

child

# TRANSPORTATION SAFETY TIPS

USING HARNESS STRAPS SAFETY SEAT RECALLS

SAFETY SEAT CHECKUP

WHERE YOUR CHILD SHOULD RIDE

PROTECTING BABY IN THE CAR



TODDLER SAFETY SEATS



# Child Transportation Safety Tips

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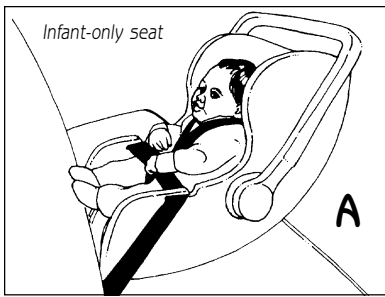
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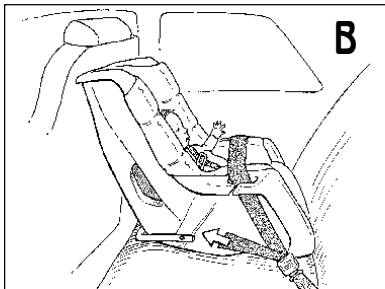
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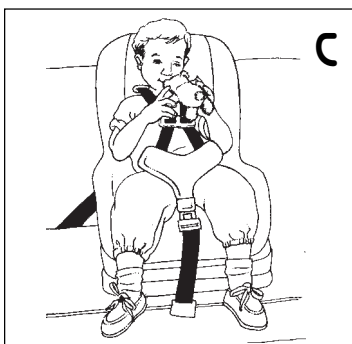
creating safer streets and play places for children



Infants under 1 year and less than 20 lbs. face rear only.



Infants less than 1 year, over 20 lbs. ride in a seat approved for heavier infants rear facing.

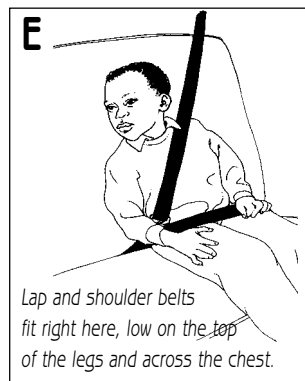


Child over age 1 and at least 20 lbs faces the front.



Belt-positioning booster is used with both lap and shoulder belts.

Auto booster seats are for children who have outgrown safety seats, at about 40 pounds.



Lap and shoulder belts fit right here, low on the top of the legs and across the chest.

# Tip #1 quick safety seat checkup

## Does your child ride in the back seat?

- The back seat is generally the safest place in a crash.
- If your vehicle has a passenger air bag, it is essential for children 12 and under to ride in back.

## Does your child ride facing the right way?

- Infants should ride in rear facing restraints, preferably in the back seat, until about age 1 and at least 20-22 lbs (A). Infants who weigh 20 lbs. before 1 year of age should ride in a restraint approved for higher rear facing weights (B). Always read your child restraint owner manual for instructions on properly using the restraint.
- Children over age one and at least 20 pounds may ride facing forward (C).

## Does the safety belt hold the seat tightly in place?

- Put the belt through the right slot. If your safety seat can be used facing either way, use the correct belt slots for each direction.
- The safety belt must stay tight when securing the safety seat. Check the vehicle owner's manual for tips on using the safety belts.

## Is the harness buckled snugly around your child?

- Keep the straps over your child's shoulder. The harness should be adjusted so you can slip only one finger underneath the straps at your child's chest. Place the chest clip at armpit level.

## Does your child over 40 pounds have the best protection possible?

- Keep your child in a safety seat with a full harness as long as possible, at least until 40 pounds (C). Then use a belt-positioning booster seat which helps the adult lap and shoulder belt fit better.
- A belt-positioning booster seat is preferred for children between 40-80 pounds (D). It is used with the adult lap and shoulder belt. Check on special products for heavy children too active to sit still in a booster.

## How should a safety belt fit an older child?

- The child must be tall enough to sit without slouching, with knees bent at the edge of the seat, with feet on the floor. The lap belt must fit low and tight across the upper thighs. The shoulder belt should rest over the shoulder and across the chest (E). Never put the shoulder belt under the arm or behind the child's back. The adult lap and shoulder belt system alone will not fit most children until they are at least 4'9" tall and weigh about 80 pounds.

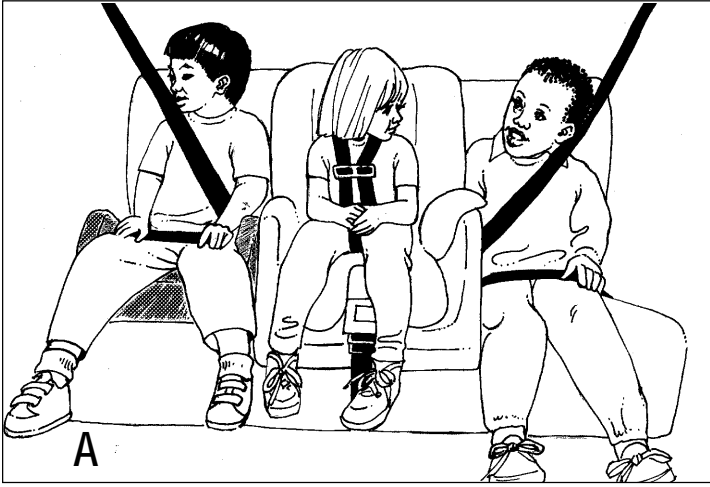
For more information, read **Child Auto Safety Tips #2 to #9** and call your local safety group or the DOT Auto Safety Hotline: 1-888-DASH-2-DOT.

Even the "safest" seat may not protect your child if it isn't used correctly.



# Tip #2

## where should your child ride?



The back seat is safer than the front. The center belt often works best for a safety seat. Older children should use booster seats with lap/shoulder belts for best protection until about age 7-8. Some booster seats go to 100 lbs.



Always read the car owner's guide for advice on installing safety seats.

**Everybody needs a safety belt or safety seat!**

### Basic Safety Facts to Remember:

- Everybody needs a safety belt or safety seat!
- Anyone who rides loose can hurt those who are buckled up by being thrown against them. People riding without belts or safety seats can be hurled out of the car and seriously hurt.
- The back seat usually is safer than the front, because head-on crashes are the most common kind (A).
- There must be one belt for each person. Buckling two people, even children, into one belt could injure both. Each child safety seat needs a safety belt to hold it in place.
- If no shoulder belt is available, it's much safer for anyone (except small babies who can't sit up) to use just a lap belt than to ride loose. Keep the lap belt low and snug across the thighs. Other options should be pursued, i.e., having shoulder belts installed or using harness/vest devices for children.
- Children who have outgrown safety seats are better protected by lap/shoulder belts than by lap belts alone. So if several children are riding in back, and there are shoulder belts there, let the older ones use the shoulder belts. Put the child riding in the car seat in the middle where there is only a lap belt (A).
- Infants must ride facing the rear of the car. In this position, the safety seat cushions the head and back.
- Infants must ride facing the rear of the car, even if they are out of the driver's view in the back seat. Parents should feel just as comfortable in this situation as they do when they put their babies down for a nap and leave the room. If a baby has special health needs that require full-time monitoring, ask another adult to ride with the baby in the back seat and travel alone as little as possible.
- Always read the instructions that come with the safety seat. Also read the section on safety belts and child seat installation in your vehicle owners manual (B).

### Does your car have an air bag for the front passenger seat?

An infant or child could be seriously injured or killed by an inflating air bag. See the other side for details.

## A passenger air bag can seriously harm a child riding in the front seat of the car.

Many new cars have air bags for the right front seat. Air bags work with lap/shoulder belts to protect teens and adults. To check if your vehicle has air bags, look for a warning label on the sun visor or the letters "SRS" or "SIR" embossed on the dashboard. The owner's manual will also tell you.



Everyone in this family buckles up. Mother sits in back beside her baby to watch and play with him. This car has a passenger air bag, so the baby ALWAYS rides in back.

An inflating passenger air bag can kill a baby in a rear-facing safety seat. An air bag also can be hazardous for children age 12 and under who ride facing forward. This is especially true if they are not properly buckled up in a safety seat, booster seat, or lap and shoulder belt.

In a crash, the air bag inflates very quickly. It would hit a rear-facing safety seat hard enough to kill the baby. **Infants must ride in the back seat, facing the rear (C).** Even in the back seat, do not turn your baby to face forward until he or she is about one year of age and weighs at least 20 pounds. Look for a seat that meets the higher rear-facing weight limit for heavier babies not yet one year of age.

If there is no room in back and you have no alternative, a child over age one who is forward facing may have to ride in front. Make sure the child is correctly buckled up for his or her age and size and that the vehicle seat is moved as far back as possible. Fasten the harness snugly, and make sure a child using a lap and shoulder belt does not lean toward the dashboard. Read your vehicle owner's guide about the air bags in your car.

*Parents who buckle up show their children that it is important to ride safely.*

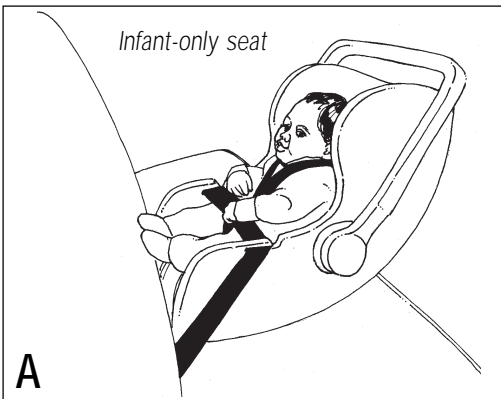
**WARNING:** If the front right seat has an air bag, a baby in a rear-facing safety seat must ride in the back seat. All children age 12 and under should ride in back.

### Remember: One Person - One Belt

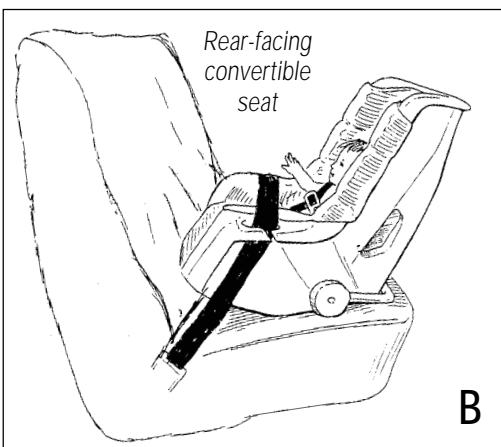
- Never hold a child on your lap because you could crush him in a collision. Even if you are using a safety belt, the child would be torn from your arms in a crash.
- Never put a belt around yourself and a child on your lap.
- Two people with one belt around them could injure each other.
- The cargo area of a station wagon, van, or pickup is a very dangerous place for anyone to ride. Anyone riding in the bed of a pickup truck, even under a canopy, could be thrown out!

# Tip #3

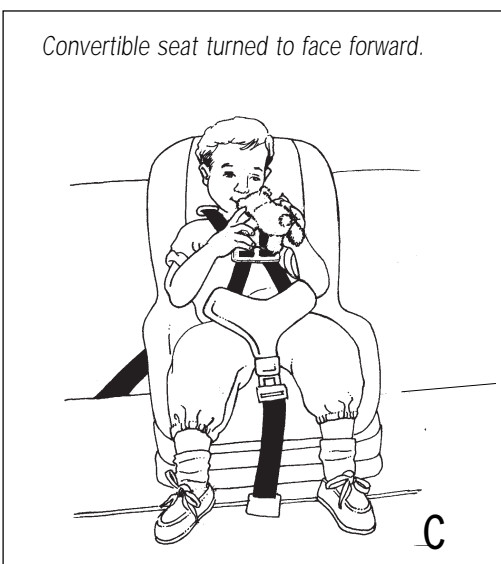
## how to protect your new baby in the car



*This kind of seat fits babies under 20 pounds and always faces the rear.*



*Infants less than 1 year, over 20 lbs. ride in a seat approved for heavier infants rear facing.*



*After 1 year and at least 20 lbs.*

Everybody would be safest facing backward while riding in a car. Babies are lucky to have seats that work this way. Infants are safest when riding facing the rear, because the back of the safety seat supports the child's back, neck, and head in a crash. So, whichever seat you choose, your baby should ride rear-facing until about one year of age and at least 20 pounds.

### Two kinds of safety seats are made for babies:

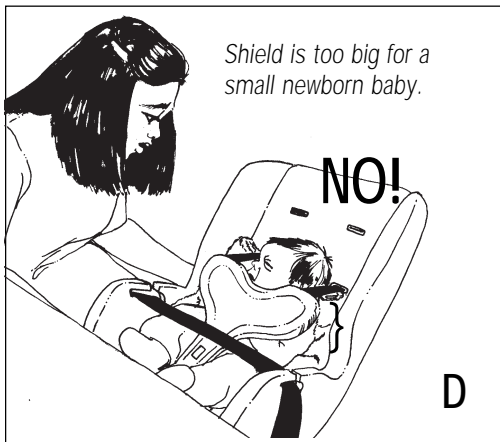
1. Small, lightweight "infant-only" safety seats are designed for use rear-facing only. This kind can be used only as long as the baby's head is enclosed by the top rim of the seat (A). The label on the seat gives the upper weight limit (17 to 22 pounds). One seat can be converted into a car bed for babies who must lie flat.
2. Larger "convertible" seats usually fit children from birth to about 40 pounds. Some new models have weight limits as high as 30 to 32 pounds for rear-facing use. These products are especially good for babies under age one who are growing more rapidly than average (B). It may be turned around to face the front when the baby is about one year old and at least 20 pounds (C).

### How to choose the best seat for your baby:

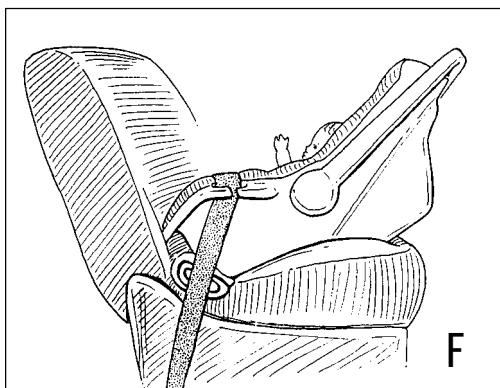
The simplest and least expensive model usually will work as well as one with fancy features. Choose a seat that you find easy to use and that fits in your vehicle.

- Before you buy a seat, try it in your car to make sure it fits and can be buckled in tightly. If you choose a convertible seat, try it facing both rearward and forward.
- Look for the seat you can use facing the rear as long as possible. Read the labels to check weight limits. If you buy an infant-only seat, you will need a convertible seat later. Most babies need to use rear-facing convertible seats as they get larger, because they outgrow their infant-only seats before age one. Some products are made to carry a baby over 20 pounds facing the rear. Look for a seat with a higher weight limit when you shop.

**Practice buckling the seat into your car before your baby's first ride.**



In this car bed a newborn baby can ride lying flat. This product converts to a rear-facing seat.



The rolled towel under the safety seat makes it tip back just far enough so the baby's head lies back comfortably. A baby should recline half way back.



A new baby needs support. Put rolled up towels or diapers on each side, not under the infant.

## More tips on choosing a seat:

- You'll save a little money if you buy one convertible seat to do the job from birth to 40 pounds, but an infant-only seat may be easier for you to use and may fit your newborn baby better.
- An infant-only seat can be carried with you wherever you go. It can be used at home also.
- Some infant-only seats come in two parts. The base stays buckled in the vehicle, and the seat snaps in and out. You may find these convenient.
- If you want to use a convertible seat for a newborn baby, choose one without a padded shield in front of the baby. Shields do not fit small newborn babies properly. The shield comes up too high and may make proper adjustment of the harness difficult (D).

## What about seats for preemies?

- A baby born earlier than 37 weeks may need to use a car bed if he or she has any possibility of breathing problems when sitting semi-reclined. Ask your baby's doctor if your baby needs to be tested before discharge for breathing problems (E).
- Use a seat with the shortest distances from seat to harness strap slots, and from back to crotch strap. Use rolled blankets to keep the baby's head from slumping (G, see below). Never place any extra cushioning under or behind the baby.

## What to do if your baby's head flops forward?

- It's important for an infant to ride sitting semi-reclined (halfway back or 45 degrees from horizontal). In the car, you may find that the safety seat is too upright for a new baby who can't hold up his or her head. You can put a tightly rolled bath towel under the front edge of the safety seat to tilt it back a little so your baby's head lies back comfortably (F). Do not recline it too far.

## Harness straps must fit snugly on the body.

- Use lowest harness slots for a newborn infant. Keep the straps in the slots at or below your baby's shoulders for the rear-facing position.
- It is very important for harness straps to fit properly over the shoulders and between the legs. Dress your baby in clothes that keep legs free. If you want to cover your baby, buckle the harness around him first, then put a blanket over him. A bulky snowsuit or bunting can make the harness too loose.
- To fill empty spaces and give support, roll up a couple of small blankets and tuck them in on each side of your baby's shoulders and head (G). If he still slumps down, put a rolled diaper between his legs behind the crotch strap. Thick padding should not be put underneath or behind the baby.

# Tip #4

## what safety seat to use

### for a big baby or toddler?

When your baby grows too tall or too heavy for an infant-only seat, you'll need a larger seat.

#### Big Baby:

Convertible seats fit infants rear facing up to about 20 lbs. Some convertible seats are rated for heavier rear facing weights and should be used for infants less than 1 year who weigh over 20 lbs (A).

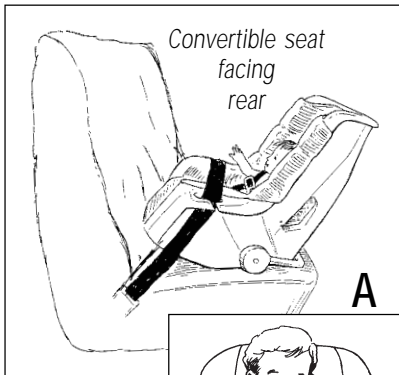
#### Toddler:

Children over age 1, who weigh at least 20 lbs. face forward in a convertible seat (B). Forward-facing child vest (C) or seat (D) are for children over age one and at least 20 pounds. These products hold children of varying sizes. Be sure to read the label and instructions. Some convert from a toddler type seat with a harness to a belt-positioning booster (D). Some are built into the vehicle seat. A full harness should be used to about 40 lbs.

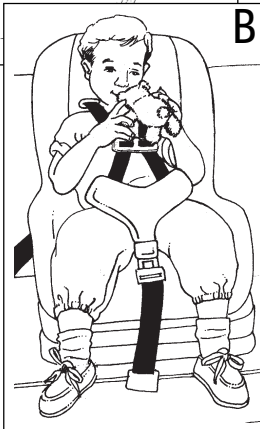
**Warning:** Most toddlers are not big enough or old enough for a booster seat. They need a full harness to give protection for the upper body and to hold them in their seats. A full harness should be used to about 40 lbs.

#### When choosing a safety seat, remember:

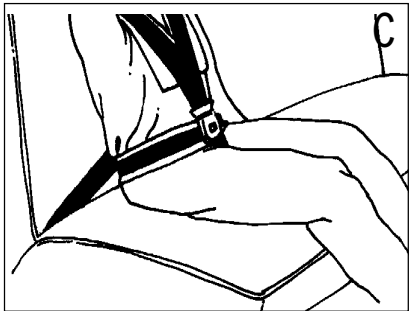
- A seat that is easy to install and use will be the best for you and your child. Find and read the instruction booklet.
- Look for a convertible seat that has a higher weight limit in the rear-facing position if your baby is less than 1 year and over 20 lbs.
- Try locking and releasing the buckle in the store. Try changing the length of the straps. Some harnesses adjust automatically to fit the child. Many can be adjusted easily from the front or the side. Others have a metal adjustment slide through which you must pull the straps.
- If the seat has a metal slide adjustor, you must thread the strap up and down through the openings, then back through the first slot (E) to "lock" it every time you adjust the harness. This keeps the strap from pulling through the slide in a crash, which would allow the child to be thrown out.
- Try the seat in your vehicle. Most safety seats fit better into some vehicles than others. Cars with bucket seats or small rear seats may present problems.



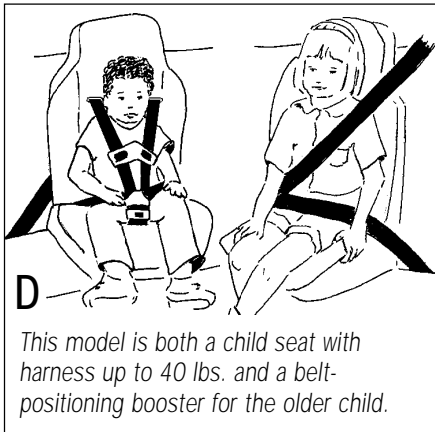
Convertible safety seats can be used for big babies and toddlers.



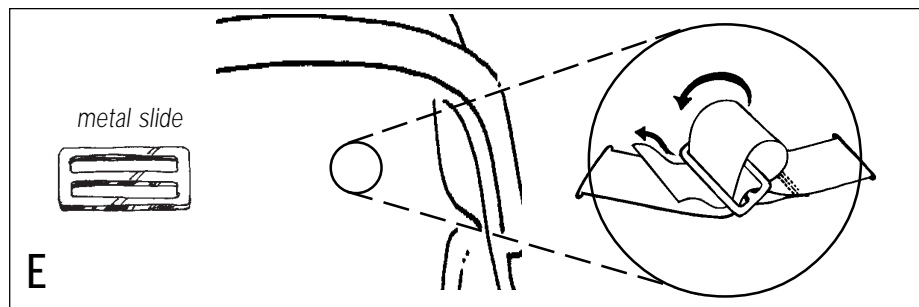
Same convertible seat facing forward for child over 1 year and over 20 lbs.



Vest has shoulder, hip, and crotch straps. Vehicle belt goes through the back of the vest. Some require a top tether.

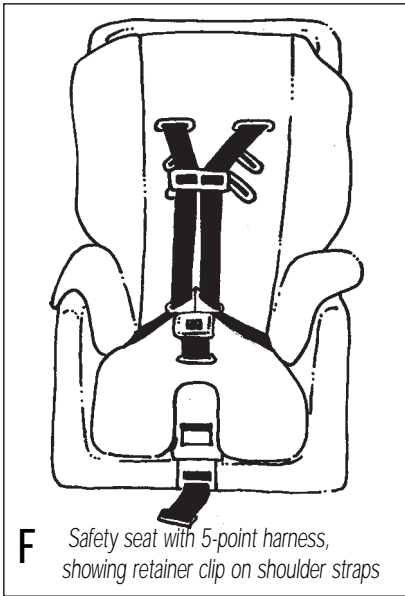


This model is both a child seat with harness up to 40 lbs. and a belt-positioning booster for the older child.

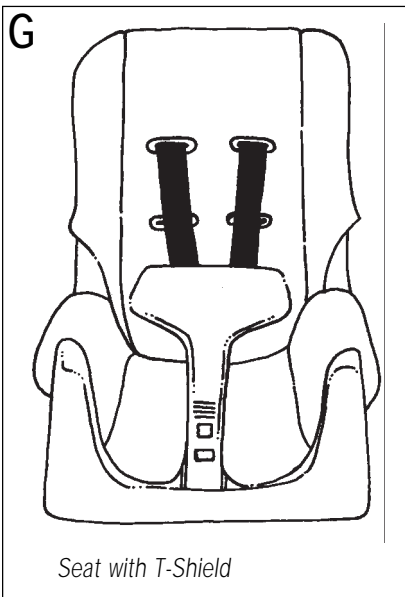


Strap on metal slide adjustor must be threaded back through the slide to hold tight.

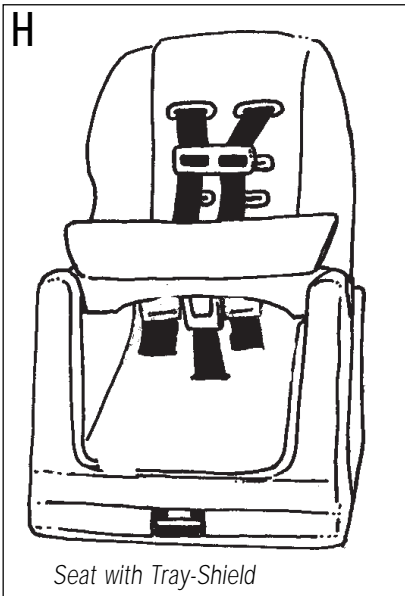




**F** Safety seat with 5-point harness, showing retainer clip on shoulder straps



Seat with T-Shield



Seat with Tray-Shield

## Which kind of harness is best?

There are three kinds. The basic 5-point harness has shoulder, hip, and crotch straps. The T-shield or tray-shield takes the place of hip straps to hold the lower body in the seat. Most seats come with a plastic **harness retainer clip** that holds the two shoulder straps together. Keep it at armpit level on your child to hold the harness straps on the shoulders. Special features of harnesses follow:

### 5-Point Harness

A 5-point harness (F) is preferred by many safety experts because the lap part of the harness fits over the child's strong hip bones. This kind of harness can be adjusted to fit snugly on both very small infants and larger children. However, the straps may twist and tangle. Keep the straps flat for maximum protection.

### T-Shield

Shoulder straps are attached to a flat pad (G). The shield reduces twisting of shoulder straps. It can be buckled quickly with one hand. Some have straps that adjust automatically to fit properly.

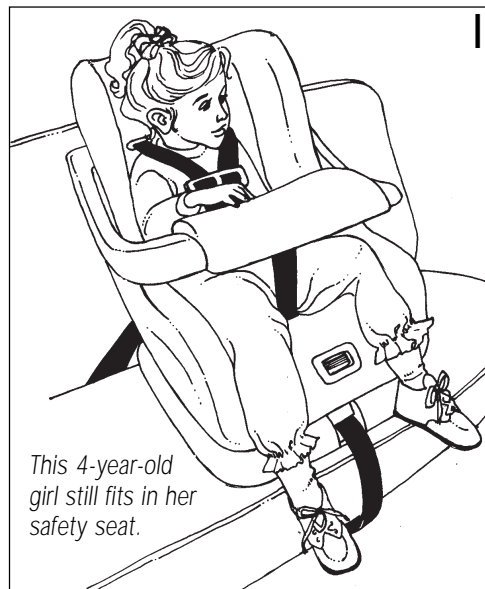
### Tray-Shield

Shoulder straps are attached to a wide, padded shield (H) that swings up. Some shields may not fit over the child's head unless the straps are adjusted each time. This may give you the mistaken idea that your child has outgrown the seat. In some cars, the roof may be too low to allow you to raise the shield completely.

## When you use a convertible seat, remember:

Keep it facing the rear as long as possible, until your baby is about one year old and weighs at least 20 pounds. Some convertible seats have rear facing weight limits to 30 lbs.

- Use the upright position when it is facing forward for children over 1 year and at least 20 lbs.
- Move up the harness straps. They must be at or above your child's shoulders. Most seats require use of the top-most slots for the forward-facing position. The top slots are reinforced to prevent the harness from failing in a crash. A few



This 4-year-old girl still fits in her safety seat.

allow use of the center slots; check weight limits in the instructions.

- Use the correct belt path for forward-facing installation.
- **Keep your child up to 40 pounds in a safety seat with a harness (I).** When the child's shoulders are above the top harness slots, move her to an auto booster seat that helps safety belts fit properly (Tip 5).
- Always follow the instructions that came with your child's seat.

# Tip #5

## how should preschool and school children ride safely?

Your child should stay in a car safety seat with a full harness until the seat is outgrown, usually at about 40 pounds. When a child's shoulders are above the top set of strap slots, it is time for a booster seat.

Booster seats protect the child's upper body with either the shoulder belt or with a shield. The booster also raises the child so the vehicle lap/shoulder belt fits well.

### Why use a booster seat instead of a safety belt?

- Most 40-pound children are not big enough to fit lap and shoulder belts properly.
- A belt that rides up on the tummy could cause serious injury.
- The adult lap and shoulder belt normally does not fit a child until they are about 4'9" tall and weigh approx. 80 lbs.
- Many young children do not sit still enough or straight enough to keep lap belts low across their thighs.

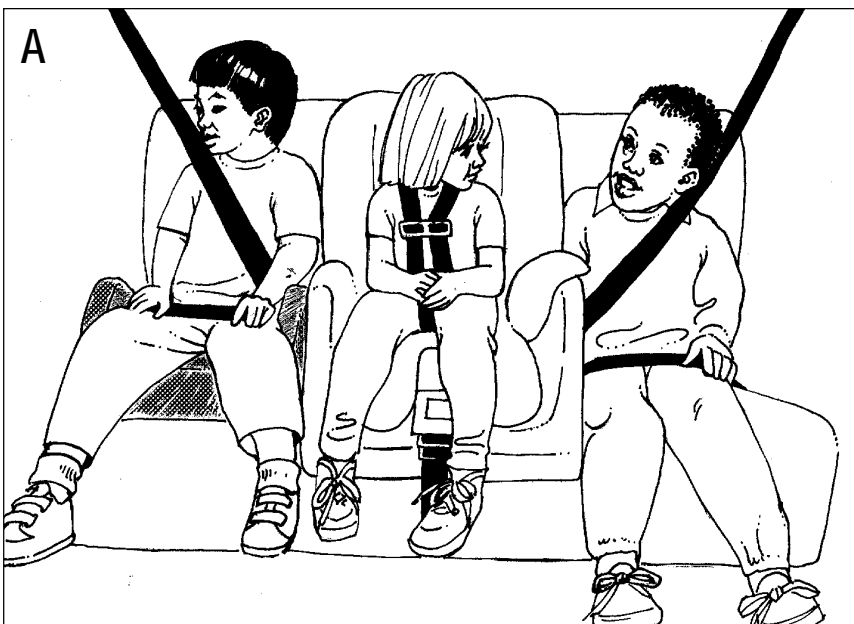
- Boosters are comfortable for children because they allow their legs to bend normally. This also reduces slouching, one cause of poor lap belt fit.

### Three kinds of booster seats (A):

1. Boosters without shields, for use only with the vehicle lap/shoulder belt. (left, right) Because raising the child improves belt fit, these are called "belt-positioning boosters." Some have a high back that gives head support for taller children. (right) Some boosters of this type are built into vehicle seats.
2. Boosters with removable shields. Use without the shield to make lap and shoulder belts fit right. Shield boosters are not currently approved for children weighing over 40 pounds. A child who has outgrown their convertible seat, yet weighs less than 40 pounds can be moved into a high-back booster with a harness. Once the child reaches 40 pounds, the harness is removed and the seat is used with the adult lap and shoulder belt as a belt-positioning booster.
3. High-backed boosters, used as belt-positioning boosters (right). Most have a clip or strap to hold the shoulder belt in place.

Some high-backed boosters have removable harnesses (B, on back). This type can be used with the harness for a child under 40 lbs.

Children who reach 40 pounds before age 3 may not be mature enough to stay seated properly in a belt-positioning booster. A vest that uses the belt system and a tether strap would be an option in this situation.





**B** Child Seat/Booster: This seat (left) has a 5-point harness. If you remove the harness it becomes a belt-positioning booster (right) to use with a lap/shoulder belt for a larger child.

### Which booster is best?

- The belt-positioning booster (B) and (C) is the best choice if your car has combination lap/shoulder belts in the rear seat.
- Use a booster with a high back if there is no head restraint for the child.
- The booster with a high back and a removable harness (B) provides the most options in many vehicles. Check the label for the weight limit on the harness.

### How long should the booster be used?

- Try the vehicle belts on your child as he or she grows taller. When the child sits comfortably without slouching, with the lap belt low on the hips and the shoulder belt across the shoulder, use the belts without the booster. Lap belt fit is most important. A child is usually ready for the adult lap and shoulder belt when the child can sit with their back against the vehicle seat back cushion with knees bent over the vehicle seat edge with feet on the floor.

- Do your child's ears come above the top of the vehicle seat back? If so, a high-back booster will improve neck protection (B).
- Always follow manufacturer instructions.

### How should a lap belt fit?

The lap belt should fit low over a child's upper thighs (D). Make sure the child sits straight against the seat back. Keep the belt snug. If the lap belt rides up onto the tummy, it could cause serious injuries in a crash.

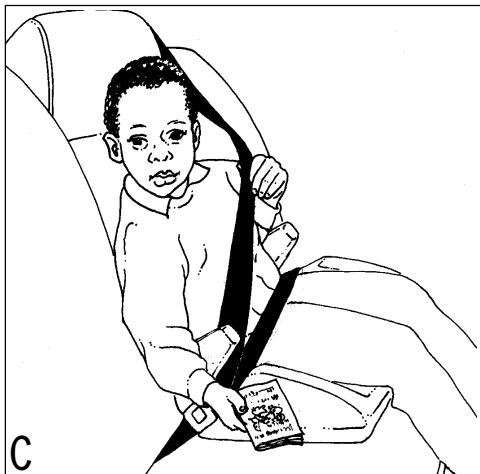
### How can you make a shoulder belt fit better?

The shoulder belt should stay on the shoulder and be close to the child's chest.

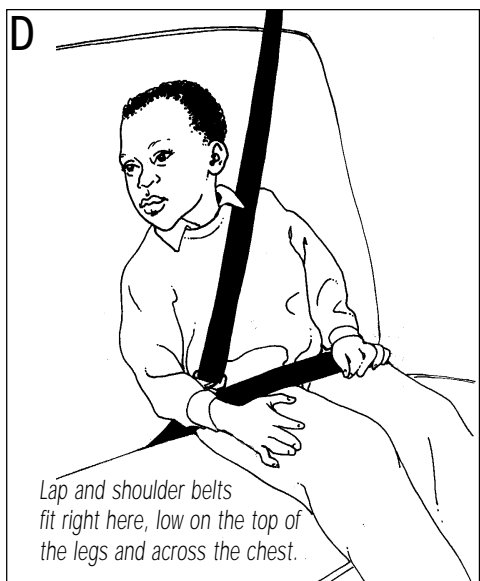
- If you have the kind of shoulder belt that stays loose when it is pulled out, make sure there is no more than one inch of slack. Too much slack will prevent the belt from working well. Teach your child to tug at the shoulder belt to take up excess slack.
- If the shoulder belt fits so poorly that it goes across the neck or face, raise the child with a belt-positioning booster.

NEVER put a shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind the back. Either of these kinds of misuse could cause serious injury in a crash.

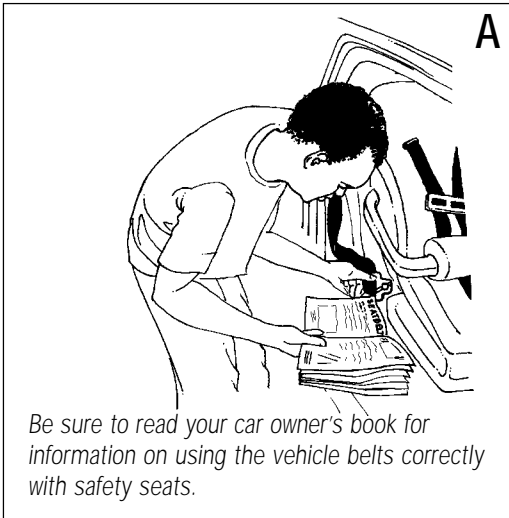
- **Warning:** Some devices advertised to improve belt fit for older children and adults are not covered by government standards. They may help with shoulder belt comfort but may put too much slack in the shoulder belt or cause the lap belt to ride up. **Boosters are a better solution for children who fit in them.**



**C** If the shoulder belt gets loose, give it a strong tug to make it snug again.



**D** Lap and shoulder belts fit right here, low on the top of the legs and across the chest.



# Tip #6 is your safety seat secure in the car?

To do its job, a child safety seat must be held securely against the vehicle seat back. If the lap part of the safety belt is not tight or the safety seat slides around on the vehicle seat, your child may not be protected.

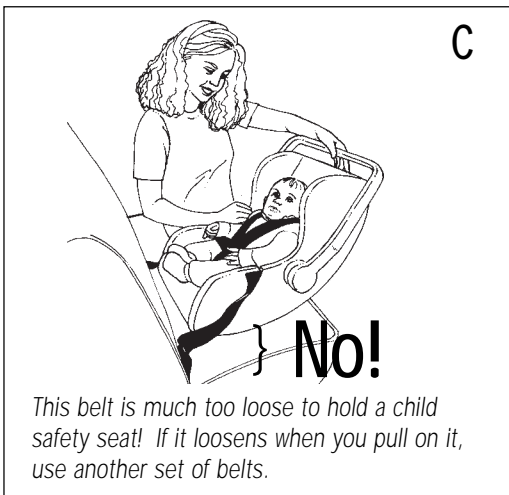
Always read the instructions that come with the safety seat. Also read the section on safety belts and child safety seats (child restraints) in your vehicle owner's book (A). If you cannot attach your seat tightly, call your vehicle customer service number for help or the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.



WARNING: Children age 12 and under should ride in the back seat. **Never** put an infant (less than one year old) rear facing in the front of a car with a passenger air bag. **Infants** must always ride in the back seat facing the **rear** of the car.

## How Tightly Should a Safety Seat Be Attached?

The lap part of the belt must hold the safety seat firmly in place. To make it tight, push the safety seat down into the seat cushion while you tighten the belt around it. Push down on it with your full weight to get the belt really tight (B) (D).



To check for a tight fit, pull the safety seat forward and push it from side to side. If the belt loosens (C) or the base of the safety seat slides forward or sideward more than an inch, your child may not be well protected.

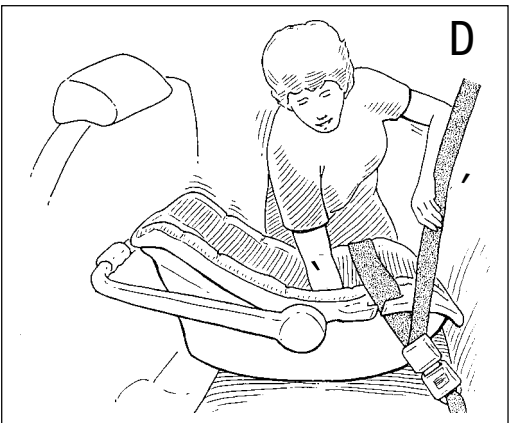
If the safety seat moves, first try another seat location in your vehicle with a different kind of belt. The lap belt in the middle of the back seat may work best to keep your safety seat in place.

## Which Kinds of Belts Are in Your Vehicle?

There are **lap belts** that hold the hips and **lap/shoulder belts** that hold the hips and one shoulder. There are several kinds of **retractors** to take up slack and **latchplates** that fit in the buckle. Read the following pages for the ways the belts, retractors, and latchplates in vehicles work.

Many vehicles have belts that stay loose while you drive and lock up in a crash. This sheet will tell you how to make this kind of belt stay tight.

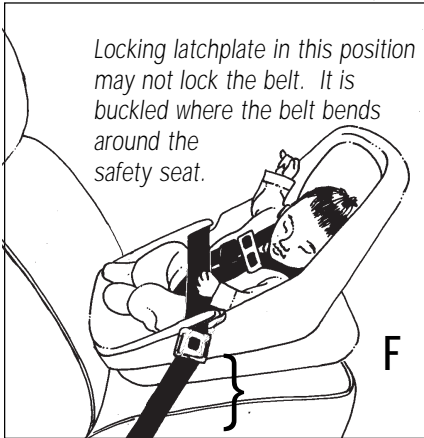
The owner's manual for recent vehicles tells you about using belts for child safety seats. Starting with the 1996 model year, vehicles **MUST** have safety belts designed to stay tight around safety seats.



Bar in locking latchplate holds the lap belt tight once it is buckled.

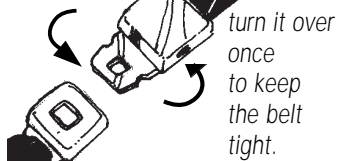


Locking latchplate in this position may not lock the belt. It is buckled where the belt bends around the safety seat.



G

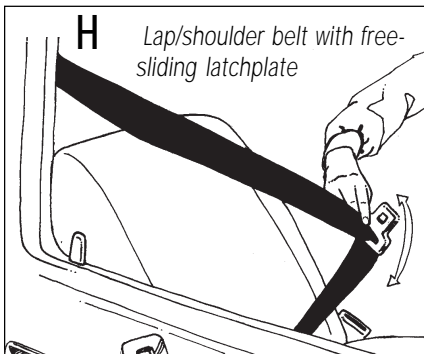
If locking latchplate loosens,



turn it over once to keep the belt tight.

H

Lap/shoulder belt with free-sliding latchplate



Look for a label on the belt telling how to keep it tight.

“

## How to Check If A Belt Retractor Locks

There are two kinds of retractors that take up slack in the belt:

1. An “emergency locking retractor” locks only during a crash or sudden stop. During normal driving you can pull the belt in and out easily. Check it in a deserted parking lot with your lap/shoulder belt on. If you slam on the brakes while driving about 10 mph, you will feel the belt “grab” you.
2. An “automatic locking retractor” locks whenever you stop pulling it out. To check for an automatic locking retractor, pull the lap belt out and stop. When you pull on it again, you will find it is locked. This kind of belt will hold the safety seat tightly. Take the slack out by pushing the webbing back into the retractor.

## “Switchable” Retractors

A switchable retractor works well with safety seats. It is an emergency locking retractor that can be switched to an automatic locking retractor. The retractor may be on either a lap belt or a lap/shoulder belt. The belt usually has a label on it telling you how it works (I). You also can read about it in your vehicle owner’s book.

In most cases, you switch the retractor by pulling the belt slowly all the way out until it goes no farther and you hear a click. It may pull out from the lap end or shoulder end. When you let the belt roll back, you will find that it locks every inch or so and will hold a safety seat tightly. In some vehicles, there is a button to push on the retractor instead. Again, check in the owner’s book.

## Belts with Locking Latchplates

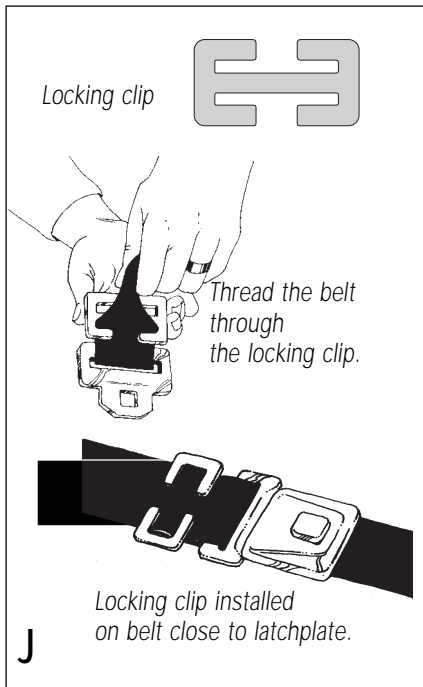
Locking latchplates (E) work well with safety seats. They usually are found on lap belts in center rear seats. Lap/shoulder belts in many vehicles also have them. A locking bar prevents the belt from loosening once it is tightened.

To tighten this kind of belt, pull on the loose end of the lap belt or on the shoulder part of the lap/shoulder belt. This tightens the lap belt. Then test for tightness by pulling the safety seat forward and side to side.

If this kind of belt does not stay tight, see if the latchplate is fastened right at the place where the belt turns to go through the slot in the safety seat (F) or around its frame. In this position, the belt may slide through the latchplate. Turn the adjustable end of the belt over (G). This will keep it tightly locked in most vehicles. This also may help keep the belt from loosening slowly over time.

## Lap/Shoulder Belt with a Free-Sliding Latchplate

This kind of belt (H) has one piece of belt webbing that slides through the latchplate even when the belt is buckled. It usually has an emergency locking retractor. It stays loose except in a crash or sudden stop. To lock this belt around a child safety seat, use a metal “locking clip.” Some belts are labeled to tell you the locking clip is needed (I). First check to see if it has a switchable retractor that allows the retractor to stay locked (see above).



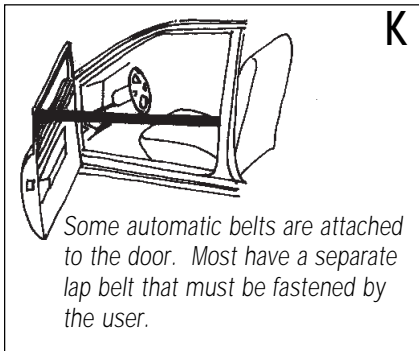
## How to Install a Locking Clip on a Lap/Shoulder Belt With a Free-Sliding Latchplate

If the lap/shoulder belt (H) does not have a switchable feature to lock it around a child safety seat, you should use a metal “locking clip” (J) to keep it tight. You will find this clip attached to the side or back of most new safety seats. If you do not have a locking clip, you can buy one from a safety seat manufacturer or from Ford, Nissan, or Toyota dealers. Here is how to install the clip (J).

1. Put the belt through the correct path on the safety seat and buckle it.
2. Push down on the safety seat. Pull up on the shoulder end of the belt until the lap belt is pulled tight.
3. Hold the two parts of the belt together at the latchplate and unbuckle it.
4. Thread the belt through the locking clip as shown, close to the latchplate.
5. Buckle the belt again. If you put the clip on right, the belt will now stay tight around the safety seat.
6. Remove the locking clip when the belt is not holding a safety seat.

**The regular locking clip that comes with most child safety seats must be used in this way only.**

3 Kinds of Automatic Belts:



## Belts That Do Not Lock

Belts with emergency locking retractors in the lap part of the belt stay loose. These belts do not have switchable retractors (see page 2) and need a special belt-shortening clip (heavy-duty locking clip) to shorten the lap belt (see page 4). Such belts are:

- Lap belts in front seats of many cars that have automatic shoulder belts;
- Lap belts in rear seats of some older cars;
- Often on belts with lap and shoulder belts sewn onto the latchplate (P, see page 4). These latchplates may be found in front or rear seats.

## Automatic Safety Belts

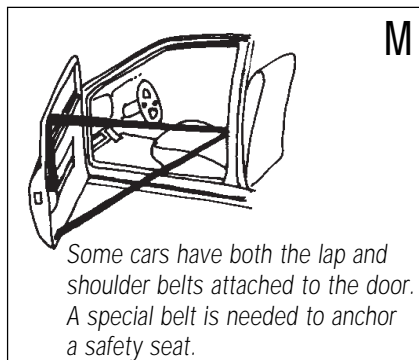
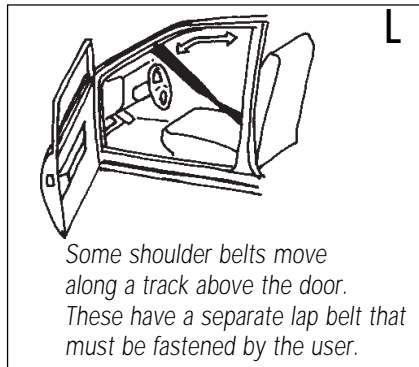
Some automatic shoulder belts are attached to the door and wrap around you when you close the door (K). Others have a motor which moves them along a track above the door (L) when you turn on the vehicle. The best way to avoid problems with these belts is to buckle up children in the back seat.

Most automatic shoulder belts have separate lap belts. Some of these lap belts lock, but many do not. Some are “switchable” (see page 2). Some vehicles (Cougar, Thunderbird, 1989-93; some Nissans) offer a separate “child seat buckle” to use with the front seat lap belt to hold a safety seat.

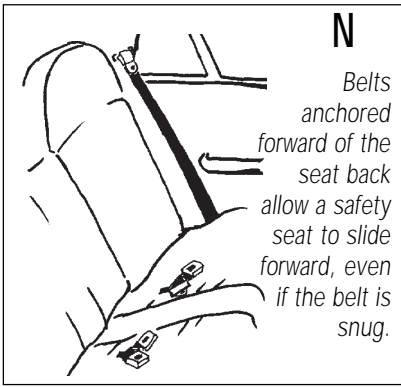
Where **both** the lap and shoulder belts are attached to the door (M, as in many GM and some Nissan and Honda cars, they should **not** be used to secure a child safety seat. To anchor a child safety seat, it is necessary for your car dealer to install a special “attaching belt.”

## Contoured Bucket Seats and Child Safety Seats

Some vehicle seats have hollows and humps that prevent the safety seat from resting flat on the cushion. Use another position if possible, or find a safety seat with a base that fits better in your car.



**Always check your vehicle owner's book for belt information.**

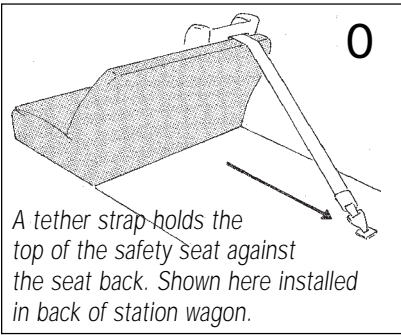


## Belts Anchored Forward of the Seat Back

Belts that come out of the seat cushion or from the side of the vehicle seat (N) may not hold your child's safety seat against the vehicle seat back. Test your child's seat by pulling it forward and sideways. If the base moves, use a different seating position unless your vehicle owner's book shows you how to make the belt system hold a child safety seat securely. A tether may help.

## A Tether Can Help Keep A Safety Seat Secure

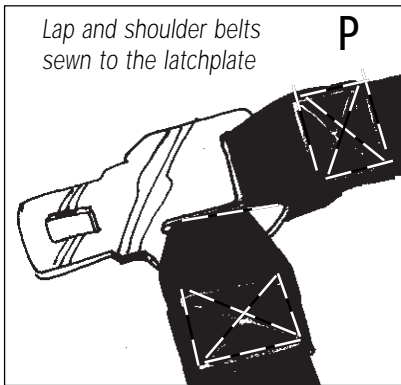
A top tether strap (O) anchors the upper part of a forward-facing child safety seat when it is bolted to the frame of the vehicle. It may be the only way to keep a safety seat secure if belts are anchored forward of the seat back. A tether aids protection even when the safety seat is held firmly with the lap belt.



Some manufacturers have tether kits for their forward-facing safety seats. Do not attempt to install a tether on a safety seat not made to use one. Many vehicles have holes drilled behind the rear seat to hold a tether anchor. Some have nuts installed. Check the owner's manual for tether anchor locations.

## Lap and Shoulder Belts Sewn to the Latchplate

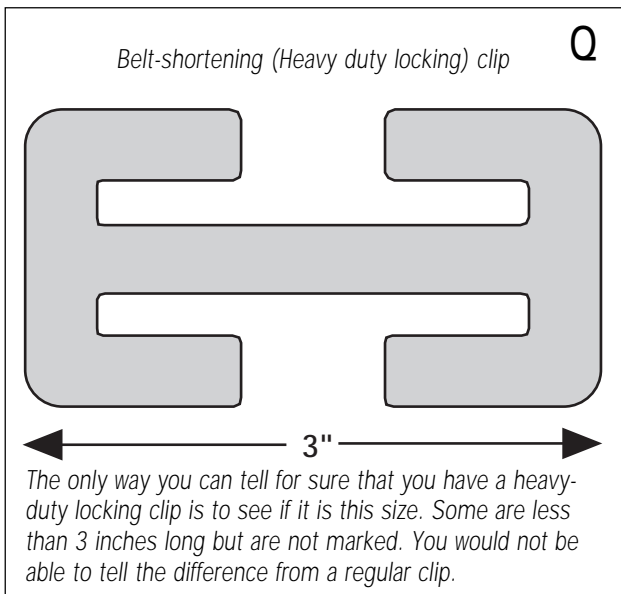
Some belts have the lap and shoulder parts sewn separately to the latchplate (P). Check to see if the lap belt can be locked or "switched" to one that locks (see page 2). If not, use a special heavy-duty locking clip to shorten the lap part of the belt (see below).



## How to Shorten Lap Belts That Do Not Lock

If a lap belt or lap part of a lap/shoulder belt with a sewn-on latchplate does not lock and cannot be "switched," you can shorten the belt to make it the right length to hold your safety seat tightly.

You will need a special belt-shortening clip ("heavy-duty" locking clip, Q). This special clip is available **only** from Ford, Toyota, and Nissan dealers. Your vehicle owner's book may explain how to use it. (Toyota locking clips come with instructions.)



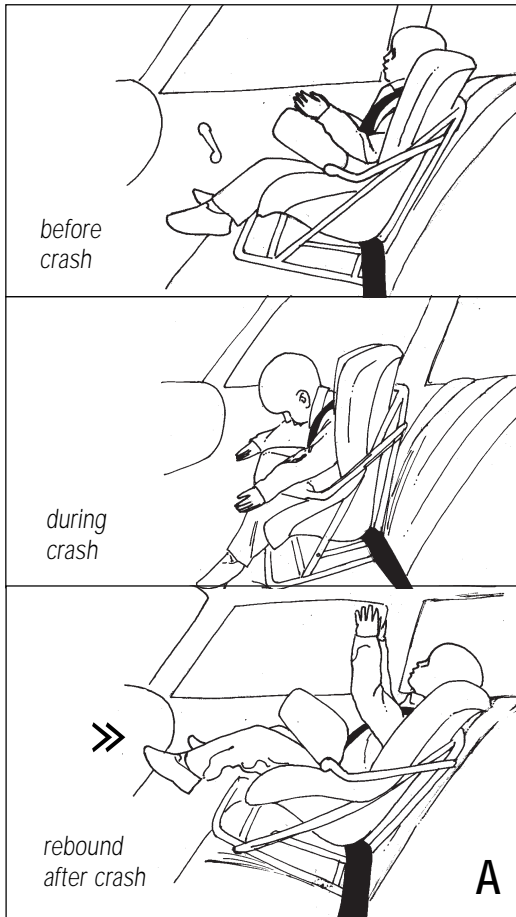
This heavy-duty clip looks just like a regular locking clip but is made from extra-strong metal. Some are a little bigger, about three inches long. If you buy a heavy-duty clip, mark it with a dab of nail polish or paint so you will know which kind it is.

**WARNING:** Use **ONLY** a heavy-duty locking clip to shorten a lap belt. Use of a regular locking clip to do this would put your child in serious danger in a crash. The regular clip could bend and release the belt, leading to possible serious injury.

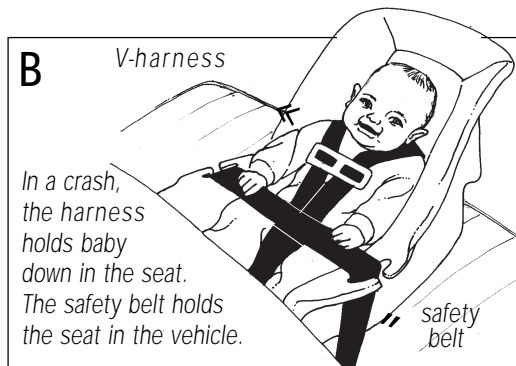
Use a locking clip to shorten a belt **only** if you know that it came from Ford, Toyota, Nissan and you have instructions for using it. If you have questions about how to use locking clips or keeping child restraints tightly secured in your vehicle, call your vehicle customer service line.

# Tip #7

## harness straps: your child's link to safety



Harness straps hold your child in his safety seat in a crash.



In a crash, the harness holds baby down in the seat. The safety belt holds the seat in the vehicle.

C. A metal slide is used on many infant-only seats and older convertible models to adjust the harness. It may be found in back or front, or on the side of the base.

The harness holds your child in his seat to protect him in a crash (A). Some safety seats have just a harness; others have a harness attached to a shield. A harness is no less safe than a harness and shield combination.

### Four Facts about the Harness:

1. The straps must fit on strong parts of the body: the shoulders and hips.
2. The harness must be adjusted for a snug fit.
3. Rear-facing seats: The straps must be at or below the baby's shoulders.
4. Forward-facing seats: The straps of most models must be in the top-most slots. They pass over a strong support in the framework of the shell. Leaving them in the lower slots could be dangerous in a crash. Read manufacturer's instructions for your seat, as some models are constructed differently.

### Using Rear-Facing Safety Seats

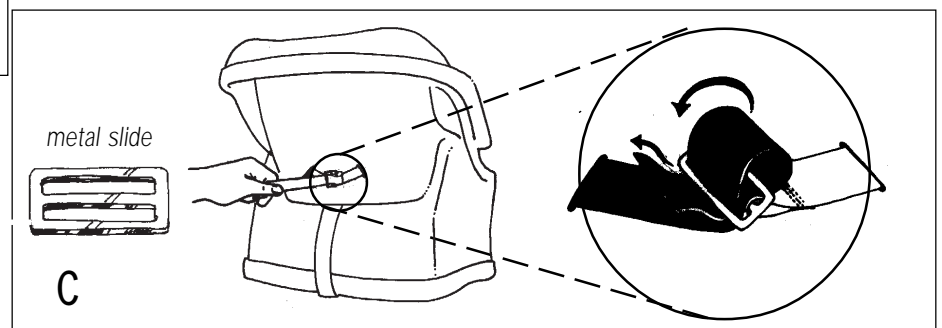
Infants ride facing rearward until they are one year old and weigh at least 20 pounds. A snug harness is important in this position. In a crash, the shoulder straps hold your baby down in the safety seat.

Infant-only seats usually have just two straps which go over the shoulders and form a "V" when buckled (B). There may be one or two sets of harness slots. Shoulder straps should be in the lowest slots for the newborn. Straps should be at or below shoulder level.

Use a harness retainer clip to keep straps on your baby's shoulders. Put the clip at mid-chest, armpit level.

**WARNING:** When adjusting harnesses or changing strap positions, take extra care! A metal slide (C) may be used to shorten or lengthen the straps. The end of the strap must be threaded up and down through the openings, then back through the first opening to "lock" it (C). If the strap is not locked, the violent force of a crash could pull it out of the slide and allow your child to be thrown out of the seat.

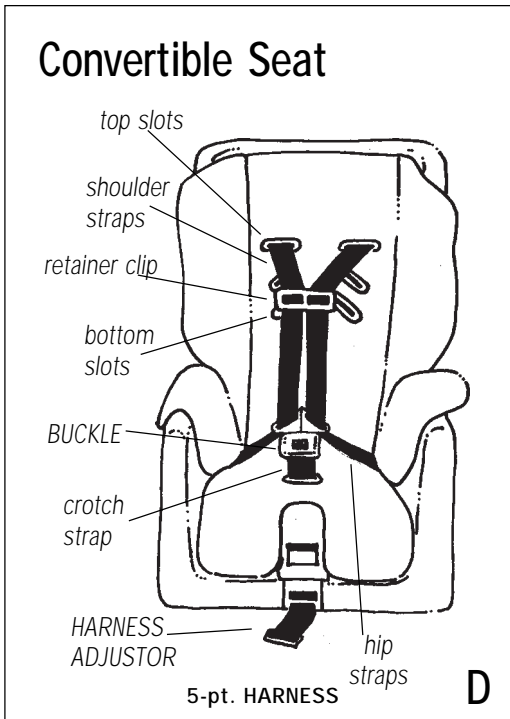
For tips on using convertible safety seats, turn this sheet **over...**



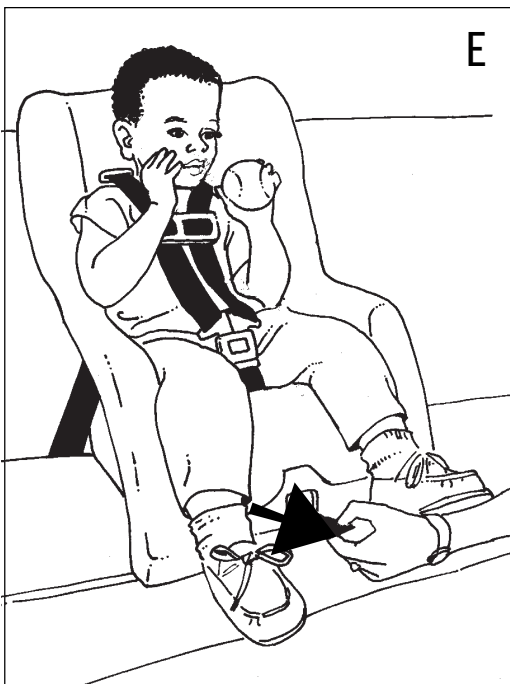
Strap with metal slide must be threaded back through the slide to hold tight.



# Using Forward-Facing Child Safety Seats



This convertible seat has a full harness to hold your child securely.



The harness on this convertible seat is tightened by pulling on the strap between the child's feet.

Some safety seats for use by children over age one and 20 pounds are "convertibles" that also can be used by babies facing the rear. Other models are for use facing forward only. These may have different minimum and maximum weight limits. Check the instructions for each model.

**If your child's seat is a convertible model**, two adjustments must be made for use facing forward.

1. Put the seat in the upright position, which gives the best protection for a forward-facing child. The reclined position used for a rear-facing infant does not protect well when used facing forward.
2. The shoulder straps must be moved up to the top set of slots (**D**). These are reinforced to withstand the force of a crash. If a convertible seat has a middle set of slots, they must not be used in the forward-facing position unless the instructions allow it.

**Forward-facing models that are not convertibles** also may have several sets of strap slots. You can choose the ones that fit your child best. Move the straps up when your child's shoulders reach the level of the slots.

**When moving the straps up**, be sure to thread them completely through the shell, not just behind the pad. Straps on older seats must go over or around a metal bar on the frame, so check the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

**Harness straps are adjusted in different ways.** Some tighten automatically to fit the child. Others have a dial to turn on the side or a strap to pull in the front (**E**). A few have a metal adjustment slide like the one pictured for the infant-only seat (**C**). The strap must be doubled back over the slide to prevent the harness from coming loose in a crash (**C**, see page 1).

If there is an **adjustable crotch strap**, keep it as short as possible to hold the hip straps or shield down low.

Put the **shoulder strap retainer clip (chest clip)** at armpit level to hold the straps in place.

**The way you install and use a safety seat makes a big difference in a crash! If the harness is loose, your child could be thrown out in a crash.**

# Tip #8

## what are safety seat recalls?

Just like automobiles and many other products, a car safety seat may be "recalled" because of a defect which could injure your child. Manufacturers are required to fix the problem free of charge. If your seat is recalled, be sure to get it fixed right away.

### When you hear about a seat being recalled:

- Find out which models and manufacturing dates are involved. Remember, the date of manufacture is the "birth-day" of your seat. It helps you know if yours is one being recalled.
- Call the toll-free number of the company for information.
- If you are not sure if your seat has been recalled or you don't know the correct telephone number, call the toll-free DOT Auto Safety Hotline in Washington, D.C., 1-888-DASH-2-DOT.

### Before you call:

Write down this information about your child's seat:

Manufacturer's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Model Number/Name \_\_\_\_\_

Manufacture Date \_\_\_\_\_

This information is printed on labels attached underneath, on the side, or the back of the seat. Some of the information may be in number codes. Bring the seat to the telephone so you can answer questions about it.

This child restraint system conforms to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Manufactured in \_\_\_\_\_ (date)  
Model# \_\_\_\_\_



Have the seat in front of you when you call the manufacturer or the Hotline. Find the model number and date on the labels.

### Does the seat have to be sent back?

Not usually. Most problems can be fixed by replacing a part that the manufacturer will send you for free. Sometimes, with an older seat or when the company is out of business, you may be told to destroy it. To make sure it is not reused, break it with a sledgehammer, crush it, or take it completely apart, marking it "not for use as a car seat" before throwing it out in a black plastic bag.

### Should I go on using a recalled seat?

Many defects are minor, but some are serious. All problems should be corrected as soon as possible.

- Unless you have another seat, you should go on using the recalled one while you are waiting for the repair kit. Using a recalled car safety seat almost always is safer than letting your child ride in a safety belt only.

**DOT AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE**  
**1-888-DASH-2-DOT**

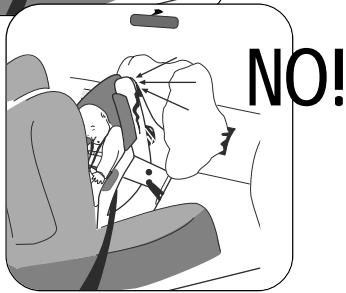
**New safety seats come with registration cards.** If you buy a new one, be sure to register it. Then the manufacturer can let you know by mail if your child's seat has been recalled. If you have an older seat, call the Auto Safety Hotline or the manufacturer to find out how to register it.

**If you think your seat has a problem** that could be a safety defect, call the Auto Safety Hotline to report it. Also call the safety seat manufacturer. Many serious problems are discovered from reports by parents.



# Tip #9

## Air bag safety: Buckle up everyone! Children in back!



*This child is in great danger! He is using only the lap part of the lap/shoulder belt and is perched on the edge of the seat, very close to the air bag.*

**An infant or child riding in the front seat can be seriously injured or killed by the inflating air bag.**

An air bag is not a soft pillow. To do its important job, an air bag comes out of the dashboard very fast, faster than the blink of an eye. Many people's lives have been saved by air bags.

The force of an air bag can hurt people who are too close to it. Drivers can prevent injuries to adults and children from air bags by following these safety steps.

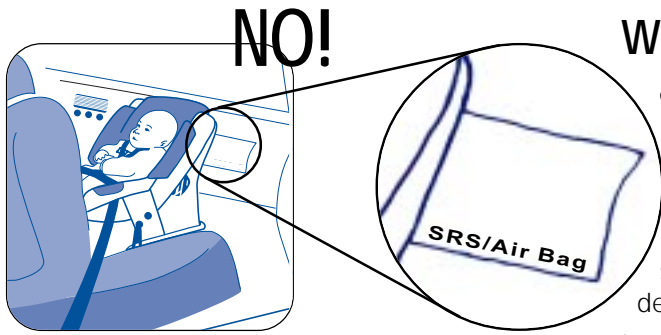
### Air Bag Safety Steps

- Infants in rear-facing child safety seats must never ride in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger air bag.
- Children 12 and under should ride buckled up in the rear seat. They should use child safety seats, booster seats, or safety belts appropriate for their age and size.
- Everyone should buckle up with both lap AND shoulder belts on every trip. Driver and front passenger seats should be moved as far back from the dashboard as practical.
- Infants under age one must ride facing the rear of the car in the rear seat. Parents should feel just as comfortable in this situation as they do when they put their babies down for a nap and leave the room.
- If a baby has special health needs and requires full-time supervision, ask another adult to ride with the baby in the back seat and travel alone as little as possible until the health problem is resolved.



- Check your vehicle owner's manual and the instructions provided with your child safety seat for information on air bags and safety seat use.

*This car has a passenger air bag, so baby always rides in back.*



## Why have children died in vehicles with air bags?

In almost all cases in which an infant died, the baby was riding in a rear-facing safety seat in the front passenger seat. The back of the safety seat was so close to the dashboard that the air bag hit the safety seat with tremendous force. The force broke the back of the safety seat and caused a fatal brain injury. Child safety seats are **not** designed to protect against this extreme impact.

In almost all cases in which a child over age 1 has died from impact by the air bag, he or she was "out of position" – either unbuckled, or not wearing the shoulder portion of the safety belt. The child slid or flexed forward during pre-crash braking, so the head and neck were close to the dashboard at the time the air bag was triggered. Severe head or neck injuries occurred.

If a child is sitting against the seat back, fully restrained by a forward-facing child safety seat or a lap/shoulder belt **and** the seat is pushed all the way back, the danger from the air bag is reduced.

### How do you know if your vehicle has a passenger air bag?

Here are some signs:

- Compartment cover in dashboard panel with embossed letters: *SRS*, *SIR*, or *SRS/Air Bag*.

Beware: NOT all vehicles have these marks. NOT all vehicles have a cover that shows in the dashboard.

- Warning label on sun visor (often on the back of the visor) and/or on the front of the right door frame.
- Description in the owner's manual.

### What about sports cars and pickup trucks?

If there is no rear seat and no air bag shut-off switch, a child is at high risk from a passenger air bag.

Some pickup trucks made since model year 1996 have switches to shut off the passenger air bag. Other vehicles may have them in future years. Turning off the switch is the best way to protect an infant riding in a rear-facing safety seat or an older child using a safety seat, booster, or safety belt.

### What if you have no alternative except putting a child in front?

If there is no room in back, a child **over age one** may have to ride in the front seat. Here's how to reduce the risk:

- Make sure the child is correctly buckled up with the vehicle seat moved as far back as possible. A toddler/preschooler should use a forward-facing child safety seat; an older child should use a belt-positioning booster or lap/shoulder belt.
- Fasten the harness or lap/shoulder belt securely.
- Make sure an older child does not slip out of the shoulder belt or lean toward the dashboard.

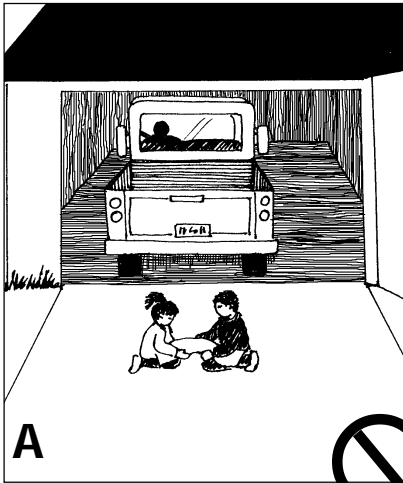
Vehicle owners and lessees can obtain an on-off switch for one or both of their air bags only if they can certify that they are, or a user of their vehicle is, in one of the four risk groups: infants in rear-facing infant seats, drivers or passengers with unusual medical or physical conditions, children ages 1 to 12, or drivers who cannot get back 10 inches from the air bag cover. To be considered eligible for an on-off switch, a NHTSA request form must be filled out and returned to NHTSA. Forms are available from state motor vehicle offices and may be available from automobile dealerships and repair facilities. Forms can also be requested by contacting NHTSA's Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-DASH-2-DOT or visiting the NHTSA Web site at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>.

Prepared in cooperation with the Air Bag Safety Campaign. Funded by National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



## Tip #10

# play it safe: walking and biking safely (toddlers & preschoolers)

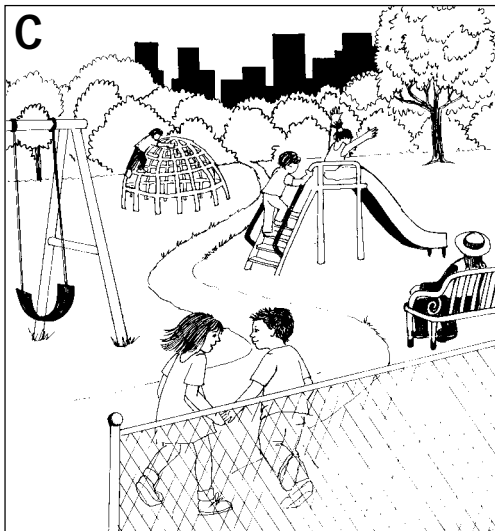


**A**  
*Toddlers are often hurt by backing vehicles.*



**B**  
*Hold your child's hand so she doesn't dash into the street.*

**C**  
*Parks and playgrounds are safe places to play away from traffic.*



## Dangers for young children on the move:

- darting out into traffic from the middle of the block;
- playing in or near the street;
- riding a tricycle or bike in a parking lot, driveway, or street.

## Young children are NOT small adults!

1. They move quickly and can run into the street without warning.
2. They don't know safety rules and expect adults to watch out for them.
3. They are small and hard for drivers to see.
4. They cannot judge speed or distance of vehicles moving toward them.

Children hit by cars can be hurt or killed, even when cars are moving slowly. Toddlers (one and two year olds) are most often hurt by a backing vehicle. If a child is playing in a driveway or parking area (**A**), a driver may not see him. Preschoolers (three and four year olds) are most often hit when dashing across a street near home.

Falls from tricycles or other play vehicles can cause serious head and brain injury. These injuries to young children can be as serious as injuries to older children falling from bikes.

## Take steps to safety

### Supervise, supervise, supervise

Parents and caregivers must watch toddlers and preschoolers closely when they are near parked or moving vehicles. To supervise properly, you must be near your child, not watching from a distance. Hold your child's hand when you walk together along the street (**B**).

### Find safe places to play

Keep children away from traffic (**C**). Fenced yards, parks, or playgrounds are good places for your child to ride and play.

Are there safe play places for children in your neighborhood? If not, talk with neighbors, local police, and community planners about ways to improve the area. (See Tip 14.)

### Set a safe example

Young children learn by watching adults. Show them safe ways to cross streets and always wear a helmet when you ride a bike.

### Get them in the habit

When walking, talk to your child about street safety. Show him/her how to stop at the edge of the street and look for cars. Don't expect your young child to do this by herself.

Start children wearing helmets with their first tricycles or play vehicles. When children begin helmet use early, they are more likely to keep the habit in later years.

## Head out safely

Wearing a bike helmet is the most important way for your child to stay safe on a play vehicle, tricycle, or bike. A helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent when worn correctly.

Toddler helmets are lightweight, because a toddler's neck is not strong enough for a regular helmet. Also, these helmets come down low around the back of the head for more coverage (D).

Choose a helmet that meets current safety standards. Look for a CPSC<sup>1</sup>, ASTM<sup>2</sup>, ANSI<sup>3</sup>, or Snell<sup>4</sup> sticker inside the helmet. By 1999, every new helmet must meet the CPSC standard.

Insist that your child wear a helmet whenever she rides. If your child's preschool uses tricycles, work with the school to make helmets available. Urge the school to have a policy requiring helmet use.

### The right fit

- Make sure the helmet covers the upper part of the forehead and sits level on the head.
- Use the foam pads inside to fit the helmet snugly so it doesn't slip around.
- Adjust the chin strap tightly enough so the helmet pulls down when the child opens his mouth.

<sup>1</sup>Consumer product Safety Commission  
<sup>2</sup>American Society for Testing and Materials  
<sup>3</sup>American National Standards Institute  
<sup>4</sup>Snell Memorial Foundation

### Carrying your child safely on a bike

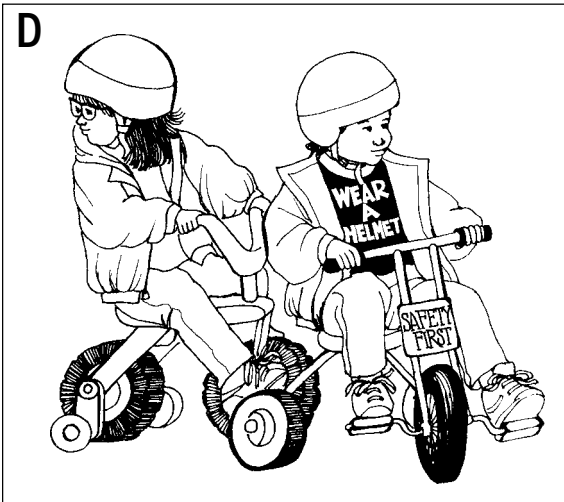
Never carry a baby under age one on a bicycle. A baby does not have the neck strength to wear a helmet. Her back is not strong enough to sit straight with the motion of the bike.

When a child is old enough to ride on an adult's bike, only a skilled rider should carry him. Ride only in safe areas like parks, bike paths, or quiet streets.

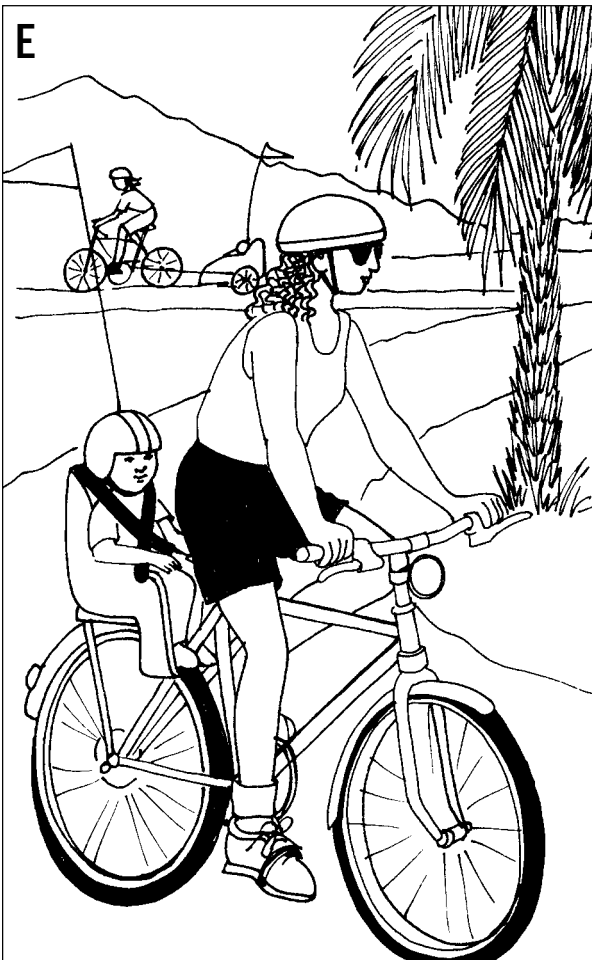
- Make sure both adult and child wear properly fitting helmets.
- Make sure the child carrier has a high back, a lap and shoulder harness, and foot guards to keep feet away from the spokes.
- Check that the carrier is fastened firmly to the bike.
- Buckle the harness snugly around the child.

*For more information, call the  
NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline: 1-888-DASH-2-DOT  
or visit the NHTSA web site, [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).*

*See Tip Sheet #11 for pedestrian and bicycle  
safety tips for school-age children.*

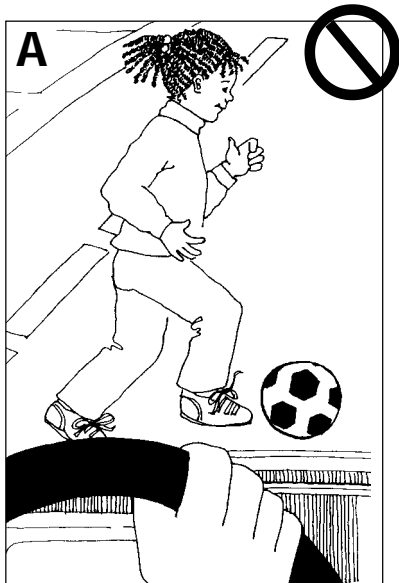


Start helmet use early - even when riding a tricycle or play vehicle.

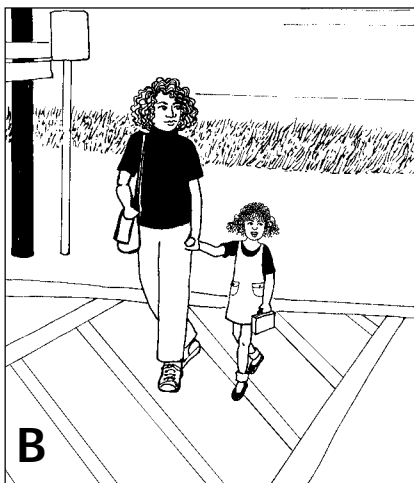


Only children over age one have the neck strength to wear helmets and ride on the back of bikes.

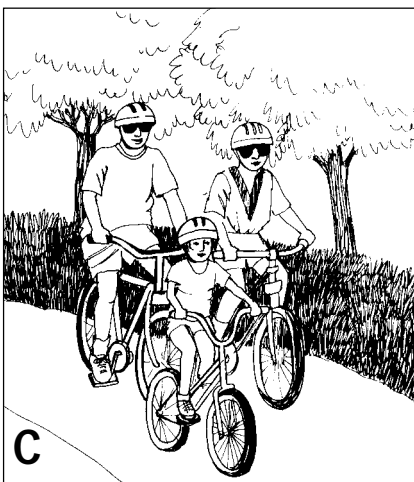
## Tip #11



Many children are hit by cars when running into the street.



Help your child practice crossing streets safely.



Set a good example. Ride with your child and wear your helmet!

# kids on the move: walking and biking safely (kindergarten to grade three)

## Learning to be traffic smart

Children in kindergarten through third grade are learning to become independent. They enjoy walking, riding bikes, and playing outside. They don't have the judgment to cope with traffic by themselves yet, but they can begin to understand safety rules.

## What parents need to know: *the bottom line*

- Parents often think their children are able to handle traffic safely by themselves before they actually are ready.
- Children don't have the skills to handle these risky situations until at least age ten.
- Boys are much more likely than girls to be injured or killed in traffic.
- Bicycles are vehicles. Children should not ride bikes in the road until they fully understand traffic rules and show they can follow them.

## Young children are NOT small adults!

1. They often act before thinking and may not do what parents or drivers expect.
2. They assume that if they see the driver, the driver sees them.
3. They can't judge speed and they think cars can stop instantly.
4. They are shorter than adults and can't see over cars, bushes, and other objects.

### Walking Risks

Nearly one third of the five- to nine-year-old children killed by motor vehicles are on foot. They are hit by cars most often when playing near home. They tend to run into the street in the middle of the block, where drivers don't expect them (A).

### Bicycling Risks

Children can be hurt riding on or off the road. Many children who are killed in bike crashes are 7 to 12 years old. The most serious injuries children get while biking are head and brain injuries. Head injuries can cause death or lifelong disability.

## Take steps to safety

### Set limits for your child

As your children grow, set appropriate limits on where they can walk or bike safely. Don't expect them to be responsible or to start to behave safely until age ten.

### Find safe places for riding and walking

Find places away from streets, driveways, and parking lots. Good choices are fenced yards, parks, or playgrounds.

### Teach safe walking habits

Begin to teach your child about how to cross streets safely (see next page). Give them plenty of chances to practice when you are with them (B).

### Set an example yourself

Young children learn by watching their parents and other adults. Cross streets properly and always wear a helmet when you ride a bike (C). When you are driving, obey speed limits and watch for children.



## Teach the "Safe Street Crossing" Method. Teach your child to:

1. Cross with an adult or older friend. (Young children still need supervision around traffic up to at least age ten.)
2. Cross at a signalized intersection, when possible.
3. Use the crosswalk when crossing near a corner. Watch for turning vehicles.
4. Stop at the curb. Look left, right, left, and over your shoulder for traffic. Continue to look as you cross.
5. Stop to look around parked cars or other objects that block the view of traffic (D). Let oncoming traffic pass, then look again before crossing.
6. Make eye contact with drivers to make sure they see you.

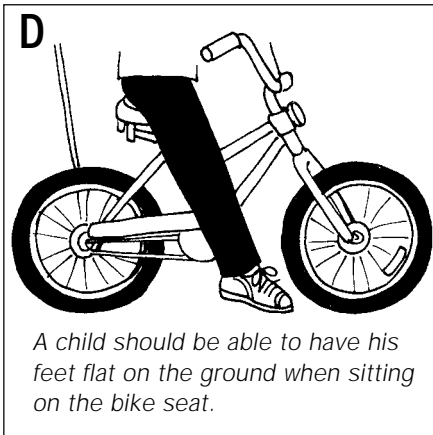
## Help your child bike safely

### A kid-size bike is right

A big bike "to grow into" is not easy to learn on or to ride safely. A child should be able to sit on the seat with knees straight and feet flat on the ground (E). Also make sure he can straddle the bike with at least one or two inches between the top bar and crotch.

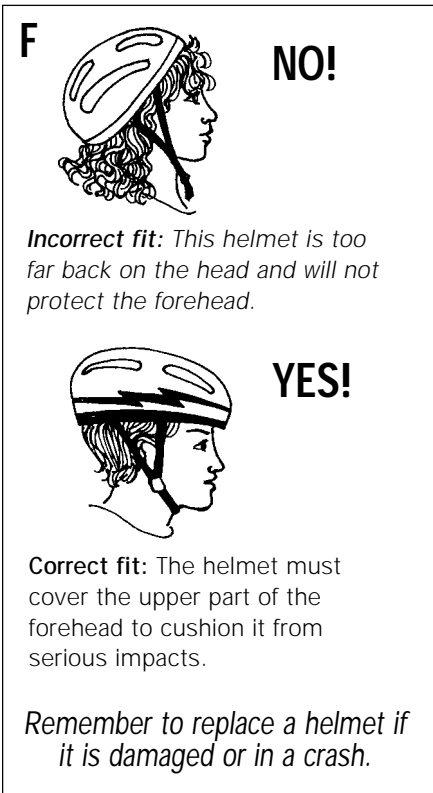
### Insist on bike helmet use

A brain injury cannot be cured! Bike helmet use can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent when worn correctly. Make it clear to your child that she must wear a helmet on every ride. It also is important to wear a helmet when doing other sports, like in-line skating and skateboarding.



## Selecting and fitting a bike helmet

- Choose a bike helmet that meets current safety standards. Look for a CPSC<sup>1</sup>, ASTM<sup>2</sup>, ANSI<sup>3</sup>, or Snell<sup>4</sup> sticker inside the helmet. By March 1999, every new bike helmet must meet the CPSC standard.
- Use foam pads inside to fit the helmet snugly so it doesn't move on the head.
- Fit the helmet so the front is just above the top of the eyebrows. Teach your child to wear it this way (F).
- Adjust the two side straps so they meet in a "V" right under each ear.
- Adjust the chin strap snugly under the chin. Make it tight enough so the helmet pulls down when the child opens his mouth.
- Check often to make sure straps stay snug and the helmet stays level on the head.



## Encourage your child to wear his helmet

- Let your child help choose the helmet.
- Explain that a helmet is "just part of the gear," as it is with football, race car driving, or hockey.
- Praise your child for wearing his helmet.
- Talk to other parents, so that all neighborhood families encourage the same safety rules.

<sup>1</sup>Consumer Product Safety Commission  
<sup>2</sup>American Society for Testing and Materials  
<sup>3</sup>American National Standards Institute  
<sup>4</sup>Snell Memorial Foundation

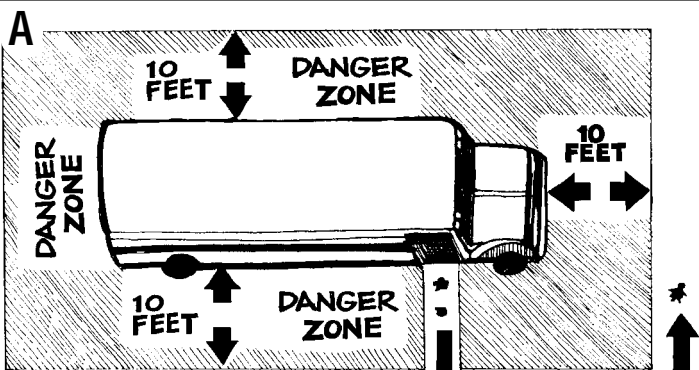
For more information, call the  
**NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline: 1-888-DASH-2-DOT**  
 or visit the NHTSA website, [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).  
 See Tip Sheet #10 for pedestrian and bicycle safety  
 tips for toddlers and preschool children.





# Tip #12

# school bus stops: a risky part of the ride



The Danger Zone is the area on all sides of the bus where children are in the most danger of being hit. Children should stay ten feet away from the bus (or as far away as they can) and never go behind it. They should take five giant steps in front of the bus before crossing, so they can be seen by the driver.

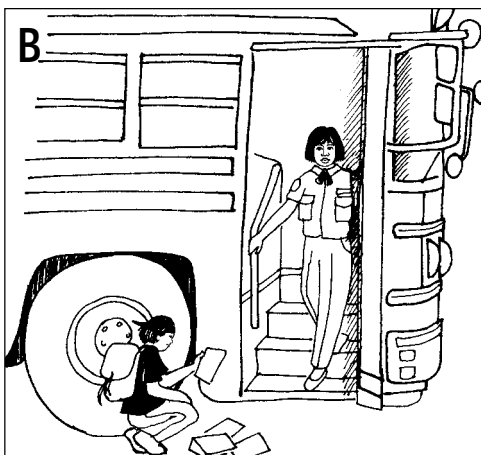
## Why students are in danger

Millions of children in the United States ride safely to and from school on school buses each day. Although school buses are the safest way to get them to school, an average of 33 school-age children die in school bus-related traffic crashes each year.

Most of those killed are pedestrians, five to seven years old. They are hit in the danger zone around the bus (A), either by a passing vehicle or by the school bus itself. It is illegal for a car to pass a bus with its red light flashing (see other side).

Young children are most likely to be hit because they:

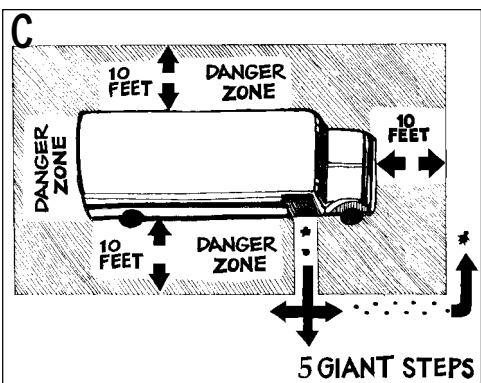
- hurry to get on or off the bus,
- act before they think and have little experience with traffic,
- assume motorists will see them and will wait for them to cross,
- don't always stay within the bus driver's sight.



Children should ask the driver for help if they drop something near the bus.

## Safety steps you can take

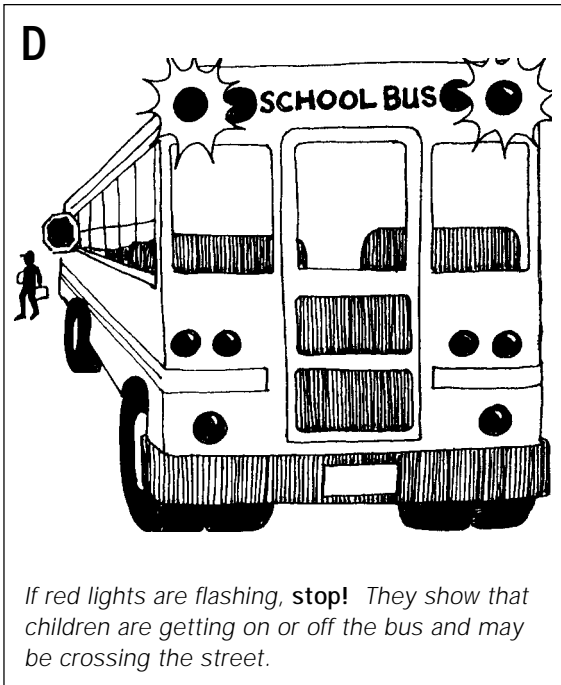
- Supervise children to make sure they get to the stop on time, wait far away from the road, and avoid rough play.
- Teach your child to ask the driver for help if he drops something near the bus (B). If a child stoops to pick up something, the driver cannot see him. Then he could be hit by the bus. A book bag or backpack helps keep loose items together.
- Make sure clothing has no loose drawstrings and backpack straps are short, so they don't get caught in the handrail or bus door.
- Encourage safe school bus loading and unloading (see below).
- If you think a bus stop is in a dangerous place, talk with your school office or transportation director about changing the location.



Supervise children at the school bus stop. Make sure they move away from the bus, out of the danger zone.

## Teach your child to get on and off the bus safely

1. When loading, stay away from the danger zone and wait for the driver's signal. Board the bus in single file.
2. When unloading, look before stepping off the bus to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder (side of the road). Move away from the bus (C).
3. Before crossing the street, take five "giant steps" out from the front of the bus, or until the driver's face can be seen. Wait for the driver to signal that it's safe to cross.
4. Look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the bus to make sure traffic is stopped. Continue to watch for traffic when crossing.



## Risky business for motorists: Passing a stopped school bus

What is the most dangerous part of the school bus ride? The bus stop!

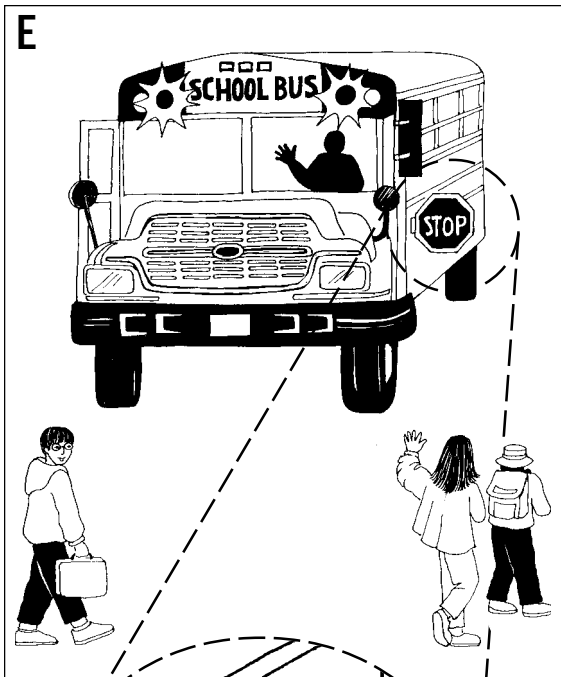
Children are at greatest risk when they are getting on or off the school bus. Most of the children killed in bus-related crashes are pedestrians, five to seven years old, who are getting on or off the bus. They are hit by the school bus or by motorists illegally passing a stopped bus.

In neighborhoods, near schools, and at bus stops, drivers need to take special care because children do not behave like adults.

Elementary school children:

- Become easily distracted and may start across the street without warning
- Don't understand the danger of moving vehicles
- Can't judge vehicle speed or distance
- May be blocked from view by the bus

**Most importantly, children expect vehicles to stop for them at the school bus stop.**



## Standard school bus stop laws

Learn and follow the school bus laws for motorists in your state. Laws exist to protect children getting on and off the bus AND to protect you from a tragedy. Check with your school transportation office or police department for more information on your state's laws. Here are standard rules:

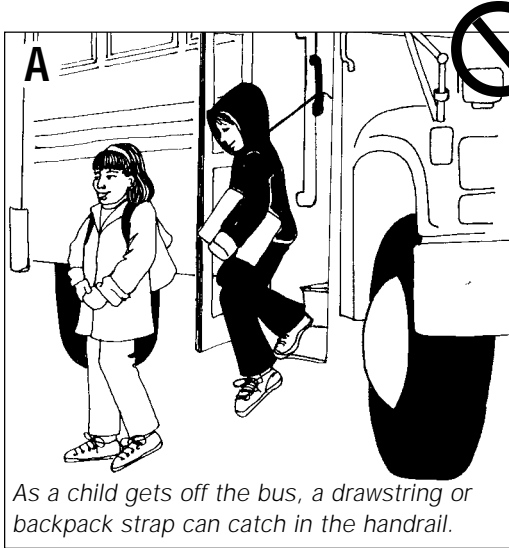
- Motorists coming to a school bus from either direction must stop when the bus displays flashing red warning lights and extends the stop signal arm (D and E). These signals show that children are getting on or off the school bus.
- Vehicles may not pass until the flashing red lights and signals are turned off.
- Drivers traveling in the **same** direction as the bus are always required to stop.
- In some states, drivers moving in the **opposite** direction on a **divided** roadway are also required to stop. Check the law in your state.
- **Never** pass on the right side of the bus, where children enter or exit. This is illegal and can have tragic results.

**Violation of these laws can result in a citation and fine. In many places, school bus drivers can report passing vehicles!**

*For more information, call the  
NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline:  
1-888-DASH-2-DOT  
or visit the NHTSA website,  
[www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).*



# Tip #13 handrails & drawstrings: clothing causes school bus hazard



## Drawstrings can be dangerous

Current styles and fads of children's clothing, especially drawstrings, have brought new injury risks. Some clothing can cause deaths and injuries by catching on bus doors or handrails, playground equipment, and cribs.

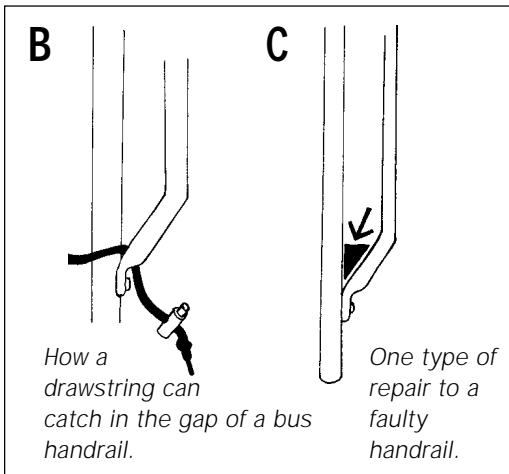
Items that can catch in these areas:

- Jackets, sweatshirts, and clothing with drawstrings at the neck or waist;
- Backpack straps, dangling key chains, scarves, belt buckles, and other loose clothing.

## How can a drawstring hurt a child?

A drawstring at the waist, hood, or neck on clothing can catch in a small gap in playground equipment, a bus handrail, or on a bolt. A drawstring with a large toggle or knot at the end is most likely to get caught (**B**).

As a child gets off the school bus, a dangling drawstring or loose object may catch in the handrail. If the bus doors close and the child isn't seen, she could be dragged and run over by the wheels (**A**).



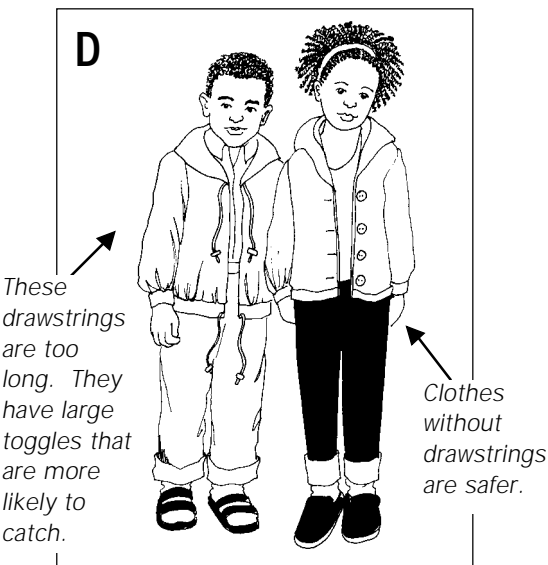
## School bus improvements help reduce danger

While clothing changes are very important, school bus manufacturers and school districts are working to change handrails. New handrails are made so they won't catch drawstrings. Older buses are being repaired (**C**).

Bus drivers are trained to watch children as they get off the bus. Your child's bus driver should make sure each child has completely cleared the bus when leaving. He also should look for clothing that could get caught.

## Simple steps make clothing safer

- Choose clothes without drawstrings — snaps, Velcro, buttons, or elastic are better choices (**D**).
- Remove hood and neck strings.
- Remove drawstrings from the waist and bottom of coats.
- Warn children about dangling key rings, large buckles, and other objects hanging from their backpacks.

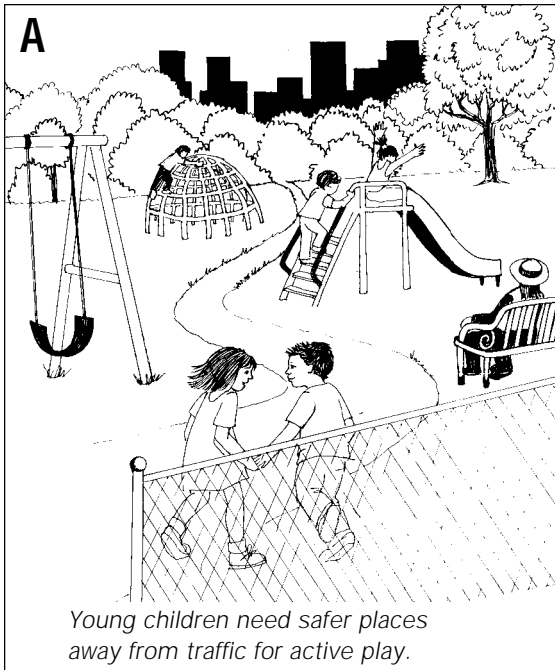


For a flyer on how to test for handrail snagging or for other school bus safety information (including vehicle recalls), call the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline: 1-888-DASH-2-DOT or visit the NHTSA website, [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).



## Tip #14

# beyond the front yard: creating safer streets and play places for children



Crawling... walking... bike riding... in-line and roller skating. As babies grow into school kids, they move farther and faster. They love to be on the move -- to the neighbor's house, the school yard, the park, or the store! These activities are great for your children, if your neighborhood has safe playgrounds, sidewalks, and streets.

**Young children** need safe places for active play (A), yet many communities today are not kid-friendly.

**Children** over ten years old need safe ways to get themselves to school, sports events, and stores. When they walk or cycle, you-the parent-help your children learn responsibility and independence.

There are things YOU can do to make these outings safer! Slower traffic, nearby parks, and better sidewalks help everyone in the neighborhood. Older people and those with limited mobility will also appreciate these improvements.

## How pedestrian-friendly are your neighborhood streets?

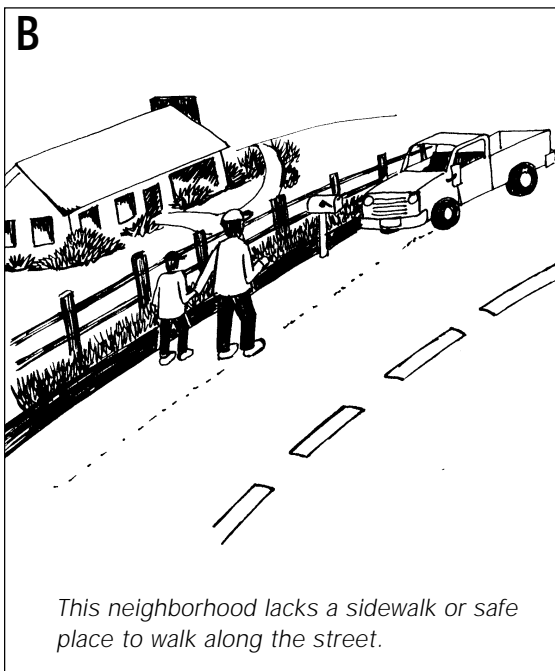
Take a walk in your neighborhood with your child. Look at the conditions along the way. You may want to score your area using the "Walkability Checklist." (See the back page for more information on how to get it.)

As you walk, ask yourself these questions:

- Are there places for people to walk (or for children to bicycle) off the street? (B)
- Are there places to cross streets easily and safely? Are there crossing guards near schools?
- Are the drivers courteous? Do they obey speed limits?
- Was your walk pleasant? Would you do it again?

Check below any problems that you find:

- Traffic speeds are too high.
- No sidewalks or wide shoulders for walking (B).
- Roadside obstructions make walking difficult (parked cars, trash bins, overgrown bushes, ditches).
- No crosswalks or traffic signals where we want to cross busy streets.
- Drivers do not stop for pedestrians.
- No place for children to play.
- Playgrounds, library, and schools are too far away.



# If you want to make your streets friendlier for kids

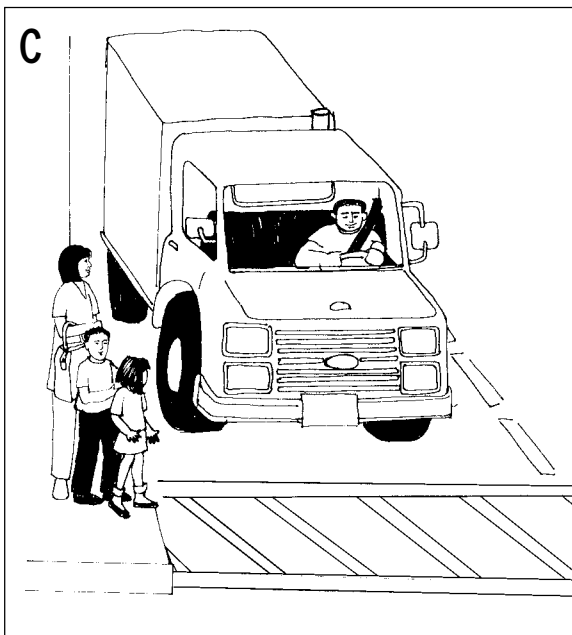
## Things that you can do yourself:

- As a driver, set an example by slowing down and giving pedestrians the right of way when crossing (C). Share the road with bicyclists.
- Obey speed limits, especially in neighborhoods where children play. Be extra careful in school zones.
- If buses or trains run in your area, use them with your child when practical.

## Things you can do with others:

Talk with your neighbors about the problems you see. They may want changes, too. Find others in your community who are concerned with child safety: traffic engineers, police traffic officers, school transportation directors, and parent-teacher associations. Write letters to your newspaper and speak up at public meetings for:

- playgrounds near homes so kids can play out of streets and parking areas;
- "traffic calming" improvements to slow down traffic on neighborhood streets (D), including traffic circles, speed bumps, and other engineering methods;
- construction of sidewalks or bike/pedestrian paths;
- a neighborhood crime watch, if needed. If playgrounds are being used for other activities, work with community groups to make them child-friendly.



Drive slowly and give pedestrians the right of way.



Traffic calming measures, like this island, can help slow traffic on neighborhood streets.

To get the "Walkability Checklist" (which is also available in spanish) or other child traffic safety information, visit the NHTSA website, [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).

Or call the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline: 1-888-DASH-2-DOT.

## Preventing playground injuries

Yards, parks or playgrounds can be safe places for young children to play. Look for some of these features of safe play areas:

- spaces fenced in or well away from busy streets and traffic
- playground equipment in good repair
- soft surfaces below climbing structures and swings (wood chips, rubber, pea gravel, sand)
- grassy areas for games, paths for bicycling

DOT HS 808 301  
Revised March 1997



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