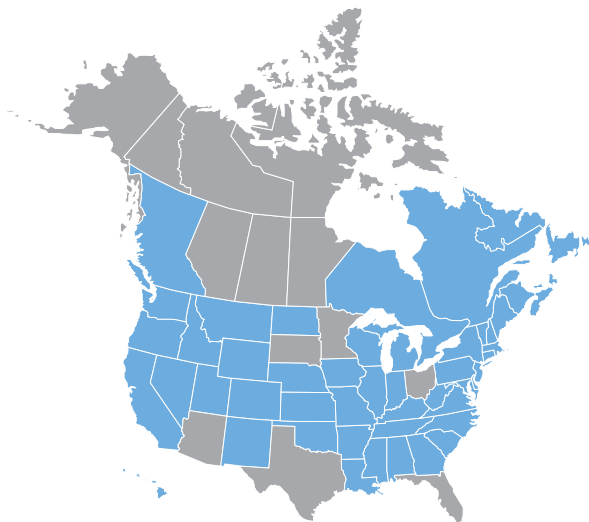




# Guide to U.S. and Canada Booster Seat Laws



-  Child booster seat/restraint required\*
-  No restraint provision required beyond the age of 3 or 4\*



## Why use a booster seat?

Motor vehicle traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for children age 2 to 14. Many parents are surprised to learn that safety belts generally do NOT fit children until they are between 8 and 12 years of age. Vehicle seat belt systems are made to fit people who are at least 4 feet, 9 inches (145 cm) tall. So, until that time, children who have outgrown a car seat with a harness are safest in a booster seat.<sup>1</sup>

A booster seat lifts your child up so that the seat belt fits correctly across the bony areas of the body (hips and collarbone). Putting your child in a seat belt before he is big enough puts him at risk for serious injuries or death in a crash. "Seat belt syndrome" is how doctors describe injuries to the spine and internal organs that can happen to children who are too small for the seat belt.

Remember – car seats and booster seats are designed to protect children and make them comfortable at the same time. There's nothing comfortable about a too-big safety belt cutting into a child's stomach or pressing against his face. Plus, kids who ride on booster seats can easily see many things they would otherwise miss.

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ([www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov))

On Cover: \*As of September 2008

## Who should use a booster seat?

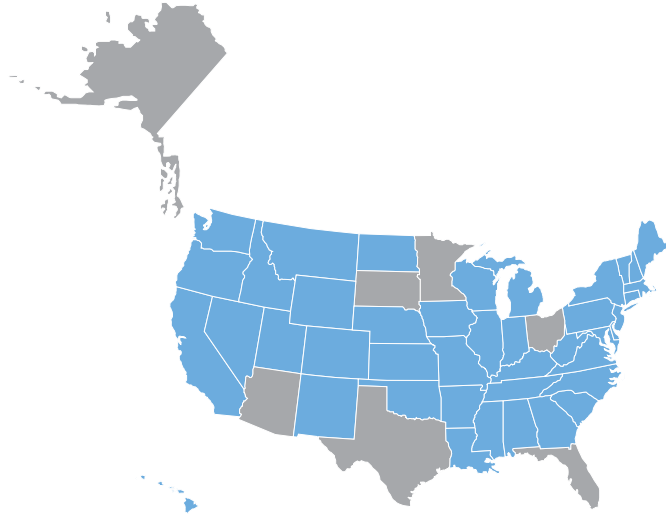
Children should use a booster seat UNTIL they meet the following criteria:

- Weigh between 80 and 100 lbs;
- Reach 4 feet, 9 inches (57 inches) in height; and
- Can pass the Safety Belt Fit Test

## 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 the booster seat.
2. Buckle the lap and shoulder belt. Be sure the lap belt rests on the upper legs or hips. If it does, go to #3. If it rests 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.

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



■ Child booster seat/restraint required\*  
■ No restraint provision required beyond the age of 3 or 4\*

\*As of September 2008

## U.S. Laws by State

The following list provides the booster seat laws for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia according to SafeKids Worldwide. Please note that the laws generally require some older children to ride properly restrained in a booster seat, secured by the motor vehicle's safety belt system. Age coverage and other requirements vary by state.

Please remember that state law does not necessarily represent best practice. We recommend that you follow the laws of your state as the minimum requirements for restraining your child while traveling. Children should use a booster seat until they weigh between 80 and 100 pounds, are about 4 feet, 9 inches tall (57 inches) and can pass the Safety Belt Fit Test. For most children, that will be between ages 8 and 12.

For more information with regard to older children and seat belt laws go to [www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org) and look to the right. Scroll down to "Learn About Child Safety Laws and Regulations: Select the state in question."

For informational purposes only. Please consult local authorities for further interpretation and current status.

### **Alabama**

Alabama law requires children through age 5 to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children are required to use a booster seat until he/she is six years of age. • Children are required to use a forward-facing child safety seat until he/she is at least five years of age or weighs 40 lbs. • Children are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat until he/she is at least one year of age or weighs 20 lbs. • Children ages 6 – 14 are required to use a safety belt.

### **Alaska**

Alaska law requires children under the age of 4 to use a child safety seat.

### **Arizona**

Arizona law requires children under the age of 5 to use a child safety seat.

### **Arkansas**

Arkansas law requires children ages 5 & under and weighing less than 60 lbs to use an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 6 – 14 or weighing at least 60 lbs must use a safety belt.

### **California**

California law requires children ages 5 & under and weighing less than 60 lbs to use an appropriate child safety seat.

### **Colorado**

Colorado law requires children ages 4 – 5 and less than 55 inches in height to use a booster seat. • Children less than one year of age and weighing less than 20 lbs are required to ride in an appropriate rear-facing child safety seat. • Children ages 1 – 3 and weighing more than 20 lbs (but less than 40 lbs) are required to ride in an appropriate forward-facing child safety seat. • Children ages 6 – 15 are required to use a safety belt.

### **Connecticut**

Connecticut law requires children ages 6 & under or weighing less than 60 lbs to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children under age one or weighing less than 20 lbs are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat. • Children ages 7 & older and weighing 60 or more pounds are required to use a child safety seat or a safety belt.

### **Delaware**

Delaware law requires children ages 7 & under and weighing less than 66 lbs to ride in an appropriate child safety seat or booster seat. • Children ages 8 – 15 and weighing more than 65 lbs are required to use a safety belt.

### **District of Columbia**

District of Columbia law requires children ages 7 & under to ride in an appropriate child safety seat or booster seat. • Children ages 8 – 15 are required to use a safety belt or a child safety seat.

[For informational purposes only. Please consult local authorities for further interpretation and current status.](#)

## Florida

Florida law requires children under the age of 4 to use a child safety seat.

## Georgia

Georgia law requires children ages 5 & under to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children weighing at least 40 lbs can be secured in a lap safety belt only, provided that the vehicle is not equipped with both lap and shoulder belts. • Children over 4 feet and 9 inches can be restrained in a safety belt.

## Hawaii

Hawaii law requires children ages 7 & under to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 4 – 7 can use a safety belt if they are over 4'9" in height. • Children ages 4 – 7 and weighing at least 40 lbs can use a lap-only safety belt in the back seat if there are no lap/shoulder belts available. • Children ages 8 – 14 are required to use a safety belt.

## Idaho

Idaho law requires children ages 6 & under to ride in an appropriate child safety seat.

## Illinois

Illinois law requires children ages 7 & under to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 8 – 15 are required to use a safety belt. • Children weighing more than 40 lbs may use a lap belt in the back seat, if the vehicle does not have a combination lap and shoulder belt.

## Indiana

Indiana law requires children ages 7 & under to ride in an appropriate child safety seat (provided that the driver holds an Indiana driver's license). • Children ages 8 – 15 are required to use a child safety seat or safety belt. • Drivers who do not possess an Indiana license are required to restrain children ages 15 & under in a safety belt or child safety seat.

## Iowa

Iowa law requires children ages 5 & under to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 6 – 10 are required to use a child safety seat or safety belt. • Children ages 11 and older are required to use a safety belt when sitting in the front seat.

## Kansas

Kansas law requires children ages 4 – 7, weighing less than 80 lbs or less than 4'9" in height, to use an appropriate child restraint. • Children under the age of 4 are required to be restrained in the most appropriate child safety seat for his or her age. • Children ages 8 – 13 years of age or weighing more than 80 lbs or is more than 4'9", are required to use a safety belt.

## Kentucky

Kentucky law will require children through age 6 who are between 40 – 50 inches tall to use a booster seat. • Violators of the law will receive courtesy warnings until July 1, 2009. • Violations on or after this date will result in a \$30 fine. • First time violators will be allowed to present proof of a booster seat purchase to escape the fine.

[For informational purposes only. Please consult local authorities for further interpretation and current status.](#)

### **Louisiana**

Louisiana law requires children ages 5 & under or weighing 60 lbs or less to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 4 – 5 or weighing 40 – 60 lbs are required to use a booster seat. • Children ages 1 – 3 or weighing 20 – 39 pounds are required to use a forward-facing child safety seat. • Children younger than age one or weighing less than 20 lbs are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat.

### **Maine**

Maine law requires children weighing less than 40 lbs to use an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 7 & under and weighing at least 40 lbs but under 80 pounds are required to use an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 8 – 17 or ages 17 & under and more than 4'7" in height are required to use a safety belt. • Children ages 11 & under and weighing less than 100 lbs are required to ride properly secured in the rear seat, if possible.

### **Maryland**

Maryland law requires children to be in a child safety seat up to their 8th birthday, unless they weigh more than 65 lbs or are 4'9" or taller. • Children ages 8 – 15 are required to use a child safety seat or safety belt.

### **Massachusetts**

Massachusetts law requires children through age 7 to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children taller than 57 inches in height and children ages 8 – 12 are required to ride in a safety belt.

### **Michigan**

Michigan law requires children under the age of 8 and less than 4'9" in height to use a child safety seat.

### **Minnesota**

Minnesota law requires children under the age of 4 to use a child safety seat.

### **Mississippi**

Mississippi law requires children ages 4 – 6 and less than 4'9" in height or less than 65 lbs in weight to use a booster seat. • Children ages 3 & under are required to use a child safety seat. • Children ages 6 & under who are not required to use a child safety seat or booster seat must use a safety belt.

### **Missouri**

Missouri law requires children ages 4 – 7 weighing at least 40 lbs but under 80 lbs, and less than 4'9" to use an appropriate child safety seat. • Children less than four years of age (regardless of weight) and children weighing less than 40 lbs (regardless of age) are required to use an appropriate child safety seat. • Children weighing at least 80 lbs or children more than 4'9" in height are required to use a safety belt or booster seat.

### **Montana**

Montana law requires children ages 5 & under and weighing less than 60 lbs to an appropriate child safety seat.

*For informational purposes only. Please consult local authorities for further interpretation and current status.*

### **Nebraska**

Nebraska law requires children ages 5 & under to use an appropriate child safety seat.

- Children ages 6 – 15 must use a safety belt.

### **Nevada**

Nevada law requires children ages 5 & under and weighing 60 lbs or less to use an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 6 – 17 or children ages 5 & under and weighing more than 60 lbs are required to use a safety belt.

### **New Hampshire**

New Hampshire law requires children ages 5 & under and less than 55 inches in height to use an appropriate child safety seat.

### **New Jersey**

New Jersey law requires children ages 7 & under and weighing less than 80 lbs to use an appropriate child safety seat or booster seat in the back seat. • Children ages 7 & under and weighing more than 80 lbs are required to use a safety belt. • Children ages 8 – 17 are required to use safety belts.

### **New Mexico**

New Mexico law requires children under the age of 7 (regardless of weight) or children who weigh less than 60 lbs (regardless of age) to use a child safety seat. Children under the age of 1 are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat in the rear seat.

### **New York**

New York law requires children ages 6 & under to ride in an appropriate child safety seat.

### **North Carolina**

North Carolina law requires children ages 7 & under and less than 80 lbs to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 7 & under and weighing between 40 – 80 lbs can be secured in a lap safety belt only, provided that the vehicle is not equipped with both lap and shoulder belts.

### **North Dakota**

North Dakota law requires children ages 6 & under to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 6 & under who are at least 57 inches in height and who weigh at least 80 lbs are not required to use a child safety seat. • Children weighing more than 40 lbs can be restrained by a lap safety belt if the vehicle is not equipped with lap and shoulder belts, or if all lap and shoulder belts are in use by other passengers. • Children ages 7 – 17 are required to use a child safety seat or safety belt.

### **Ohio**

Ohio law requires children under the age of 4 and weighing less than 40 lbs to use a child safety seat.

[For informational purposes only. Please consult local authorities for further interpretation and current status.](#)

### **Oklahoma**

Oklahoma law requires children ages 5 & under to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 6 – 12 are required to use a child safety seat or safety belt. • Children weighing more than 40 lbs may use a lap safety belt if rear seating positions do not have a lap and shoulder belt system.

### **Oregon**

Oregon law requires children through age 7, weighing more than 40 lbs and measuring 4'9" or shorter to use a booster seat. • Children weighing 40 lbs or less are required to use an appropriate child safety seat. • Children under age one, regardless of weight, or children weighing 20 lbs or less, must be properly secured in a rear-facing child safety seat.

### **Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvania law requires children under the age of 8 to use a child safety seat.

### **Rhode Island**

Rhode Island law requires children ages 6 & under, less than 54 inches in height, and weighing less than 80 lbs to use an appropriate child safety seat in the back seat. • Children ages 6 & under, 54 inches in height or more, and weighing 80 lbs or more are required to use a safety belt in the back seat.

### **South Carolina**

South Carolina law requires children ages 5 & under and weighing between 40 – 80 lbs to use a booster seat in the back seat. • Children ages 5 & under and weighing more than 80 lbs who can sit with their backs straight against the vehicle seat back cushions, with their knees bent over the vehicle's seat edge without slouching, may use a safety belt in the back seat. • Children ages 0 – 1 or weighing less than 20 lbs must use a rear-facing child safety seat in the back seat. • Children ages 1 – 5 and weighing between 20 – 39 lbs must use a forward-facing child safety seat in the back seat.

### **South Dakota**

South Dakota law requires children under the age of 5 and weighing less than 40 lbs to use a child safety seat.

### **Tennessee**

Tennessee law requires children ages 4 – 8 and measuring less than 4'9" in height to use a booster seat (in the rear seat, if available). • Children under age 1 or children weighing 20 lbs or less are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat (in the rear seat, if available). • Children ages 1 – 3 and weighing more than 20 lbs are required to use a forward-facing child safety seat (in the rear seat, if available). • Children ages 9 – 12 (or any child through age 12) measuring 4'9" or more in height are required to use a safety belts (in the rear seat, if available). • Children ages 13 – 15 are required to use a safety belt (in the rear seat, if available).

[For informational purposes only. Please consult local authorities for further interpretation and current status.](#)

### **Texas**

Texas law requires children under the age of 5 and less than 36 inches in height to use a child safety seat.

### **Utah**

Utah law requires children through age 7 to use an appropriate child safety seat.

- Children ages 7 and under who are 57 inches or taller may use a safety belt.
- Children ages 8 and up are required to use a safety belt.

### **Vermont**

Vermont law requires children ages 1 – 7 and weighing more than 20 lbs to use an appropriate child safety seat. • Children under the age of one (regardless of weight and children weighing less than 20 lbs (regardless of age) are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat. • Children ages 8 – 15 are required to use a child safety seat or a safety belt.

### **Virginia**

Virginia law requires children ages 7 & under to use an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 8 – 15 are required to use a safety belt.

### **Washington**

Washington law requires children ages 7 & under to use an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 8 or older, or 4'9" in height or taller can be restrained by a safety belt or an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 12 & under should sit in the back seat when practical.

### **West Virginia**

West Virginia law requires children ages 7 & under to ride in an appropriate child safety seat. • Children ages 7 & under and at least 4'9" tall can be restrained by a safety belt.

### **Wisconsin**

Wisconsin law requires children ages 4 – 7, weighing between 40 – 80 lbs and no more than 57 inches in height to ride in a booster seat. • Children ages 1 – 3 and weighing between 20 – 39 lbs are required to use a forward-facing child safety seat in the back seat if possible. • Children less than one year of age or weighing less than 20 lbs are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat in the back seat if possible.

**Wyoming** law requires children ages 8 and under to use an appropriate child safety seat.

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

For informational purposes only. Please consult local authorities for further interpretation and current status.

## Canadian Laws by Province/Territory

The following list provides car seat and booster seat laws, according to Safe Kids Canada, for each of the 10 provinces and 3 territories. Please note that the laws generally require some older children to ride properly restrained in a booster seat, secured by the motor vehicle's safety belt system. Age coverage and other requirements vary by province/territory.

Please remember that local law does not necessarily represent best practice. We recommend that you follow the laws of your province as the minimum requirements for restraining your child while traveling. Children should use a booster seat until they weigh between 80 and 100 lbs, are about 4 feet, 9 inches tall (57 inches) and can pass the Safety Belt Fit Test. For most children, that will be between ages 8 and 12.



- Child booster seat/restraint required\*
- No restraint provision required beyond the age of 3 or 4\*

\*As of September 2008

For informational purposes only. Please consult local authorities for further interpretation and current status.

### **Alberta**

Children must ride in a car seat until they are a minimum of 6 years old or over 40 pounds (18 kg). • No provision after children reach 40 lbs (18 kg).

### **British Columbia**

Children must ride in a rear facing car seat until they are a minimum of 20 pounds (9 kg) and at least 1 year of age. Children who are at least 1 year of age, at least 20 pounds (9 kg) but less than 40 pounds (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. Children must ride in a booster seat until they are a minimum of 4 feet, 9 inches (145 cm) tall, or a minimum of 9 years old.

### **Manitoba**

Children must ride in a car seat until they are a minimum of 5 years old and a minimum of 50 pounds (23 kg). • No provision after children reach 40 lbs (18 kg).

### **New Brunswick**

Children must ride in a car seat until they are a minimum of 5 years old or more than 40 pounds (18 kg). • Children must ride in a booster seat until they are a minimum of 4 feet, 9 inches (145 cm) tall, or a minimum of 36 kg (79 pounds), or a minimum of 9 years old.

### **Newfoundland and Labrador**

Children must ride in a rear facing car seat until they are a minimum of 20 pounds (9 kg). • Children who are at least 20 pounds (9 kg) but less than 40 pounds (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. • Children must ride in a booster seat until they are a minimum of 4 feet, 9 inches (145 cm) tall, or more than 80 pounds (36 kg), or a minimum of 9 years old.

### **Northwest Territories**

Children must ride in a rear facing car seat until they are a minimum of 20 pounds (9 kg). • Children who are at least 20 pounds (9 kg) but less than 40 pounds (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. • No provision after children reach 40 lbs (18 kg).

### **Nova Scotia**

Children must ride in a rear facing car seat until they are a minimum of 22 pounds (10 kg) and at least 1 year of age. • Children who are at least 1 year of age, at least 22 pounds (10 kg) but less than 40 pounds (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. • Children must ride in a booster seat until they are a minimum of 4 feet, 9 inches (145 cm) tall, or a minimum of 9 years old.

### **Nunavut**

Children must ride in a rear facing car seat until they are a minimum of 20 pounds (9 kg). • Children who are at least 20 pounds (9 kg) but less than 40 pounds (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. • No provision after children reach 40 lbs (18 kg).

[For informational purposes only. Please consult local authorities for further interpretation and current status.](#)

**Ontario** Children must ride in a rear facing car seat until they are a minimum of 20 pounds (9 kg). • Children who are at least 20 pounds (9 kg) but less than 40 pounds (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. • Children must ride in a booster seat until they are a minimum of 4 feet, 9 inches (145 cm) tall, or a minimum of 80 pounds (36 kg), or a minimum of 8 years old.

**Prince Edward Island** Children must ride in a rear facing car seat until they are a minimum of 22 pounds (10 kg) or a minimum of 1 year of age. • Children who are at least 22 pounds (10 kg) but less than 40 pounds (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. • Children must ride in a booster seat if they are 40 pounds (18 kg) or more (maximum weight based on booster seat manufacturer's recommendations). They must ride in a booster seat until they are 4 feet, 9 inches (145 cm) tall, or a minimum of 10 years old.

**Quebec** Children must ride in a car seat or booster seat until they have a minimum seated height (measured from the seat to the top of the head) of 25 inches (63 cm). The car seat or booster seat must fit the child's height and weight.

**Saskatchewan** Children must ride in a car seat that is appropriate for their size until they are a minimum of 40 pounds (18 kg). • No provision after children reach 40 lbs (18 kg).

**Yukon** Children under the age of 6 must ride in a rear facing car seat until they are a minimum of 20 pounds (9 kg). • Children under the age of 6 who are at least 20 pounds (9 kg) but less than 48 pounds (22 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. • New legislation currently under development. Until then, no provision after children reach the age of 6 or are over 48 lbs (22 kg).

Source: Safe Kids Canada. You will find specific information pertaining to your province or territory under the public policy and advocacy tab, then choose "Solution: Mandatory Booster Seat Use."

For informational purposes only. Please consult local authorities for further interpretation and current status. All height and weight measurement conversions are approximates and are provided for convenience purposes only.

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