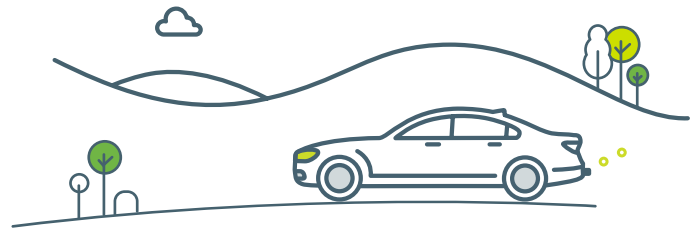


A simple guide to child car seats



Having the right car seat for your child's age, height and weight is the law – but do you know the right one to buy?



Child car seats – the basics

All children in the UK need to use a car seat until they're 12-years old or 135cm tall.

But what type of seat they need depends on their age, height and weight.



Why? It's simply unsafe for your child to be in the wrong seat. Children's bodies behave differently in an accident to an adult's, so need additional support and restraint.

There are currently two different laws governing child car seats - one is based on the weight of your child; the other on their height. Whether you're buying a new car seat, or replacing one because your child's outgrown it, you'll need to buy a seat that conforms to one or both of these regulations.

Child car seat 'groups' – everything you need to know

Child car seats are bought in two ways: either according to your child's weight ('group' seats) or according to their height (i-Size seats). This is to conform to certain regulations.

Group seats:

Child's weight	Group	Seats
0kg-10kg	0	Lie-flat or 'lateral' baby carrier, rear-facing baby carrier, or rear-facing baby seat using a harness
0kg-13kg	0+	Rear-facing baby carrier or rear-facing baby seat using a harness
9kg-18kg	1	Rear- or forward-facing baby seat using a harness or safety shield
15kg-25kg	2	Rear- or forward-facing child car seat
22kg-36kg	3	Rear- or forward-facing child car seat

SOURCE: [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

I-Size:

Child's height	Approx. group in weight-based system	Seats
0-85cm	0+	Rear-facing baby carrier or rear-facing baby seat using a harness
0-105cm	0/1/2	Rear-facing baby seat until your child is at least 15-months old, then rear- or forward-facing child car seat
100cm-135cm	2/3	Rear- or forward-facing child car seat

SOURCE: [Halfords UK](#)



BE AWARE: Some child car seats are designed to last for several years so will overlap group definitions. For example, you can buy a car seat that's suitable for a child from the age of 4 to 12.

What's i-Size? I-Size is the new European-wide car seat regulation based on a child's height. It's designed to make travelling safer for kids by keeping them rear-facing for longer, offering better side protection, and making seats easier to fit correctly using [ISOFIX](#) - a fitting system that allows you to safely secure your child's seat to your car without using the seatbelt.

Both types of seat are safe for your child but the weight-based group system will be phased out over time. At the moment there's no need to replace your existing seat until your child's outgrown it.

Which? have put together a [how to buy the right child car seat guide](#) that explains the range of seats available.



Moving to a booster seat

First: what's a booster seat? A booster seat is designed for a child, usually from four-years, who's outgrown their Group 1 rear- or forward-facing child car seat. It's designed to recreate the protection that an adult's body provides and also raises a child so their seatbelt, designed to fit an adult, can keep them safe.

There are two types of booster seats available: a high-backed booster seat, and a backless booster seat, also known as a booster cushion.

High-backed booster seats offer side and head protection and are secured to the car using the seatbelt or ISOFIX. A booster cushion is simply a way of raising the child so their seatbelt secures them more safely than if they were just sitting on the seat.

What are the laws on booster seats? Your child must use a Group 0 rear-facing baby seat until they're at least 15-months old according to the height-based system, or 9kg according to the weight-based system. After which they can move to a Group 1 rear- or forward-facing child car seat.

High-backed booster seats are available from approx. four-years, and the use of booster cushions are limited to children taller than 125cm and weighing more than 22kg.

Once your child is 12-years old or 135cm, there's no legal requirement for them to use a car seat.

Despite the law, [safety experts recommend children remain rear-facing for as long as possible](#), preferably till they are 4-years old. Why? In a frontal collision, extended rear-facing car seats offer a higher level of protection to a child's delicate head, neck and spine, compared to a forward-facing toddler seat.

[Experts are also concerned that backless seats don't go far enough to protect children](#), particularly during a side-impact crash. They recommend instead that older children who've outgrown their Group 1 rear- or forward-facing child car seats travel in a high-backed booster seat until they're 150cm, the height car seatbelts are designed for.

