Washington's Child Restraint Law

- Vehicle occupants of any age must be restrained properly. The driver is responsible for properly securing all passengers under age 16.

- Children under age 13 must ride in the back seat, whenever practical to do so.

- Children under age 8 or 4'9” tall must ride in an appropriate child restraint system (i.e. car seat or booster seat). Child restraint systems must be used according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

- When your child reaches age 8 or 4'9” tall – use the “Seat Belt Readiness Test” below to determine if they are ready to move to an adult seat belt.

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<th>CHILD’S AGE</th>
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| INFANT (0-12 months) | • Infants must ride in a rear-facing car seat.  
• Infant seats are convenient for newborns and young babies – most have a base that installs in the vehicle, while the seat can be snapped in and out and used as an infant carrier.  
• Convertible seats are larger and remain installed in the vehicle. Most have higher weight and height limits than infant seats. Always install it in the rear-facing position for infants. | • 5-point harness with up front harness adjuster  
• Low harness slots (for newborns)  
• Multiple harness slots / crotch buckle positions (to adjust as baby grows) |
| TODDLER (1-2 years) | • Children under age 2 are safest in a rear-facing car seat – choose a convertible seat with high rear-facing limits (30-35 lbs).  
• When your child reaches the rear-facing limits of their convertible seat – the next step is a forward-facing car seat.  
• A child should NOT ride forward-facing before reaching age 1 and 20 pounds. | • 5-point harness  
• High rear-facing weight limit  
• Easy-to-use features – try installing seat and adjusting harness before you buy |
| PRESCHOOLER (3-5 years) | • Children are safest in a 5-point harness.  
• If your child outgrows their car seat before age 4 / 40 pounds – consider moving to a seat whose harness system will accommodate their size.  
• The next step is a booster seat – always used with both a lap and shoulder seat belt. | • 5-point harness  
• High forward-facing weight/height limit  
• High harness slots (for taller kids) |
| SCHOOL-AGE (6+ years) | • Your school-ager needs to use a child restraint system (car seat or booster) until the adult lap/shoulder belt can fit properly.  
• When your child reaches age 8 or 4’9” tall – use this “Seat Belt Readiness Test” to determine if they are ready to ride in an adult seat belt:  
  ✓ Can your child sit comfortably against the vehicle’s seat back?  
  ✓ Can your child’s knees bend at the edge of the seat?  
  ✓ Does the lap belt fit low across the upper thighs?  
  ✓ Does the shoulder belt fit across the center of the shoulder and chest?  
  ✓ Can your child stay seated comfortably in this position for the entire ride! **If the answer is “no” to any of these questions, your child should remain in a booster seat.**  
• Make sure your child always wears their seat belt correctly, and rides in the back seat until age 13. | • High-back boosters provide whiplash protection  
• Open shoulder belt guides for better fit  
• Wide / deep base for larger children  
• Kid-friendly designs (cool fabrics, cup holders, etc.) |

Questions about car seats, booster seats, or Washington’s child restraint law?  
Contact the Safety Restraint Coalition 1-800-BUCK-L-UP or www.800BUCKLUP.org

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