

IIHS Releases Study Ranking Booster Seats

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Do you have a small child in your family? Then you should know that the [IIHS](#), Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, recently performed an extensive study of 41 common booster seats. Only 15 were recommended. Another 13 performed so poorly they wouldn't provide good seatbelt fit in most vehicles.

Booster Seat Basics

The purpose of a booster seat is to provide a proper fit with a seatbelt designed for an adult. By boosting the child, the safety restraint can better protect them in the event of a crash. [Proper fit](#) includes a lap belt that fits flat across the child's upper thighs and a shoulder belt that sits in the middle of the shoulder firmly.

Lap belts that ride over the abdomen can increase the likelihood of a soft-tissue injury versus the more stable and bony structure of the pelvis. An ill-fitting shoulder belt is less safe and can ride up on the neck of a child or off the shoulder, causing discomfort which leads children to readjust the belt, often resulting in an ineffective restraint.

Fitting the Seat

Though parents may opt to skip the booster seat, this can lead to increased chances of injury in the event of an accident. Using booster seats lowers injury risk by 59 percent compared with belts alone, according to a 2003 study by the Center for Injury Research and Prevention at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Any child that has outgrown a child restraint and measures less than 4 feet, 9 inches tall should be using a booster seat. This ensures that the seat belt will properly restrain the child while protecting vulnerable areas. As a 2006 study by the Center for Injury Research found, child safety seats reduce the risk of fatality among children ages 2-6 by about 28 percent compared with seat belt alone.

The Best and The Worst

The following list was compiled by the [IIHS in their recent study](#). Unless otherwise noted in the name, all boosters are highbacks. The IIHS also has [a complete list](#) of model numbers and manufacture dates.

Best Bets

Graco TurboBooster backless with clip
Fisher-Price Safe Voyage backless with clip
Combi Kobuk backless with clip
Fisher-Price Safe Voyage
Britax Parkway
LaRoche Bros. Teddy Bear
Safeguard Go backless with clip
Volvo booster cushion
Recaro Young Style
Britax Monarch

Good Bets

Graco TurboBooster
Safety Angel Ride Ryte
Recaro Young Sport
Combi Kobuk
Safety 1st/Dorel Apex 65

Not recommended for use

Safety Angel Ride Ryte backless
Cosco/Dorel (Eddie Bauer) Summit
Graco CarGo Zephyr
Evenflo Big Kid Confidence
Cosco/Dorel Traveler
Compass B505
Compass B510
Evenflo Generations
Dorel/Safety 1st (Eddie Bauer) Prospect
Cosco Highback Booster
Cosco/Dorel Alpha Omega
Evenflo Chase Comfort Touch
Safety 1st/Dorel Intera

Rules to Follow

- Children 12 and younger should always ride in the back seat.
- Rear-facing restraints should be used until a child reaches 1 year of age and a minimum of 20 pounds.
- Forward-facing restraints should be used until a child reaches 4 years of age AND weighs at least 40 pounds.
- It's better to wait when transitioning your child from one class of restraint to another than to do so too soon.

- Despite booster seat rankings, it is your responsibility to ensure any given booster seat (or child restraint) fits your child, in your car, properly.

What Kind is Best for Me?

There are two kinds of booster seats: highback and backless.

Highback boosters can sometimes be converted into backless boosters and are especially recommended in vehicles that do not have head restraints in the back seat.

Backless boosters are often more affordable and popular with older children. They may require a plastic clip to properly position the shoulder belt.

Additionally, there are combination seats and three-in-one seats that transition as the child grows.

Regardless of the booster seat style you choose, **the most important factor is fit - fitting your vehicle and fitting your child.**