

The main purpose of any child car seat is to reduce the risk of Injury or death in the event of an accident.

From the 18th September 2006, legislation says you **must** use the correct car restraint for your child. Children between the ages of 3 and 12 years, up to a height of 135 cms (4ft 5") must use the appropriate child restraint when travelling in any car, van or goods vehicle. That will mean using either a booster seat or a booster cushion, whichever is appropriate to the weight of the child. Adult seatbelts may be used if the child is either 12 years old, or 135 cms (4ft 5"), whichever they reach first. This law affects many people who transport children by car, either as parents taking their own children to school, or staff or friends carrying other people's children in their own vehicle. There are very few exceptions.

Before you buy

- Look for seats carrying label with an "E" mark.
- Look for the right type of restraint for your child's size and weight.

Make sure the restraint fits your car. Insist on trying the seat or carrier in your car before you buy as not all restraints fit all cars. Most reputable dealers will allow you to do this.

Never buy a second-hand seat unless you know its history and have the instructions so that you can fit and use it correctly. Never buy or use a seat that you suspect has been involved in an accident - it is worthless.

When fitting a car seat make sure that:

- You read the instructions carefully
 - When using a child restraint in the front passenger seat, make sure the seat is pushed back as far as possible;
 - The in-built harness is adjusted correctly - the shoulder straps must be tight enough for only two fingers to be inserted under them;
- The seatbelt routing is correct.

What sort of mistakes do parents make when fitting seats?

- Seats are loose in the car
- Forward facing seats used the wrong way round
- Body harness loose and twisted
- Wrong seat for the size and weight of the child
- Seat not suitable for the model of the car

WARNING

"You must not place rearward facing baby seat on a passenger seat protected by a frontal airbag. All children using child restraints should avoid being in passenger seats with frontal airbags, unless you can immobilise them with certainty".

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue offer a free service of checking Child Seats - this can be arranged by calling your local Community Fire Safety Officer on Gloucester (01452) 753333.

