

# little urbanites

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## Car Seat Safety Guide

### Infant-only seats

- Are small and have carrying handles (and sometimes come as part of a stroller system).
- Used for infants from 22 to 30 pounds, depending on the model.
- Often come with a base that can be left in the car. The seat clicks into and out of the base so you don't have to install the base each time you use it. Parents can also buy more than one base for additional vehicles.

### Convertible seats (used rear-facing)

- Can be used rear-facing then "converted" to forward-facing for older children. This means your child can use the seat longer. They are bulkier than infant seats, however, and do not come with carrying handles or a separate base.
- Have higher rear-facing weight and height limits than infant-only seats. This makes them ideal for bigger babies.

Include the following types of harnesses:

- 5-point harness - attaches at the shoulders, hips, and between the leg.
- Overhead shield - a padded tray-like shield that swings down over the child.
- T-shield - a padded t-shaped or triangle-shaped shield attached to the shoulder straps.

### Installation tips for rear-facing seats:

- Make sure the car safety seat is installed tightly in the vehicle and that the harness fits the child snugly.

- Never place a rear-facing car safety seat in the front seat of a vehicle that has a front passenger air bag. If the air bag inflates, it will hit the back of the car safety seat, and could cause serious injury or death.
- If your rear-facing seat has more than one set of harness slots, make sure the harnesses are in the slots at or below your baby's shoulders.
- Be sure you know what kind of seat belts your vehicle has. Some seat belts need locking clips. Locking clips come with all new car safety seats. If you're not sure, check the manual that came with your vehicle. Locking clips are not needed in most newer vehicles.
- If you are using a convertible seat in the rear-facing position, make sure the seat belt is routed through the correct belt path. Check the instructions that came with the car safety seat to be sure.
- If your vehicle was made after 2002, it may come with the LATCH system, which is used to secure car safety seats. See below for information on using LATCH.
- Make sure the seat is at the correct angle so your infant's head does not flop forward. Many seats have angle indicators or adjusters that can help prevent this. If your seat does not have an angle adjuster, tilt the car safety seat back by putting a rolled towel or other firm padding (such as a pool noodle) under the base near the point where the back and bottom of the vehicle seat meet.
- Be sure the car safety seat is installed tightly. If you can move the seat more than an inch side to side or front to back, it's not tight enough.

Still having trouble? There may be a certified Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Technician in your area that can help.

### Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What if my baby weighs more than 20 pounds but is not 1 year old yet?

A: Use a seat that can be used rear-facing by children who weigh more than 20 pounds and keep your baby rear-facing as long as possible, or at least until he has reached his first birthday.

Q: What do I do if my baby slouches down or to the side in his car safety seat?

A: Pad around your child (never under or behind) with rolled-up cloth diapers or blankets. Do not use any sort of car safety seat insert unless it came with the seat or was made by the manufacturer of the seat.

Q: Can I adjust the straps when my baby is wearing thicker clothing, like in the winter?

A: Yes, but make sure the harnesses are still snug. Also remember to tighten the straps again after the thicker clothes are no longer needed. Dress your baby in thinner layers instead of a bulky coat or snowsuit, and tuck a blanket around your baby over the buckled harness straps if needed.

Q: Are rear-facing convertible seats OK to use for preemies?

A: Premature infants should be tested while still in the hospital to make sure they can ride safely in a reclined position. Babies who need to lie flat during travel should ride in a crash-tested car bed. Very small infants who can ride safely in a reclined position usually fit better in infant-only seats; however, if you need to use a convertible seat, choose one without a tray-shield or T-shield harness. The shields often are too big and too far from the body to fit correctly.

Safety Information Provided By: The American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)