitor
- Going home on oxygen
- With craniofacial deformities--like Pierre Robin sequence--that may make it harder to breathe in a semi-upright position
- For whom the pediatrician is concerned that the baby may not tolerate the semi-upright position

Tips for passing the Car Seat Test:

- Buckle the baby into the safety seat exactly as you would if they were to ride in the car. Make sure of the following: the straps are snug the baby is not swaddled, and nothing that did not come with the safety seat, including blankets, infant positioners, pillows, etc, is in the safety seat. once the baby is buckled in snugly, you can put receiving blankets alongside their head and/or body to provide extra support if you'd like.
- Make sure the car seat is reclined to 45 degrees.
- Wait at least 30 minutes after a feed to do the test.

Who needs a car bed?

Car beds are for use only by babies who have a medical need to lay flat. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, a baby (even a 4 pound preemie) who can tolerate sitting in a semi-upright position should ride in a rear-facing safety seat, not a car bed. A car bed is a safe option for babies for whom there is no other option. A rear-facing safety seat offers better protection than a car bed for a baby who can tolerate sitting semi-upright. Rear-facing safety seats have an excellent track record in all real world crashes of providing the best protection in any type of crash. In a rear-facing safety seat, the shell of the safety seat does a tremendous amount to absorb the crash forces and distribute them on the strongest parts of the baby's body--the baby's entire back. A car bed's shell is not able to do as much, especially in a side impact. Babies who fail the car seat test and leave the hospital in a car bed should have a plan in place for when they will be retested in a rear-facing safety seat.

What Car Beds are available?

- Angel Guard Products Angel Ride Infant Car Bed. This goes from birth to 9 pounds and 21.5 inches. Babies with taller torsos may need a longer harness, available from the manufacturer.
- Dorel Cosco Dream Ride SE. Goes from 5 to 20 pounds.

Traveling with medical equipment? Here are some tips:

Some children must travel with devices such as apnea monitors, oxygen tanks and ventilators.

- Secure these devices in the vehicle so that they do not become flying objects in a crash or sudden stop. At this time, there is no single product available to secure medical devices. Try wedging the equipment on the vehicle floor with pillows or securing it with seat belts not being used by a passenger.

- Make sure that any devices that use batteries have enough power for your entire trip.

Are you a physician or nurse working in a well baby nursery or neonatal intensive care unit?

This 2 page handout is a fantastic guide for helping ensure new babies leave the hospital safely.

{mospagebreak title=Newborns}

Tips for Newborns

- What makes a seat fit a newborn well?
- How should I position my newborn in the car seat?
- Can I use a head support device?
- Can I swaddle my baby in the car seat?
- How do I calm my baby? He cries when I put him in the car seat!
- Can I use a convertible child safety seat for my newborn?
- My baby weighs less than 5 pounds. What should I do?

What makes a seat fit a newborn well?

A few things:

1. Low shoulder strap slot. The closer the shoulder strap slots are to the baby's shoulders, the better. Remember, it is best to have the straps start **BELOW** the baby's shoulders when kids are rear-facing. Many newborns are not tall enough to have the straps start below the shoulders, but finding a seat that has the slots as close as possible is important.

2. Close crotch buckle position.

3. Narrow spacing between the hip straps on seats with a 5-point harness.

4. Small, short and narrow chest clip. On some seats the clip is so big that it pushes under the baby's chin. On other seats it is so wide that it pushes the shoulder straps so far apart that they fall off the baby's shoulders.

Here's a short video showing how to buckle in your newborn.

We know parents of newborns don't have too much time to watch videos--but we have a longer version with more detail on our Videos page. The baby in this video is 7 weeks old and about 8 lbs. She's being buckled into a Graco Safe Seat.

How can I position my newborn in the car seat?

New babies do not have enough strength in their necks to hold their heads up. Their heads tend to flop sideways---this is OKAY! But when the car seat is too upright, their heads tend to flop forward, and this is NOT OKAY. A baby's head should not fall forward in the car seat, so that his chin touches his chest. This is dangerous and can interfere with the baby's breathing.

Two tips to make sure your newborn's head stays in a safe position.

1. Make the harness straps snug. Snug straps do more than just keep a baby safe in a crash. They prevent babies from slumping over, giving them the support they need to keep their bodies and heads straight.

2. Recline the car seat properly. For safety and comfort, a newborn should ride semi-reclined, so that the angle of the car seat (where their head and chest rest) is reclined enough to keep the baby's head back and his chin off his chest, but never more than 45 degrees from vertical. Most newborns will require a 45 degree angle to keep their heads well positioned and their airways open. We must position the newborn's head and neck for him, since he doesn't have the neck muscles to do it himself. Without this reclined position, a child's head could easily fall onto his chest, pinching off his airway. As he grows older and can hold up his own head, you can move the car seat into a more upright position to provide better crash protection.

Can I use a head support device with the car seat?

It has been our experience that the vast majority of head supports that come with child safety seats are ineffective or worsen the positioning of the baby's head. Most of these head supports place more padding behind the child's head, which further encourages the head to fall forward---exactly what we DON'T want to occur! (Before removing your child safety seat's head support, read your owners manual, since a few car seats (like the Britax Companion) require the head support for crash protection.)

Better positioning, even for the smallest preemies, can usually be achieved with a rolled diaper cloth or receiving blanket alongside the baby's head. Never place anything behind a newborn's head or under his neck. Do not use a head support device that did not come with your car seat. In order to sell a product for use with a child safety seat--but one that does not come with the seat--there are NO standards and NO crash tests required! Despite what such "aftermarket" products

may claim, the child safety seat manufacturers feel that using such products may be unsafe. Using these products violates the warranty on the child safety seat.

Can I swaddle my baby in the child safety seat?

No.....and yes. It is dangerous to have anything under the straps that is not the baby's body. But you can still give the baby that snugly feeling of being swaddled with these simple steps.

1. Buckle the baby into the safety seat and make the straps snug. There should be NO blankets or bulky clothing under the straps or on the baby's body.
2. Take a blanket and, while keeping the baby's arms down at the sides, tuck the blanket very tightly along the sides of the baby's body and underneath the baby's legs. Of course if it is very hot outside don't do this, since the baby will overheat.

The 2 week old baby in this photo is buckled tightly into her Graco Snugride 35. You can't see the straps due to the swaddle, but rest assured that she's ready to go for a ride (just as long as the carrier handle is moved to an approved position for use in the car!)

How do I calm the baby? He cries when I put him in the child safety seat!

Dr. Karp, a pediatrician and author of the Happiest Baby on the Block talks about the 5 S's system to calm a baby. Just like your new baby cries when you change his diaper or dress him, he may cry when you buckle him into his safety seat. Here are a few tips adapted from Dr. Karp's 5 S's for calming the baby.

1. Swaddling. In the last few months of pregnancy, the baby tucks up into fetal position and spends her time with constant touch and support. Tight straps mimic this constant touch. Adding a blanket overtop the straps tucked alongside the baby's body gives an extra element of support by keeping the baby's arms at her sides, preventing her from setting off her own startle reflex.
2. Shushing Sounds. Babies in utero listen to a constant white noise "soundtrack," the sound of blood whooshing through the mom's body. You can mimic this sound by making a loud shushing noise.
3. Swinging. Babies in utero are used to constant motion, since when mom moves, so does baby. Most babies miss this constant motion and have trouble adjusting to it not being there. With your baby snugly buckled into the car seat, swing the car seat by the handle gently to mimic the motion he misses.
4. Sucking. This is a very powerful calming technique for babies. Once the baby is in the safety seat, offer her a pacifier.
5. Side or Stomach Position. This is not possible in the child safety seat, unfortunately.

Can I use a convertible child safety seat for my newborn?

Yes! People often use infant carriers for newborns because they tend to be more convenient. But a convertible seat is just as safe, provided it fits your child correctly (see [What makes a seat fit a newborn well](#), above). There are certain circumstances where it makes more sense to use a convertible seat instead of an infant carrier.

- 1. Money is tight and baby will typically be riding in just one vehicle. If you are using multiple vehicles and/or taxis, the convenience of the infant carrier makes it a better choice.

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- 2. The second parent or the grandparent wants a child safety seat in his/her car, but won't be taking the baby frequently in the first months. Buying a second base for an infant carrier which a baby will use only a few times does not make sense.

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- 3. You plan to use a sling to carry the baby instead of carrying them in the infant carrier car seat.

My baby weighs less than 5 pounds. What should I do?

Most infant seats start at 5 lbs. But some can be used for smaller newborns (the number in parentheses is the height of the lowest shoulder strap):

- Britax Chaperone (6.5"). Starts at 4 lbs.
- Chicco KeyFit and KeyFit30 (6.5"). Starts at 4 lbs.
- Combi Shuttle 33 No minimum weight.
- Cosco Comfy Carry Starts at 4 lbs.
- Cybex Aton Starts at 4 lbs.
- Graco Snugride 30 Starts at 4 lbs.
- Maxi Cosi Pria (convertible car seat) Starts at 4 lbs.
- Safety 1st Comfy Carry Elite and Elite Plus Starts at 4lbs
- Safety 1st onBoard 35 and onBoard 35 Air Starts at 4 lbs.

{mospagebreak title=Rear-Facing Installations}

Rear Facing Installation Tips, Tricks and Videos

When installing your rear-facing car seat (convertible or infant seat), try the following:

- Move the front seats up as far as possible so that you have lots of room to work in the back seat.
- If possible, recline the vehicle seat where the car seat will go before starting your installation. Make the seat upright once you've finished. This will help you get the seat installed tightly.
- Pull the seat belt or latch belt from inside the car seat, not from outside the seat. This means that if you dropped the latch belt, it should fall down on top of where the child goes, not outside the car seat. This rule applies to most car seats except for the following:
 - Britax Classic convertible models, older Britax convertibles (i.e. Marathon, Boulevard, Roundabout, Decathlon--those that go up to 40 or 65 lbs)
 - Chicco KeyFit and KeyFit30
 - Recaro Signo
 - Sunshine Kids Radian models

For Infant Seats specifically:

- Put your weight on the base when you pull the seat belt or latch belt tight. Do not just use a hand on the base, this generally won't be enough weight to get the seat installed tightly. In this photo, Alisa has her left knee in the base and her right foot on the ground. If you are short and flexible, like all three Car Seat Ladies, you can probably get your foot in the base--this works even better.
- Put weight on the right side of the seat, and then the left side, then the right side again, etc, as you pull the latch belt or seat belt tight. This will help you get the belt as tight as possible. In the photo, see how Alisa is pushing with her hand and her knee on the right side of the base. After she pulls the latch strap, she'll move her knee into the left side of the base and push there as she pulls more slack from the latch strap.
- Unless you are installing a Chicco Keyfit, pull the latch strap or the seat belt from inside the base, as Alisa is doing in the photo.

For Convertible Seats specifically:

- To tighten the seat belt or latch belt, go behind the car seat, between the car seat and the front seat. Use your stomach to push the car seat into the back of the car and sway from side to side as you pull the seat belt or latch belt tight. You will have to lean over onto the car seat. Note how Alisa is leaning over onto the car seat and pushing it with her belly as she pulls the lower latch straps tight. Also note that the vehicle seat is very reclined. She will move the vehicle seat upright after she has installed the car seat.

- If you don't fit behind your rear-facing convertible seat or if you don't want to use your belly to push the car seat into the vehicle seat, you can stand or kneel beside the car seat and push down with one hand on the seat (put your hand where your baby's bottom would go) and pull the latch strap with the other hand. Sway the car seat as you do this. Then switch to the other side and repeat. You may have to switch a few times before you get the car seat completely tight.

Videos

The following videos illustrate many of the tips above and may help you get a tight, secure installation. Of course you should always read your car seat's instruction manual before you attempt any installation.

[Installing a Snugride 32 or Snugride 35 base with the seat belt](#)

[Installing a Combi Coccoro rear-facing with the seat belt](#)

[Installing an Infant Carrier using the European routing path](#)

[Installing a Britax Boulevard Classic using lower LATCH anchors and Swedish tether method](#)

[How to Use a 5-point harness \(Long Version-8:29\)](#)

How to use a 5-point harness (Short Version-1:30)

{mospagebreak title=Forward-Facing Installations}

Forward-Facing Installation Tips and Tricks

- Make sure your child really needs to sit forward-facing. Remember, kids who sit rear-facing are 5 times safer than those who sit forward-facing!
- Before installing your forward-facing car seat, move the front seats all the way up. This will give you more room to move around the back seat.
- If your car has tether anchors: Place your car seat on the vehicle seat. Before attaching it, set up the tether strap by attaching the hook to the tether anchor. Don't tighten it, just make sure the strap and tightening mechanism are accessible, and keep an eye on them as you install the car seat using the lower anchors or the seat belt. This way the tether strap won't get caught under or behind the car seat during installation.
- Check your vehicle owner's manual and your car seat instruction manual to make sure that you are attaching your car seat in an approved seating position and using an approved method. For example, not all forward-facing seats can be used with the lower latch anchors in every vehicle seating position. Many require that you use the seat belt to install the car seat in the center seating position.
- Pull the seat belt or latch belt from inside the car seat, not from outside the seat. This means that if you dropped the latch belt, it should fall down on top of where the child goes, not outside the car seat. We have found this especially helpful with the Britax Frontier and Frontier 85. This rule applies to most car seats but not all--exceptions include the older Britax seats (not the models with "70" after their names), the Sunshine Kids Radian, Recaro Signo, and Graco Safe Seat Step 2.
- As you pull the seat belt or latch belt tight, put pressure on the car seat. Generally we find that putting one or two knees in the car seat helps sink it down into the vehicle seat. Don't get out of the car seat until you have finished installing it
- If you are in an SUV, hatchback, station wagon or minivan, you may find it easier to tighten a Y shaped tether strap if you pull from inside the trunk area.

{mospagebreak title=Keeping Kids Happy}

Keeping Your Kids Happy

We've all been there: You're on a long car trip, or even just on the daily carpool route, and your kids are NOT HAPPY. They scream and cry and don't want to be in their car seats. Think about it--Would you want to be strapped down in the car for long periods of time every day? Kids get bored and uncomfortable just like adults. Here are some ways to keep your kids happy, or at least happier, in the car.

Infants

Toddlers

Kids Who Act Up in the Car

Infants

- Make sure your newborn's straps are tight enough. Newborns are comforted by a tight 5-point harness, since it mimicks swaddling, and may drift off to sleep once the car starts moving.
- Make sure your infant is not too cold OR too hot. Babies have trouble regulating their own temperature and can overheat easily, even in winter if they are bundled up and then put in a warm car. Read more about keeping your baby warm Cold Weather Tips and cool Warm Weather Tips.
- Many older infants become unhappy in the car seat around 6-8 months. Babies this age are just becoming more aware of their surroundings and don't want to be confined in the car seat. Early sitters and movers will be more unhappy than kids content to stay in one place. Many of these children are happier once they transition to a rear-facing convertible car seat, because convertible seats sit higher up off the vehicle seat and are more upright, allowing the child to perhaps see out the rear-window, and at the very least to sit up. See how your child likes to rest outside of the car seat and take that into consideration when deciding if its time to move into a convertible seat.
- Check to see that the sun isn't shining into the baby's eyes. A stick-on sunshade or adjusting the car seat's own built-in sunshade may make the baby happier.
- While your child can't see you when you're driving, even very young babies can recognize the voices of their parents. Talk to your baby – or play music and sing to it. You don't necessarily need to listen to "baby" songs – kids like music with a beat, so many of your favorite songs might become the baby's favorites too!
- It is developmentally appropriate for older infants to dislike the car seat and other forms of restraint (like high chairs or strollers). These restraints limit a child's mobility and freedom; most kids would much rather be crawling around exploring the world around them instead of strapped into a car seat. But while its disconcerting to hear a baby cry, it's also important to realize that it's unlikely that the baby is crying out of pain. Crying is the baby's only form of communication. He might be trying to ask "Are we there yet? I want to get out and play!" As any pediatrician can tell you, the crying baby is the most reassuring baby, because you know his airway is open.

Toddlers

- Toddlers are even more apt to dislike the car seat and other forms of restraint, like the stroller and high chair. You can bet that your unhappy kid wants nothing more than to be out of the car seat. An older toddler can understand simple directions and can be reminded (perhaps constantly) that "We need to be in the car seat if we are in the car. The car seat will keep you safe."
- Distraction works wonders. Set aside some soft toys (ones that pass the ouch test) that are only for use in the car. Soft books, blocks, cards, dolls, etc, are all great toys and if they are only allowed in the car, they become "special," making a ride in the car something to look forward to. Stickers are great for older kids who won't try to eat them.
- Play music and sing with your toddler.
- Older kids who can be trusted with food will enjoy eating cereal and other non-chokeable treats in the car.
- If your rear-facing toddler can see out the rear-window, talk to him about what he sees out there.
- It often helps to NOT sit in the back seat with your toddler. Many children can't understand why they can't come out of the car seat and sit with Mommy or Daddy. These kids will often entertain themselves if left alone with a few soft toys and some music, albeit after a short amount of protest.

Kids Who Act Up in the Car

This section is for parents of kids who are having behavioral issues in the car. We all know who these kids are--the ones who unbuckle themselves as soon as you reach the highway, the ones who wiggle out of their shoulder straps, and the ones who just don't stop SCREAMING.

- As you are walking to the car, give your child clear instructions as to how they should behave in the car - outlining your expectations and the consequences should they misbehave. For example "We are going to get in the car to go to school. You must wear your straps in the car. We do not take our straps off until Mommy says so. If you take your straps off you will get a time out when we reach the school parking lot."

- Kids will work for attention - whether it is positive or negative attention. Not only that, but kids, unlike adults, have trouble distinguishing between positive attention and negative attention. Reinforce the behavior you want, which means FREQUENTLY praising the child for good behavior. If you are buckling your child in and she is cooperating nicely you should say something like "Mommy is so proud of you for getting buckled like a big girl." If it's two minutes into the car ride and she's still sitting nicely; yup, you guessed it, praise her again. Two minutes later, praise her again. Kids have very short attention spans - so the praise, especially in the beginning, needs to be VERY frequent.

- Use a sticker chart. Kids love visual reminders of their good behavior - and it only encourages them to continue that behavior so they get another sticker. If your child is worst behaved when you are buckling them in, talk to them on the way to the car about the behavior you expect and the reward for such behavior (i.e. a sticker, or getting to read a story with you, or something else that is NOT FOOD). If they behave well while you buckle them in don't make them wait til the end of the car ride for a sticker, give them one right then. If they also typically misbehave during the trip, talk to them on the way to the car about the behavior you expect, and give them a sticker at the end of the car trips that they behaved nicely. Keep your sticker chart in the car if it helps!

- If your child has a favorite book or small toy, save it for the car - this way it makes them look forward to riding in the car as they get to play with that toy or read that special book.

- Let kids who are fascinated by the buckles and/or straps buckle and strap themselves in. As the child buckles and straps herself in, tell her what a good job she's doing using the car seat the right way. This allows the child to feel in control of her car seat and feel like she's accomplished something.

- Make a story about using the car seat (with your child) and read it to your child often. To you it may seem like routine that everytime you go in the car you strap your child in - but perhaps your child doesn't understand the routine (even though you do it 5 times a day!). Making things routine - and helping your child understand the steps to the routine - alleviates some of the anxiety associated with transitioning from one activity to another. Picture books are a great way of teaching your child the routine - while also making it fun as most toddlers love reading books, especially ones about them! Here is an example of a story you can write with your child - print it out and read it with them as you go to the car and buckle them in. If you have a digital or cell phone camera, take a picture of the steps and incorporate that into your story so your child can see exactly what is going to happen. Page 1: Mommy and I walk to the car. Page 2: Mommy opens the car door. Page 3: I climb into my seat like a big girl! Page 4: Mommy puts the straps over my shoulders and over my hips. Page 5: I help Mommy with the easy part (the chest clip). Page 6: Mommy does the hard part (buckles between the legs). Page 7: Mommy makes my straps snug so they give me a hug. Page 8: Mommy gives me a high five and a hug. Page 9: Mommy sits in her seat and wears her seat belt snug so it gives her a hug. Page 10: Mommy starts the car - I like the sound of the engine! Page 11: Off we go!

- If your child starts misbehaving, STAY CALM. Your goal is to give her NO ATTENTION for her misbehavior - this means that you don't show her any facial expressions in reaction to it (typically people show an angry face or laugh - both of which encourage the child to continue screaming). For wigglers and unbucklers, you will obviously need to find a safe place to pull over and tighten the child's straps or rebuckle the harness- and I would recommend giving the child a time out right then or immediately when you get to your destination.

{mospagebreak title=Warm Weather}

Warm Weather Tips

How do you keep your child--especially a rear-facing child--cool in the car during the summer?

Cool Down the Car

Removable sunshades: Keep the car cooler for everyone by using a reflective sunshade on the front and rear windows while your car is parked.

Window Tinting: Consider getting your windows tinted--certain types of tinting also block UV rays!

DO NOT use a roller sunshade on your car windows. These are not recommended because the shade is likely to fly off in a crash, and the hard roller part could seriously injure your child if it hit the child's head. Also, anything that is on the window of your car should be transparent enough that you can see through it – if it blocks the driver's visibility, this is **NOT** safe.

Cool Down the Car Seat

Removeable Car Seat Cooler: Cool the car seat down while you are not in the car with a removable car seat cooler. Freezable ice packs fit into a cover that you put on top of your child's car seat. When you remove the cover to put your child in, the car seat is nice and cool. Please note that you **CANNOT** use these coolers while your child is in the car seat.

- The Original Cold Seat
- Baby Bee Cool Car Seat Cooler Pad

Sunshades for the car seat: If you are using an infant carrier, keep the sunshade up while its in the car to block some of the sun coming in from the side windows. For older kids in convertible & combination seats, the Protect-A-Bub car seat sunshade is rated UPF 50+ and will block a lot of the bright sun coming in from the side windows (and for forward facing kids, from the back window too). It is very soft and flexible – so you don't have to worry about any hard/sharp parts hurting your child in the event of a crash. These devices will keep the sun off the car seat while the car is parked, and can also be used while your child is in the car seat.

DO NOT use a roller sunshade on your car windows. These are not recommended because the shade is likely to fly off in a crash, and the hard roller part could seriously injure your child if it hit the child's head. Also, anything that is on the window of your car should be transparent enough that you can see through it – if it blocks the driver's visibility, this is **NOT** safe.

Cool Down your Child

Wet Your Kid: Using cool water, wet your child's hair & exposed skin (and you may even want to wet his shirt somewhat) before putting him in the car seat. If you'll be going into an air-conditioned space at the end of the car ride, you'll want to avoid getting the child's clothes wet, since he may become too cold in the air conditioning.

Spray bottles and fans: Toddlers and older children might enjoy holding a spray bottle filled with water that they can use during the car ride to keep cool. Older kids might like the spray bottles that have fans attached (make sure the child is old enough and trustworthy enough that they won't try to chew on the fan blades – even though they are soft, they could be a choking hazard).

Cooling towels and bandanas: A few products also exist for use in the car seat. Note that all of these products are for use **OVER** the car seat harness straps, never under the straps.

- Frogg Toggs Chilly Pad Super Cooling Towel
- Frogg Toggs Chilly Dana Cooling Bandana
- Ergodyne Chill-It's Cooling Towel
- Ergodyne Chill-It's Evaporative Bandana

{mospagebreak title=Cold Weather}

Cold Weather Tips

Keeping Baby Warm

Keeping the baby warm is very important. Unfortunately, products designed to keep the baby warm can also make your baby unsafe in the car. Even winter coats can be dangerous in the car! Here's why:

The Parachute Comparison

The whole idea of the car seat is to act as your child's parachute in a crash. 30mph feels the same to the body as if you jumped from a 3rd story window and landed on the pavement. You would be absolutely crazy to jump – but if you had to, you'd rather land with a parachute, since you would land as slowly and gently as possible. If your child's car seat is secured tightly to the vehicle, and the straps are snug to the child's body, the child will come to the slowest, gentlest stop possible in a crash. If, however, the car seat is loose to the vehicle and/or the straps are loose to the child's body, the child still needs to come to a stop – but it becomes a much more jolting stop, like landing on your feet, and that's what hurts and causes injuries.

If you were about to jump out of a plane, you wouldn't wear anything fluffy between your body and your parachute harness. If you did, you'd be afraid that the harness wouldn't hold you tight. The same thing goes for your child – you don't want to put anything bulky like coats, snowsuits, buntings, Bundle Mes, body supports, strap covers, etc between the back of the car seat and the harness straps, since any of these things will prevent the straps from being snug to the child's actual body.

Aftermarket Products

Many parents purchase sleeping bag type devices to keep their kids warm in the car seat. These products are **UNSAFE**, since they have a layer between the child and the car seat, a layer that will add too much slack into the harness straps and thus prevent the car seat from allowing the child to come to a gentle stop in a crash. Many of these devices also have a second problem--the strap slots on the product do not line up with the strap slots on the car seat. This causes the

car seat straps to fall off the child's shoulders, and could lead to the child coming out of the seat during a crash!

Even if the product says it was safety tested, it is still NOT SAFE. In order to sell a child safety seat in the US, the seat has to pass rigorous crash test standards to prove that it is safe. However, in order to sell a product for use with a child safety seat---but one that does not come with the seat---there are NO standards or crash tests required! Despite what such "aftermarket" products may claim, the child safety seat manufacturers feel that using such products may be unsafe and violates the warranty on the child safety seat. We have included a chart below with each car seat manufacturer's recommendation regarding these products.

Winter Coats

Have you ever struggled to just get the harness buckled when your child is wearing a coat? Do you notice the straps sliding off the child's shoulders when the child wears a coat? Do you notice that when you take the coats off the straps seem very, very loose? If this happens to you, TAKE OFF YOUR CHILD'S COAT before putting him in his car seat. Wearing a heavy coat prevents the car seat straps from tightening against the child's body. The straps may seem tight, but that's only because the child is wearing a bulky coat. The girls in this photo are UNSAFE from getting tight and buckling properly.

How can you tell if your child's coat is safe to use in the car seat?

Buckle your child into their car seat with their coat on & get the straps snug. Take the child out of the car seat, remove their coat, and rebuckle the child into the straps. Firmly pull upwards on the shoulder straps – you should notice no slack coming up, and only enough room for one finger to fit between the child's collar bone and the strap. If the straps are looser than this, then the coat is not safe for the car.

How do I keep my child warm if I can't put his coat on or use a sleeping bag in the car seat?

Newborns and Babies

Dress your baby in thin, tight layers. For example, put on a long sleeved onesie, footie pants, and a thin sweater. Put a hat on the baby's head. Put your baby in the car seat and strap her in properly, making sure you pull up on the shoulder straps to get all the slack out of the legs/stomach area, and then pulling tightly on the adjuster tail. The straps should be so tight that you can fit only one finger between the baby's body and the straps. Once your child is in the car seat, tuck blankets around her to keep her warm. Use as many blankets as you want, being sure to keep them away from her face. Or use a fleece cover designed specifically for the car seat--see our Car Seat Lady Approved product page for a list of covers that will keep the baby warm and toasty. As the car warms up, you can pull off blankets or unzip the fleece cover to prevent your baby from overheating.

Toddlers and Older Kids

Remember, kids get uncomfortable when dressed in bulky layers because they feel restricted and soon overheat when the car warms up. Dress your child in thin, tight layers under his coat, as if it was 50 degree weather outside. For example, under his coat, put your son in an undershirt, a long sleeve shirt and a sweater. Keep your child's coat on until you get to the car. At the car, take your child's coat off and quickly buckle him into his car seat. Make sure you pull up firmly on the shoulder straps to get all the slack out of the legs/stomach area and then pull firmly on the tail to tighten the straps. Have your child stick out his arms and put the coat on backwards. The best part about this is not only is he safer, but he also won't overheat as the car gets warmer--he can pull the coat off when he gets hot.

Here is what the car seat manufacturers have to say about coats and aftermarket products. These excerpts were taken directly from the child safety seat instruction manuals.

Baby Trend

"Do Not dress your child in bulky clothing or other garments that will hinder the harness from being snug around your baby and properly latched between your child's legs."

"Accessory products for use with the Safety Seat are acceptable for use provided that they do not interfere with the harness assembly, or the proper adjustment of the harness such that it remains tight on the child's shoulders at all times. Thick, soft, or other compressible material in excess of 1/4 inch thick should not be placed behind or under the child or between the child and harness straps. Examples of accessory products are head support pillows or rolled blankets to add additional head support."

Britax

"The use of non-Britax Child Safety, Inc. covers, inserts, toys, accessories, or tightening devices is not approved by Britax. Their use could cause this restraint to fail Federal Safety Standards or perform worse in a crash. Their use automatically voids the Britax warranty."

Chicco

"NEVER use clothing or blankets that interfere with fastening or tightening the harness. An unsecured child could be ejected in a sudden stop or crash! To keep child warm, place a blanket over child and restraint AFTER you have properly secured child in harness."

DO NOT use any accessories, pads or products supplied by other manufacturers with this Child Restraint. Items not tested with this restraint could injure your child."

Dorel

Maxi Cosi, Eddie Bauer

and Safety 1st

"Dorel Juvenile Group does not recommend the use of any child restraint accessories except those recommended by DJG."

Evenflo

"In cold weather, DO NOT dress the child in bulky clothing like snowsuits if the child is riding in a child restraint. Bulky coats/ snowsuits make it difficult to properly tighten the harness to the child, which may allow the child to be ejected from the restraint during a crash."

Graco

"DO NOT use accessories or parts other than those provided by Graco. Their use could alter the performance of the car seat."

Orbit

"Do not modify your Infant Car Seat or Base. Only use products and accessories approved by Orbit Baby to ensure the safety of your child. This limited warranty does not apply to: defects resulting from use with covers, inserts, accessories, tightening devices, or other components not supplied by or expressly approved in writing by Orbit Baby."

Peg Perego

"Use only approved parts. Use of unapproved parts can affect the safety of the car seat and cause serious

injuries in an accident."

Sunshine Kids

"Using any non-Sunshine Kids product with this restraint; or any product not specifically approved by Sunshine Kids for use with this restraint is not allowed. Use of such products voids manufacturer's warranty and may seriously impact the products ability to perform properly in an accident."

{mospagebreak title=Carsickness}

Motion Sickness

The Car Seat Ladies are very familiar with this nasty problem--Alisa still gets motion sick in cars! While no cure exists, it may help you to learn why motion sickness happens and what has worked for us and our clients.

What is Motion Sickness?

Motion sickness occurs when your brain senses motion while your eyes don't, or when your brain and eyes sense different types of motion. For example, a child who is unable to see out the window will sense motion in a car but won't be able to see any movement occurring--and may therefore feel sick. A child looking out the side window may also feel carsick, because the scenery out the side window appears to be flying by, at speeds much faster than the car itself is moving. This disconnect, between perceived speed and real speed, can cause the feeling of motion sickness.

Will turning my rear-facing child forward-facing help to prevent motion sickness?

No! Unfortunately kids who are prone to feel car sick are going to feel that way no matter what. A study of several hundred children in rear-facing and forward facing car seats found identical rates of "car sickness" – about 2%.

How can I prevent motion sickness?

While there is no cure, there are a few tricks to try before declaring defeat. Here's what's worked for us and for our clients.

Installation help for preventing carsickness

Because one of the major causes is a disconnect between real and perceived motion, help your child's senses align. Many kids and adults with motion sickness find relief when they look out the front or rear windows and see traffic and scenery moving at the same speed as their bodies. Their brains sense movement at 30mph, and their eyes verify that they are moving at that speed. Looking out the side window, where scenery flies by and appears to be moving much faster, should be avoided.

- For rear-facing kids: Use a car seat that allows your child to sit up high and see out the rear window. Remove the rear seat head restraint (for the seat the child occupies) if possible to give the child an unimpeded view. Make the car seat as upright as possible (still following the manufacturer's instructions of course). Talk about what you see out the rear window to encourage your child to look out.

- For forward-facing kids: Install the child's car seat in the middle of the back seat. The child will be able to see out the front window more easily. Talk about what you see out the front window to encourage your child to look out.

- For all kids: Use a car seat with a deep seat back and big side impact protection, like the Britax Boulevard or the Recaro Proride. A child who is properly strapped into these seats will not be able to lean over far enough to see out the side windows and will therefore be less likely to feel sick.

Lifestyle help for preventing carsickness

Does your child vomit on some ride but not others? Changing your routine before a big car trip may help to ease symptoms.

- Avoid feeding your child for an hour before your car trip
- Avoid dairy before the trip.
- Travel at night or at naptime when your child will be tired and more likely to sleep
- Don't allow older kids to read in the car.