Travelling with children in cars

Australian law requires that all children aged under 7 years must use a child restraint when travelling in a car. This is to protect the child from being injured if they are involved in a car crash.

The type of restraint needed depends on the child's age and size. The restraint must be the right size for the child, properly adjusted and fastened, and correctly fitted to the vehicle.

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Children aged 0–6 months

Must travel in a rearward facing restraint. The restraint must be in the back seat – NOT the front seat.

Children aged 6 months to 4 years

- Can travel in a rearward facing restraint or a forward facing car seat with in-built straps, depending on their size. The child must travel in the restraint only in the back seat – NOT the front seat.
- There are now restraints available with in-built harnesses for children up to 8 years of age.

Children aged 4 to at least 7 years

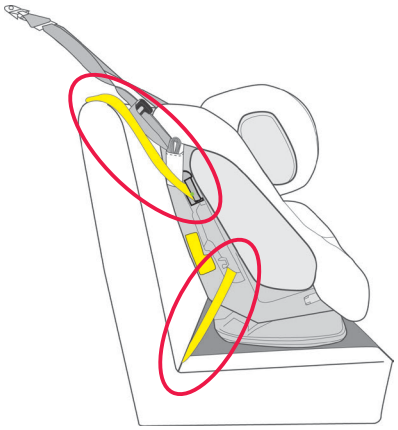
- Can travel in a forward facing car seat or a booster seat, depending on their size. Booster seats lift the child into the right position so that the seatbelt fits them.
- Children aged 4–7 years can only travel in the front seat (using a booster seat) if all seats in the back are being used by children under 7 years.
- Booster seats with a back and a top tether strap are safer than other types of booster seats.
- Children should stay in a booster seat until they are 145cm tall. If they move into an adult seatbelt too early, they will be at greater risk of being injured if involved in a crash.

Fitting the restraint

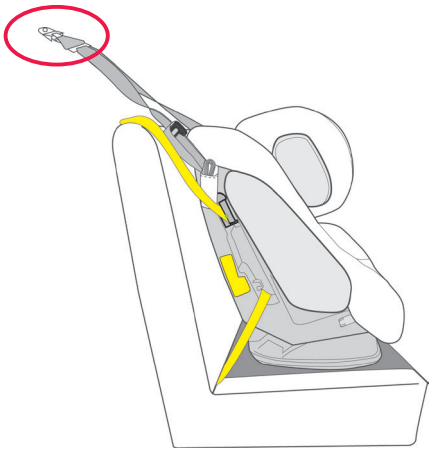
Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when fitting the child restraint or booster seat to your vehicle.

For children aged under 4 years, fitting the restraint means:

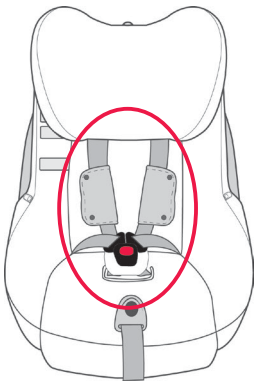
- The restraint is fitted to the car by threading the seatbelt through the marked slots and fastening it.



- The top tether strap is hooked up to the car.

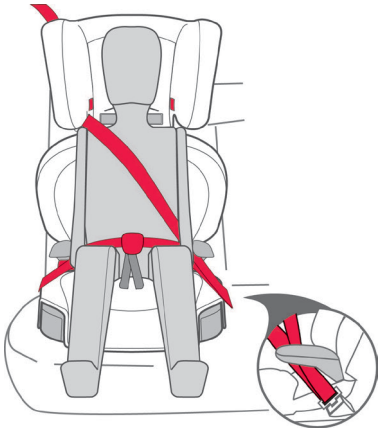


- The straps are fastened to hold the child in the restraint.



For children aged over 4 years, travelling in a booster seat:

- If there is a top tether strap hook it up to the car.
- The seatbelt needs to be fastened around the child.



Choosing a restraint

Only child restraints and booster seats that meet Australian safety standards (AS/NZS 1754) are permitted to be used. This means that car seats bought to Australia from other countries are not permitted.

Try to avoid using second hand restraints or booster seats as they may be damaged and will not be safe.

There are large fines and license demerit points for not using child restraints. These fines apply for each person in the car who is not restrained correctly.