

# Buckle Up!

## A Lesson on Car Seat Safety

### Playgroup #11

#### Materials Needed

- Borrow or bring in car owner's manuals and car seat manuals
- You will need a car and car seat for the activity

#### Handouts

- Facts About Car Seats
- Top Ten Car Seat Tips

### Introduction

Bring in a few car seat manuals and car owner's manuals. Have the women in your playgroup get in small groups and give each group a car seat manual and owner's manual. Have them read through the manuals. See if they can determine if the car seat is appropriate for the car and how to install it correctly.

Here are some quick tips to share with the mothers in your playgroup about finding an appropriate car seat.

1. Look for a car seat that has a 5-point harness.



2. Only buy a car seat that you can figure out in the store. If you can't figure it out in the store, it is probably too complicated.
3. Buy a seat that fits your car. Some stores, such as Babies 'R' Us, will allow you to test the seat in your car before you purchase it.
4. Make sure your child meets the seat's weight and height requirements.
5. Go to [www.carseatdata.org](http://www.carseatdata.org) to learn more about what car seat is right for you and your child.

### Lesson Plan

#### Lesson Objectives

- Understand how to correctly use infant, toddler, and booster seats
- Know when and how to safely use the car safety belt on your child
- Know where to go for car seat classes and safety checks

In Utah County, 88% all car seats are used incorrectly. It is important that you understand what type of car seat is appropriate for your child's age and size as well as how to correctly use that car seat so that it protects your child in an accident.

## Infants

- From birth to at least age 1 and 20 pounds (not either or).
- Use a rear-facing car seat positioned in the backseat of the car.
- Use a car seat that is appropriate for your child's weight and height.
- Read the car seat instructions.
- Use the car seat's belt or LATCH system to lock the car seat into the car. It should not move more than 1 inch side to side or front to back. Test it by grabbing the car seat at the safety belt or LATCH path.
- Put harnesses through the slots so they are even with or below the infant's shoulders. Make sure the harness is tight. You should not be able to pinch extra webbing at the shoulder.
- Adjust the chest clip to armpit level.
- Position the car seat rear-facing and reclined no more than 45 degrees so that your baby's head stays in contact with the seat. This will make sure her airway stays open.
- Keep the baby rear-facing until at least age 1 and 20 pounds. Use a rear-facing convertible seat longer if the seat has higher weight and height limits.
- Find where the frontal airbags are in your car by checking the owner's manual. Never put a rear-facing seat in front of an active airbag.

## Toddlers

- Older than age 1 and more than 20 pounds.
- Use a forward-facing car seat positioned in the back seat of your car.
- Use the right car seat with a harness for your toddler's weight and height.
- Use the car's safety belt or LATCH system to lock the car seat into the car. The seat should not move more than 1 inch from side to side or front to back.
- Put harnesses through the slots so they are even with or above the child's shoulders. Some seats require use of the top slots when the seat is forward-facing, so check instructions.
- Be sure the harness is tight. You should not be able to pinch extra webbing at the shoulder.
- Use a top tether if your vehicle and car seat are both so equipped. Tethers limit the forward motion of your child's head in a crash. If you don't have them, contact your car dealer and car seat manufacturer.
- Adjust the chest clip to armpit level.
- A child is too big for a seat when the shoulders are above the top slots, the tops of the ears are above the back of the seat or the weight limit is exceeded. Move to a taller car seat or a booster seat. Many children will outgrow the harness of a forward-facing car seat at age 4 or 5.
- Be sure all occupants wear safety belts at all times. Children learn from adult role models.

## Boosters

- 40 to 80 or 100 pounds
- Use a booster seat correctly in a back seat every time your child rides in a car.
- Older kids get weighed and measured less often than babies. Be sure to check your child's growth a few times a year.
- Use a booster seat until your child weight between 80 and 100 pounds, is about 4'9" tall, and can pass the Safety Belt Fit Test. This is usually between the ages 8 and 12.
- Inform all drivers who transport your child that booster seat use is a must when your child is in their vehicle.
- A booster seat uses no harness. Instead, it uses the vehicle's lap and shoulder belts only. Be sure the safety belt is properly buckled.
- Booster seats are not installed tightly. They sit on the vehicle seat. The child buckles the lap and shoulder belt and wears the safety belt like you do. Never use only the lap belt.
- Use the vehicle's lap and shoulder belts on every booster seat. Never place the shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back.

## Safety Belts

- Move children from booster seats to safety belts in a back seat only after the Safety Belt Fit Test is passed in every vehicle. Return your child to a booster seat if the safety belt does not fit properly.
- Use the Safety Belt Fit Test on any child you transport in your car.
- Ensure that all kids sit upright when using safety belts. Do not allow children to lean against windows or car doors or lie down. Never put the shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind their back.
- Inform every driver who transports your child that safety belt use is a must.
- Teach your child to use a safety belt in a back seat in every vehicle he or she travels in.
- Wear your safety belt as a role model for your child.

## Safety Belt Fit Test

1. Have your child sit all the way back on the vehicle seat. Do his or her knees bend at the front edge of the seat? If they bend naturally, go to #2. If they don't, return to booster seat.
2. Buckle the lap and shoulder belt. Be sure the lap belt lies on the upper legs or hips. If it does, go to #3. If it lies on the stomach, return to the booster seat.
3. Be sure the shoulder belt rests on the shoulder or collarbone. If it does, go to #4. If it's on the face or neck, return to the booster seat. Never put the shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back.
4. Check whether your child maintains the correct seating position for as long as you are in the car. If your child slouches or shifts positions so the safety belt touches the face, neck, or stomach, return your child to the booster seat.

## **Activity**

For this activity you will need to take a little field trip out to your car. Demonstrate for the mothers in your group how to correctly install a car seat. Once you are done, encourage them to get their car seats checked.

The Utah County Health Department has free car seat classes and car seat checks. You can call the Utah County Health Department at 801-851-7035 or 801-851-7068 to set up an appointment.

## **Suggested Reading**

Berenstain Baby Bears: My Trusty Car Seat  
By Stan Berenstain

## **References**

Safe Kids Worldwide, [www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org)

Utah County Health Department, <http://www.co.utah.ut.us/dept/health/>