

Car Seat Awareness

With the summer holidays approaching and many people undertaking more car journeys with their children, I thought it would be useful to re-send this information regarding the UK law on the use of car seats and child-safety in cars as a reminder. Sadly, we are still being made aware of some children arriving at school in cars without any safety restraint, including some who have been standing between the front seats of the car and this is a real concern. If children are not properly restrained in cars, the results can be catastrophic in the event of an accident.



Did you know?

“Seat belts did not become a legal requirement for rear passengers until 1987? Even more remarkably the use of children’s car seats wasn’t made a legal requirement until 2006!

*Since then, all infants from birth until a certain age or height **must** be in a specially designed car seat. This is a legal requirement and failure to do so will likely result in you receiving a £500 fine but, of course, the threat of a cash fine pales into insignificance when compared to the realities and outcomes of an accident.” www.incarsafetycentre.co.uk*

Main points of the law:

- 1) Height based seats are required to used REAR FACING for a minimum of 15 months.
- 2) A suitable* child car seat **must be used** until the child reaches a height of 135cms or 12 years old, whichever is reached first.

*suitable = a seat that is intended for the child’s height, weight and the vehicle it is to be used in.

The purpose of the regulations and the law is to improve levels of safety for children in vehicles. It is our responsibility to ensure our children are protected to the best of our ability.

What are the legal requirements for rear-facing car seats?

New laws dictate that children must travel in rear-facing car seats until they are 15 months old. **Furthermore, you must never fit a rear-facing car seat in the front of your car where there is an active passenger airbag.**

What are the legal requirements for forward-facing car seats?

From 15 months old onwards, it is believed that your child’s neck will be strong enough to more reasonable handle the impact of an accident and, therefore, forward-facing car seats may be used. **However, it is recommended that rear-facing seats are used for as long as possible.**

What car seat is legally required for my child?

There are two categories of seats: those that are manufactured to the latest **EU standard ECE R129**, known as i-Size and are based on a child’s height; and those manufactured under the **EU standard ECE R44-04** which are weight-based.



[Here is a simple guide to seat categories.](#)

Categories	Height Based	Weight Based	Approximate Age
Infant Carriers	Birth to 75 or 87cm	Birth to 13kg	Birth - 15mths
Toddler Seats	76 to 105cm	9kg to 18kg	15mths - 3 1/2
Combination Seats (Infant and toddler combined)	Birth to 105cm	Birth to 18kg	Birth - 3 1/2
Child Seats	100 to 150cm	15kg to 36kg	3 1/2 - 12 years
Combination Seats (Toddler and child combined)	n/a	9kg to 36kg	3 1/2 - 12 years

[When can a child legally travel without a car seat?](#)

In the UK, children **must** be restrained in a car seat until they are 12 years old or at least 135cm tall. From that point onwards, they must use a seat belt like all adults.

There are a few exceptions to this:

- A child can travel in a taxi or mini-cab without a car seat if the driver doesn't provide one however, they **must** wear a seat belt.
- The same rule applies for coaches and minibuses – children **must** travel in rear seats and use seat belts.
- If you have to make a short, unexpected journey as an emergency, it is legally acceptable to restrain your child with just a seatbelt instead of a car seat providing your child is 3 years or older.
- Children with special or additional needs or medical conditions will have bespoke requirements outside of normal laws. Usually, they are required to be restrained by means designed for their needs.

While these exceptions exist, it is advisable not to take any unnecessary risks. Accidents happen in buses and taxis too.

[Further, really important safety note:](#)

Of course, not all children like wearing their safety harnesses and seat belts and we know this can be a tricky area. Children do wriggle and attempt to get themselves out of these restrictive straps. However, if you become aware that your child has slipped off their shoulder straps, please take a few moments out of your journey, stop the car and re-position them as, if they are not properly restrained in the event of an accident, this can make a huge difference to the outcome of that accident.