



Top 12 Most Common Car Seat Mistakes

1. Not installing the car seat tight enough.



The car seat should not move side to side or front to back with more than an inch (1") of 'wiggle room' at the belt path. Pull the belt tight, you can push down on the seat as you pull, and pull the direction of the belt to get the leverage needed.

2. Harness straps are too loose.



The harness straps should be snug enough (with no gaps or twists) to keep the child restrained in the event of a crash. The harness should lay flat against the child's body with no slack. Put your finger underneath the harness strap at the shoulder and pull. If you get any slack, tighten until no slack remains.

3. Retainer clip (or chest clip) is too low.



The retainer clip (chest clip) needs to be at armpit level to secure the child and make sure their shoulders don't slip out in the event of a crash.

4. Turning a child forward-facing too soon.



A child should remain rear-facing until they are at least two-years-old, or to the upper weight/height limits of a rear-facing convertible seat, to maximize safety in the event of a crash. The shell of the car seat protects their spinal column when it is rear-facing by absorbing impact.

5. Adding additional padding, toys or mirrors to a child's car seat.



Using products that have not been tested with the car seat may interfere with how the seat was designed to perform in a crash. Additionally, loose items can become **dangerous projectiles** in a crash. Rule of thumb: If I throw it at my baby, would it hurt?

6. Wearing bulky coats/sweaters while buckled into a car seat.



Bulky coats can create slack in the harness system – always buckle the child first and then place blankets over them after they are harnessed snugly in their seat for warmth. You can also put the coat on them backwards after they are harnessed in their seat.

7. Moving out of a booster seat too soon.



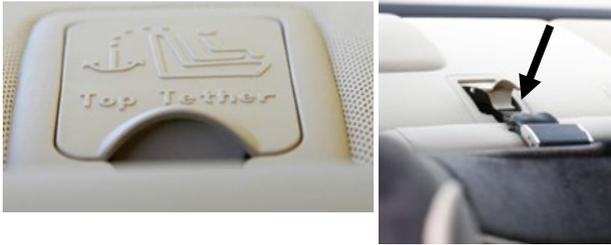
Seat belts are designed to fit adults, not children. Depending on a child's growth and development, a seat belt typically fits properly (lap belt across the hips and shoulder belt across the chest and collarbone) between the ages of 8-12-years-old, or 4'9".

8. Transporting unsecured, heavy items, including pets, in the vehicle.



These items can become dangerous projectiles in the car and seriously injure passengers, especially children. The force at which an object can hit, is weight times speed.

9. Forgetting to hook up the top tether.



The top tether, is a strap that connects the **forward-facing** car seat to the car and restricts the top of the seat from moving forward in a crash. Without this your child's head and neck could be subjected to excessive forward movement in a sudden stop or crash.

10. Installing a car seat using LATCH in the center rear position of a vehicle (when not permitted).



Most vehicles do not support LATCH in the rear center seating position. Always use the vehicle's owner's manual to determine if it supports LATCH in the center position.

11. Installing a car seat using both LATCH and the seat belt.



It's one or the other, as these systems often work against each other in the event of a crash.

12. Allowing a child under 13 to ride in the front seat.



Younger children are not typically large enough to ride safely in the front seat and can be seriously injured by front air bags in the event of a crash.

Car Seat Safety Tips

Crashes can happen anywhere! You should always wear your safety belt whether you are in the front seat or back seat, even if you are just traveling around the block or in a parking lot.

Keep all children secured in proper car seats until they are at least **4-years-old and 40 pounds**. Children should ride in a booster seat after they have outgrown the car seat. New York state law for booster seats is that children must ride in them until age 8. Seat belts are made for adults (typically 4'9" and above). The booster seat helps your child's safety belt fit correctly, and helps them see out the window better.

The back seat is the safest place for all children under 13.

For more information on using choosing the right seat, go to:

www.nhtsa.gov

Source: AAA Chicago

RELATED LINKS:

www.safeseats4kids.aaa.com



Car Seat Safety Education

4 out of 5 car seats are installed incorrectly or used improperly. AAA Hudson Valley's Traffic Safety team are certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians. We can educate you on proper usage and show you how to install your child safety seats correctly. This program is a Free community service, and is available by **appointment only**. Call (518) 426-1000 ext. 2441 to schedule an appointment.

Car Seat Loaner Program

AAA Hudson Valley also offers a free car seat loaner program to members who have a need for a car seat for short periods of time. Certified technicians will help to install the car seat and educate you on proper usage. **You must be a AAA member to take advantage of this program.** Car seat inspections and the loaner program is only available at 618 Delaware Avenue in Albany and is by **appointment only**. Call (518) 426-1000 ext. 2441 to schedule an appointment.

To ensure that a loaner seat is available for you, 3-4 weeks advance notice is required. For a complete listing of services, visit our website at: www.AAA.com

For a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician near you: www.safenyny.gov

