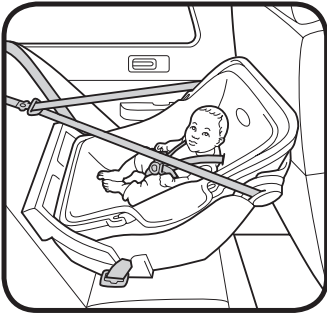


Choosing the right restraint for your child.



Your guide to South Australia's child restraint laws.



Government
of South Australia

Choosing the right restraint for your child

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South Australian Child Restraint Laws Effective 1 July 2010.

www.sa.gov.au/restraints

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Introduction



This booklet will help you to:

- Understand South Australia's child restraint laws.
- Choose safe restraints for your growing child.
- Decide when to move your child to the next type of restraint.
- Explain the Australian Standard for child restraints.
- Develop life-long safety practices for you and your family.

Each year in Australia many children are injured or killed in road crashes by not wearing the right restraint.

To ensure the safety of your child and to comply with the law, children must be restrained correctly at all times, even when driving at low speeds or on short trips.

South Australia's child restraint road laws have been created to help ensure that as children grow, they are always placed in the restraint that offers the best protection in a crash.

Nothing else offers the same level of crash protection for babies and young children as a properly fitted child restraint.

South Australia's child restraint laws

Children need to be kept safe in different restraints as their bodies grow. They start with a rearward-facing infant restraint, progress to a forward-facing child safety seat and finally graduate to a booster seat before using an adult seatbelt when they are tall enough.

Children must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats.

If your car has one row of seats the child must be correctly restrained in an approved restraint in the front seat.

If a child is required to travel in the front row where there are airbags present, you should always follow the specifications from the child restraint manufacturer.

Children up to 6 months:

Must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats and must use an approved infant restraint that is:

- Rearward-facing.
- Properly fitted to the vehicle.
- Adjusted to fit the child's body correctly.

More information is provided on page 6-8.

Children aged 6 months to 4 years:

Must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats.

- Must use EITHER an approved rearward-facing infant restraint OR an approved forward-facing child safety seat with an inbuilt harness that is:
 - Properly fitted to the vehicle.
 - Adjusted to fit the child's body correctly.

More information is provided on page 10-12.

Children aged 4 to 7 years:

Must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats, unless all the other back seats are occupied by children who are also under 7 years.

- Must use EITHER a properly fastened and adjusted approved forward-facing child safety seat with an inbuilt harness; OR use an approved booster seat and be restrained with a properly fastened and adjusted lap-sash seatbelt or child safety harness.

More information is provided on page 13-16.

South Australia's child restraint laws

(Continued)

Exemptions and penalties

Drivers are responsible for ensuring that all occupants (including themselves) are properly restrained. Penalties include demerit points and expiation fees.

This does not apply to drivers of buses or motor bikes. Exemptions also exist for the following:

- A person for whom a certificate signed by a medical practitioner is produced by the driver of the vehicle.*
- A person for whom a certificate of exemption issued by the Minister for Transport is produced by the driver of the vehicle.*
- A person travelling in a historic vehicle that is registered and driven in accordance with the conditions of registration.

*NOTE: This exemption does not apply if the certificate is not produced on request by the driver of the vehicle.

In a vehicle where there are insufficient seatbelts for all occupants, priority must be given to children under 16 years of age. All children under the age of 7 years must be in an approved child restraint regardless of the position they occupy.

Taxis

Taxi drivers are not required to provide child restraints or booster seats. Taxi drivers are exempt from responsibility for passengers under 1 year old and must ensure children over 1 year old are seated with a properly fastened and adjusted seatbelt if no child restraint is available.

- Children under 1 year old do not have to use a restraint, but they must travel in the back seat.
- Children over 1 and under 7 years old should be seated in their own seating position in a taxi, with their own properly fastened seatbelt if no suitable child restraint or booster seat is available in the taxi and must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats.

Safely restraining your child

Nothing else offers the same level of crash protection for babies and young children as a properly fitted child restraint.

Restraints fall into three basic categories - infant restraints, child safety seats and booster seats. Taking the time to read through this booklet will help you choose the right child restraint for your child's age, weight and height.

Familiarise yourself with your child's restraint and make sure that it fits, is installed correctly and when to move up to the next type of restraint.

Children need different restraints as they grow. To provide maximum safety benefits, the restraint must match the size of the child and be properly installed and adjusted to fit the child's body. If a child is too large for the restraint specified for their age group they should use the restraint specified for the next age group.

It is important that your child grow out of one type of restraint before moving to the next type of restraint.

- The back seat is safer.
- The middle position is safest.
- A lap only belt should always be used with a child safety harness.
- A lap-sash belt must be used if one is available.

- Do not move children into bigger seats or the front seat of a vehicle when not appropriate for their size.
- Seatbelts are not suitable for young children.

When fitting a restraint into your vehicle, always follow the specifications from the child restraint manufacturer. If you have any concerns, contact a child restraint fitting centre for advice. See page 24.

- Dress children in comfortable clothing that is appropriate for the temperature inside the car.
- Plan plenty of stops so that children can stretch their legs and the driver can take a break.
- Ensure pets are restrained.
- Remove all loose objects on the shelf behind the back seat. In a crash they may fly about and injure passengers.

Children with special needs

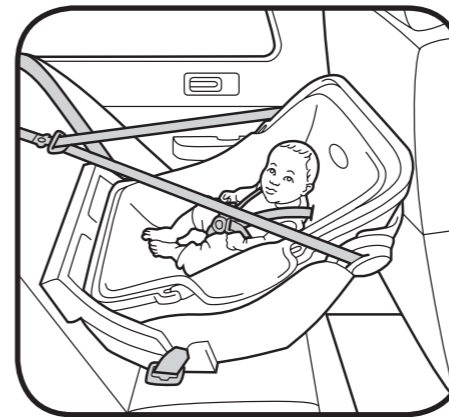
If your child has special needs it is recommended to seek advice from an occupational therapist or child restraint fitting centre. See page 24.



Children up to 6 months

- Must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats.
- Must use an approved infant restraint that is:
 - Rearward-facing.
 - Properly fitted to the vehicle.
 - Adjusted to fit the child's body correctly.

Children up to 6 months



Rearward facing baby capsule.

The restraint must be properly installed and adjusted to fit the child's body.

When fitting a restraint into your vehicle, always follow the specifications from the child restraints manufacturer. If you have any concerns, contact a child restraint fitting centre for advice. See page 24.

Children up to 6 months old must use an approved rearward-facing infant restraint and must never travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats. If your car has one row of seats the child must be restrained in an approved restraint in the front seat.

Child restraint manufactures and the current Australian Standard specify that a rear-facing child restraint should not be used in the front seat where an airbag is fitted.

A rearward-facing infant restraint allows a child to lie down and, in a crash, gives support and protection to the head and neck – the most vulnerable parts of a child's body.

Choosing a rearward-facing child restraint

Choosing your child's first restraint can be a challenge as there are so many to choose from. You may need to visit a restraint fitting centre for advice and installation (see page 24). In some vehicles, such as station wagons or hatchbacks, extension straps may be needed to install the restraint.

Children up to 6 months

(Continued)

There are single purpose restraints for rearward-facing usage only and convertible restraints, which can be used as a rearward and forward-facing child restraint.

Always ensure that your child fits within either the weight guidelines and/or height guidelines for the respective restraint.

Fitting a rearward-facing infant restraint

Restraints must not be used on vehicle seats that face the rear or the side of the vehicle. The specifications from the child restraint manufacturer will show you where the seatbelt should pass through the restraint. If you have a convertible restraint, make sure you follow the instructions for rearward-facing use.

Push the restraint into the vehicle seat while removing all slack from the seatbelt by pulling it firmly after you have fastened the buckle.

The tether strap attaches to a child restraint anchorage point in your vehicle. There is usually one anchorage point for each back seat seating position; however, if your car has a split rear seat, there may not be an anchorage point in the centre.

A restraint fitting centre can provide some options as to how you can deal with this situation. In sedans the anchorage point is usually in

the shelf behind the back seat. In a station wagon and hatchback it may be in the roof, in the back of the seat or on the floor. Your vehicle owner's manual will show you where they are located. The tether strap attaches to the anchorage point by a hook.

The tether strap prevents the restraint from tipping forwards or sideways in a crash, but it should not be pulled so tight that the back of the restraint is lifted off the seat; firm but not tight is recommended. If you are in any doubt that the restraint is correctly installed, have it checked at a restraint fitting centre. See page 24.

Adjusting a rearward-facing infant restraint

The harness inside the restraint must be adjusted so the shoulder straps are coming from the pair of slots that are level or just above the baby's shoulders. The harness is then adjusted to fit the baby as snugly as possible, with the shoulder and the crotch strap fastening between the baby's legs. Blankets should go on after the harness is fastened. Keep in mind that restraints need to be adjusted depending on the type of clothing being worn by your child.

As the baby grows you will need to move the shoulder straps to the next pair of slots.

Children up to 6 months

(Continued)

Using a rearward-facing infant restraint

Every time your baby travels in the restraint, you should check:

- The seatbelt is correctly passed through the restraint, is done up and the slack removed.
- The harness straps are not twisted and come from above the baby's shoulders (they must NOT come from below the shoulders).
- The harness fits the baby's body snugly (this will vary according to the amount of clothing the baby is wearing).
- The tether strap is fastened to the anchor fitting and is firm, but not tight.

Once your baby has reached the maximum weight/height size limits for the rearward-facing restraint, has good head and neck control and is over 6 months old, a forward-facing restraint may be used. If your baby reaches the maximum size limits for that restraint before 6 months, you should seek advice from a child restraint fitting centre. See page 24.



Children aged 6 months to 4 years

- Must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats.
- Must use EITHER an approved rearward-facing infant restraint OR an approved forward-facing child safety seat with an inbuilt harness that is:
 - Properly fitted to the vehicle.
 - Adjusted to fit the child's body correctly.

Children aged 6 months to 4 years



Forward-facing child safety seat with an inbuilt harness.

Children in this age group must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats.

Children grow at different rates between the age of 6 months and 4 years, so a child may use EITHER a rearward-facing infant restraint OR a forward-facing child safety seat with an inbuilt harness, depending on their size and the weight limitations of the restraint.

Because rearward-facing travel is safer, you should only move your child to a forward-facing child safety seat when they've reached the weight and/or height limits of their rearward-facing restraint.

Turning 6 months old does not necessarily mean the child is ready to be placed in a forward-facing child safety seat.

Choosing a forward-facing child restraint

There are three kinds of approved forward-facing child restraints:

- Dedicated forward-facing child safety seat (8–18 kg).
- Convertible child safety seats in forward-facing mode with an upper weight limit of 18 kg.
- Combination restraints that can be used as a forward-facing child safety seat (8–18 kg) and then booster seat (18–26 kg).

Children aged 6 months to 4 years

(Continued)

Fitting a forward-facing child safety seat

Follow the specifications from the child restraint manufacturer, it will show you where the seatbelt should pass through the restraint.

If you have a convertible restraint, make sure you follow the instructions for forward-facing use. If you have a combination child safety seat/booster seat, make sure you follow the instructions for the child safety seat use. Push the restraint into the vehicle seat whilst removing all slack from the seatbelt by pulling it firmly after you have fastened the buckle. The tether strap attaches to the child restraint anchorage point in your vehicle. It should be firm but not tight.

Adjusting a forward-facing child safety seat

The harness inside the restraint must be adjusted so the shoulder straps are coming from the pair of slots that are level or just above the child's shoulders. The harness is then adjusted to fit the child as snugly as possible, with shoulder and the crotch strap fastening between the child's legs. As the child grows you will need to move the shoulder straps to the next pair of slots.

Using a forward-facing child safety seat

Every time your child travels in the restraint, you should check:

- The seatbelt is correctly passed through the restraint, it is fastened, not twisted and the slack removed.
- The harness straps are level or come from above the child's shoulders.
- The harness fits the child's body snugly (this will vary according to the amount of clothing the child is wearing).
- The tether strap is fastened to the anchor fitting and is firm but not tight.

Keep your child in the forward-facing child safety seat until the child reaches either the weight guidelines and/or height guidelines for that restraint.

If the child reaches the upper weight limit or is too tall to fit in the seat before reaching the age of 4 years, your child can use an approved booster seat restrained by either a lap-sash seatbelt or child safety harness.



Children aged 4 to 7 years

- Must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats, unless all the other back seats are occupied by children who are also under 7 years.
- Must use EITHER a properly fastened and adjusted approved forward-facing child safety seat with an inbuilt harness OR use an approved booster seat and be restrained with a properly fastened and adjusted lap-sash seatbelt or child safety harness.

Children aged 4 to 7 years



Booster seat with child safety harness.

Children in this age group must not travel in the front seat of a vehicle that has two or more rows of seats unless all the other back seats are occupied by children who are also under 7 years.



Booster seat with lap-sash seatbelt.

A child may use EITHER a forward-facing child safety seat with an inbuilt harness OR an approved booster seat with lap-sash seatbelt. If you are using a seating position with a lap-only seatbelt, you must also use a child safety harness.

Remember that children grow at different rates. Just because they have turned 4 years old does not mean they are ready for a booster seat. If your child is still under 18 kg and fitting in the forward-facing child safety seat with inbuilt harness, keep using this restraint.

Choosing a booster seat

There are two kinds of approved booster seats:

- Dedicated booster seats (14–26 kg).
- Combination child safety seat/booster seats (8–26 kg).

Ensure that your child fits within either the weight guidelines and/or height guidelines for that restraint.

Children aged 4 to 7 years (Continued)

Fitting a booster seat

If you have a combination child safety seat/booster seat, follow the specifications from the child restraint manufacturer for booster seat use. If your booster seat comes with a tether strap, it must be used. If you need to use the booster seat in a front seating position or in a third row seating position with no anchorage point, you will need to purchase a booster seat with no tether strap.

Using a booster seat

Booster seats are designed to be used with a lap-sash seatbelt. The seatbelt holds both the child and the booster seat in place. The lap part of the belt should pass over the child's upper thighs and across the hips (not across the child's stomach). The sash part of the seatbelt should pass over the child's shoulder and pass diagonally across the body. The sash should not rub against the child's neck or face. A sash guide is usually located on the side or back of the booster seat, or at the bottom section of the headrest for a booster seat with an adjustable headrest.

Some booster seats also have a seatbelt guide for the lap part of the belt. If your child's booster has one of these, be sure to pass the lap part of the belt through the buckle to ensure correct placement of the lap part of the belt. If the seatbelt does not appear to be fitting your child correctly, you may need to visit a restraint fitting centre for advice.

Most booster seats can also be used in conjunction with child safety harnesses. If you are using a booster seat in a lap-only seatbelt seating position, you must also use a child safety harness. In some vehicles it's possible to have the lap only seatbelt replaced with a lap-sash seatbelt. A restraint fitting centre can refer you to places that provide this service. See page 24.

Always restrain the booster seat with the seatbelt when the booster is not in use to stop the empty seat from moving around the vehicle in a crash and potentially causing injury to other passengers.

Keep children in boosters seats for as long as possible. But you must ensure that your child fits within either the weight guidelines and/or height guidelines for that restraint.

If using a booster cushion, a good indicator that the child has outgrown the seat is when their eye level reaches the top of the vehicle seat or the child has reached the maximum weight.

Booster cushions (that is, seats with no backs) do not provide any side impact protection and are not recommended. However, if a booster seat is used, it should not be used in seating positions next to doors and windows. These boosters should only be used in the centre of the rear row with a lap-sash seatbelt.

Children aged 4 to 7 years

(Continued)

Dikki seats

Dikki seats are allowed for passengers aged over four years. A dikki seat is a retro fitted seat that comes in various forms that is generally fitted to the cargo area of a station wagon to allow for additional small passengers. Dikki seats provide a good seatbelt fit for small passengers, however they do not offer the same level of protection as a booster seat as there's no side impact protection.

Child safety harness

It is worth noting that a child safety harness is not an inbuilt harness: it is an additional product to purchase. A child safety harness attaches to a child restraint anchorage point or an attachment on the upper tether of a booster seat. A harness is sometimes used by children aged approximately 4 to 10 years (14–32 kg), particularly where there is no option other than a lap-only belt. Harnesses can be used in conjunction with most booster seats, however, if you plan to use a harness with a booster seat, ensure that the booster seat is compatible with the harness. As there are different types of harnesses check the booster seat instructions to see which type is recommended.

Recent Australian research showed that a harness offers no more protection than a correctly fitted lap-sash seatbelt.

However, it is recommended to use a child safety harness in situations where:

- It is not possible to replace your lap-only seatbelt with a lap-sash seatbelt.
- A child does not wear their seatbelt correctly (e.g. places sash part under their arm).
- A child has special needs.
- A child graduates at an early age to a booster because of their size.

If using a child safety harness with a booster seat, it is recommended you use a booster seat with an anti-submarining clip to hold the lap part of the seatbelt down low across the hips. If you are using a child safety harness, ensure that the shoulder straps are not too tight and that the lap part of the belt is adjusted so that it is firm and very low across the hips, otherwise it may ride up into the child's stomach area; this could cause serious injury or even death in a crash.

You should always ensure that the harness is fitted correctly every time it is used. If you're unsure how to install and use a harness, you should seek advice from a restraint fitting centre. See page 24.



Children aged 7 years and older

Must use EITHER a properly fastened and adjusted approved child restraint OR a seatbelt that is properly adjusted and fastened.

Children aged 7 years and older



Lap-sash seatbelt.

If a child is 7 years or older and has not reached the maximum weight/height for the seat they should continue using it until they are tall enough for the seatbelt to fit properly. If a child has outgrown their current booster and is still not able to wear a seatbelt correctly it may be possible to obtain a larger booster. Contact a child restraint fitting centre for advice. See page 24. It is safer for children of any age to travel in the back seat. Research suggests that a seatbelt will fit a child properly when they are around 140 cm tall. It is therefore important to check whether your child is tall enough to be safely restrained by a seatbelt.

There must be only one passenger for each seating position and one seatbelt for each passenger.

Children who are not yet tall enough to use a seatbelt tend to slump into the vehicle seat so that their legs bend at the seat edge. This means the lap part of the seatbelt is positioned too high on their stomach and they are at risk of serious injury in a crash.

Lap-sash seatbelts provide greater protection than lap-only seatbelts. If there is a lap-only seatbelt in your car, it can be used with a properly fitting child safety harness by a child up to 32 kg (approximately 10 years of age). A restraint fitting centre can refer you to places that replace lap-only seatbelts with lap-sash seatbelts. See page 24.

A seatbelt fits properly if:

- The sash part of the seatbelt sits flat on the shoulder without touching the face or neck.
- The lap part of the seatbelt crosses low over the hips, not the abdomen.
- It is not twisted.
- All slack is removed.

If your child is 7 years or older and still fits in their booster seat, keep using it until they have outgrown it.



Seatbelts and pregnancy

Pregnant women must wear seatbelts too.

Seatbelts and pregnancy



Pregnant women must wear seatbelts too.

A properly fitted seatbelt will protect both you and your unborn baby in a crash.

Keep in mind that if you have a medical condition or disability that makes it unsafe for you to use a seatbelt, you will need a certificate from a registered medical practitioner that states the reasons and the timeframe. You will also need to carry the certificate whenever you travel by car and produce it when asked by a police officer or other authorised person.

Correct use of a seatbelt

Place the lap part of the belt:

- Over your upper thighs.
- Across your hips.
- Below your baby.

Place the sash part of the seatbelt:

- Over your shoulder.
- Diagonally across your body between your breasts.
- Above your baby.

The sash should not rub against your neck or upper arm.

Many cars have adjustable sash positioning arrangements to prevent this. Make sure:

- No part of the seatbelt is twisted.
- All slack is removed by pulling firmly on the sash part of the belt after you have buckled up.

Choosing a child restraint

Important things to consider when choosing a suitable restraint for your child:

- Child restraints must be approved to the Australian Standard AS 1754. An approved child restraint is easily identified by the certification mark shown on the next page.
- The new standard replaces weight guide lines with minimum and maximum shoulder height lines marked on the restraints.
- Ensure that your child fits within either the weight guidelines and/or height guidelines for that restraint.
- In smaller cars, some larger booster seats along with some convertible child restraints in the rearward position do not fit well. Seat contouring in some cars can also affect how well some restraints may fit.
- Overseas restraints may not comply with the Australian Standard AS 1754 and therefore are illegal for use in Australia. Unless there is a sticker on the child restraint and packaging that states that it complies with AS 1754, it is not an approved restraint.

- A large restraint, especially in the rearward position, can push the front seat so far forward that a passenger may not be safely accommodated in the front.
- Some restraints have a reclined position for when your child is asleep.
- Keep in mind that you may need to make sure you can accommodate additional restraints for other children you may transport.
- Not all child restraints are the same. Some are easier to adjust and install than others. Before buying a new child restraint ask your retailer to show you how it fits into your car and how and when it should be adjusted.
- Booster cushions (that is, seats with no backs) do not provide any side impact protection and are not recommended. However, if a booster seat is used, it should not be used in seating positions next to doors and windows. These boosters should only be used in the centre of the rear row with a lap-sash seatbelt.

Choosing a child restraint

(Continued)

- A seatbelt sash guide on a booster seat will position the seatbelt so that it sits properly on the child's shoulder.
- To prevent a child from slipping under the seatbelt in a crash (sometimes called 'submarining'), some booster seats use a clip attached to the lap part of the seatbelt. Others use the design of the base of the seat itself.

'Try before you buy' if possible, to satisfy yourself that the restraint will be suitable for you, your vehicle and your family's needs. For advice on which restraint is most suitable for your needs, contact a child restraints fitting centre on page 24.

Old label



New label



Second-hand child restraints

If you are considering a second-hand child restraint, ensure that you check:

- That it is approved to the Australian Standard 1754.
- The condition (check for signs of wear, frayed straps and buckles that don't work).
- The history – be sure that it has not been involved in a crash.
- That it is not more than ten years old (older restraints may not provide as much protection in a crash).
- That all the parts, including the instruction booklet, are included.

You should only consider using a second-hand restraint owned by someone you know and trust. If you are unsure of the age of your restraint, contact the child restraint manufacturer or seek advice from a child restraints fitting centre listed on page 24.

Do not accept a child restraint that has:

- Been in a crash—even if there is no obvious damage.
- Splits, cracks or large stress marks in the restraint shell.
- Straps that are frayed, worn or damaged.
- Been in use for over ten years.
- A buckle that does not work smoothly.
- Not approved to the Australian Standard 1754.

If the specification book or any parts of the restraint are missing, you should contact the child restraint manufacturer. If you are unable to find the instruction booklet, a restraint fitting centre will be able to advise or fit the restraint for you. See page 24 for more information.

Child restraint services

Restraint fitting services are provided by various organisations to assist parents and carers to install and use approved restraints correctly.

Approved rearward-facing child restraints, such as baby capsules, can be hired through various private organisations.

There may be a charge for restraint fitting services and you will need to check with the provider if you need to make a booking.

If you have a restraint installed by a restraint fitter, ask the fitter to show you how you can install it yourself. This will enable you to not only re-fit the restraint if required, but to also make the necessary adjustments to the restraint as the child grows.

RAA Child Safety Centre **Advice, buying and fitting**

101 Richmond Rd Mile End SA 5031
Phone: 08 8202 4592
Email: childrestraints@raa.com.au
Web: www.raa.com.au

Red Cross Baby Seats

Advice, buying, hiring and fitting

125 Henley Beach Road Mile End SA 5031
Phone: 08 8443 9700
Email: babyseats@redcross.org.au
Web: www.redcross.org.au/babyseats

Hire for Baby

Advice, hiring and fitting

Various locations across the metropolitan and regional areas
Phone: 1300 363 755
Email: info@hireforbaby.com
Web: www.hireforbaby.com

Kidsafe SA Inc

Advice

Women's and Children's Hospital
72 King William Road
North Adelaide SA 5006
Phone: (08) 8161 6318
Email: sa@kidsafe.org.au
Web: www.kidsafesa.com.au

sa.gov.au/restraints



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