



Car seat click

Dear Parent or Carer,

Your child is learning about road safety as part of a national campaign to reduce the number of road casualties. This Home-link Sheet is one of a series showing how you can help your child to be safer. It contains ideas for simple activities that you can do with your child. Learning together this way is fun and it supports the key safety messages that your child is learning in his or her Early Years Setting.

Setting a good example for young children through your own behaviour on the road and in the car helps them learn good road safety skills and apply these throughout their lives.

The car seat click

This is all about car seats and seat belts. The sheet outlines what the law says about car seats and seat belts and why. There are also activities to help your child to learn:

- that they need to be strapped in when travelling in a vehicle
- that car seats and boosters keep them safer
- that the type of car seat needed for a child depends on his or her weight.

Seat belt and car seats: the legal requirements

By law, you must wear a seat belt or child restraint in cars, vans and goods vehicles where one is fitted. There are very few exceptions to this. The driver can be prosecuted if a child under 14 years does not wear a seat belt or child restraint as required.

Until they are 12, children less than 135cm tall must use the appropriate child restraint for their weight (not age) when travelling in the front or back seat of any car, van or goods vehicle. There are very few exceptions.

A child can use an adult belt when they reach 135cm or their 12th birthday, whichever comes first.

In buses and coaches with seat belts fitted, passengers aged 14 years and above must use them.



The law for cars, vans and other goods vehicles is summarised in this table:

Person	Front seat	Back seat	Who is responsible
Driver	Seat belt must be worn if fitted		Driver
Child up to three years old	Correct child restraint must be used	The correct child restraint must be used. If one is not available in a licensed taxi/private hire vehicle, the child may travel unrestrained.	Driver
Child from third birthday up to 135 cms in height (approx. 4'5") or 12th birthday, whichever is first	Correct child restraint must be used	Where seat belts are fitted, the correct child restraint must be used. The child must use an adult belt in the back seat if the correct child restraint is not available either: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• in a licensed taxi or private hire vehicle• for a short distance in an unexpected necessity• if two occupied child restraints prevent fitting of a third. A child three years and over may travel unrestrained in the back seat of a vehicle if seat belts are not fitted in the rear.	Driver
Child 12 or 13, or over 135 cms (approx 4' 5") in height	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Driver
Passengers aged 14 years and over	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Passenger



Why are child restraints important?

Even in a minor crash, an unrestrained child would be thrown about inside the vehicle, injuring themselves and others. They could be thrown from the car through one of the windows. Car seats use the seat's own harness to restrain the child. Boosters are designed so that children get the full benefit of adult seat belts (which are designed for adults).

Car seats should be checked after a collision even if there is no visible damage.

Be careful when buying a used car seat – you should only use one if:

- you know that it is right for your child's weight
- it has not been in a crash already
- it has all the fixings complete
- it has the instructions.

Finding further help

Some local authorities (and some other organisations) offer a car seat fitting service by trained people. Nurseries with suitably trained staff might also be able to offer this to parents at a parents' evening.

Activities

- Find out what happened to Jake and his teddy in the story 'Mr Lumpy's journey' (<http://bit.ly/13keGul>). Your child may already have seen this online story at his or her Early Years Setting.
- Talk about what happened to Jake and his teddy in the story, underlining what can be learned from it.
- Follow this up by looking at your child's car seat, checking that it is correct for their weight (see the label) and making sure that he or she is comfortable.
- Show your child the driver's seat belt and watch out for other children and adults wearing seat belts and restraints when out on journeys.