

Car seats, boosters and seat belts

A lot of confusion surrounds the issue of child car seats and this section will address this problem. The need for them, however, is clear:

- In 2010, 14 children aged 0-11 were killed and 206 seriously injured in cars.

So, what does the law say?

- By law, you must wear a seat belt in cars and goods vehicles where one is fitted. There are very few exceptions to this. The driver can be fined if a child under 14 years does not wear a seat belt or child restraint as required. Anyone 14 and over not wearing a seat belt, is responsible for themselves.
- Children under 12 and also under 135cm tall must use the appropriate child restraint for their weight (not age) when travelling in the front or back seat of any car, van or goods vehicle. There are very few exceptions (see <http://www.direct.gov.uk/think/> . Look for Road safety: hot topics). 'Child restraint' means any of baby seat, child seat, booster seat or booster cushion.
- A child can use an adult belt when they reach 135cm or their 12th birthday, whichever comes first.
- In buses and coaches with seat belts fitted, passengers aged 14 years and above must use them.

The law for **cars, vans and other goods vehicles** is summarised in this table.

Person	Front seat	Back seat	Who is responsible
Driver	Seat belt must be worn if fitted		Driver
Child up to three years of age	Correct child restraint must be used	The correct child restraint must be used. If one is not available in a licensed taxi/private hire vehicle, the child may travel unrestrained.	Driver
Child from third birthday up to 135cms in height (approx 4'5") or 12th birthday, whichever is reached first	Correct child restraint must be used	Where seat belts are fitted, the correct child restraint must be used. The child must use an adult belt in the back seat if the correct child restraint is not available either: - In a licensed taxi or private hire vehicle. - For a short distance in an unexpected necessity. - If two occupied child restraints prevent fitting of a third. A child three years and over may travel unrestrained in the back seat of a vehicle if seat belts are not fitted in the rear.	Driver
Child 12 or 13, or over 135cms (approx 4' 5") in height	Seat belt must be used if fitted	Seat belt must be used if fitted	Driver
Passengers aged 14 years and over	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Passenger

Why are child restraints important?

Even in a minor crash, an unrestrained child would be thrown about inside the vehicle, injuring themselves and others. They could be thrown from the car through one of the windows. To find out what type of child restraint your child needs visit www.childcarseats.org.uk

Helping your child stay safe

- Make sure that your child has the right type of child seat or booster
- Make sure that the seat or booster fits your car
- Make sure it is properly fitted in your car every trip
- Check that your child's booster seat raises him/her into the correct position so that the belt fits well
- Show your child the above chart and talk about it
- Make sure that your child knows that it is against the law for them not use a child restraint if they are under 12 years old and also under 135cm tall
- Make the child seat/booster theirs – take your child with you when you buy it. The fit for the child and in the car are the first priorities, but then you can get them to choose the colour or pattern they like best, so that they feel it's theirs.