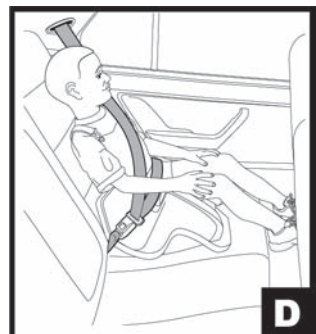
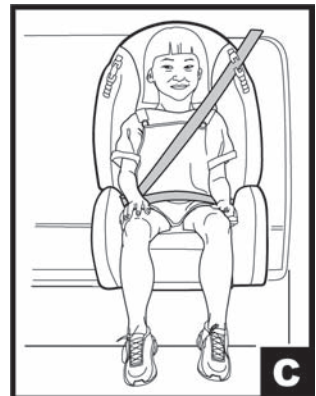


# TIP #1: TRAVELING SAFELY WITH CHILDREN: THE BASICS

- Everybody needs a child safety seat, booster seat, or safety belt!
- There must be one safety belt for each person. Buckling two people, even children, into one belt could injure both.
- People who are not buckled up can be thrown from the car or around inside the car, and seriously hurt themselves or others.
- **Never** hold a child on your lap! You could crush him/her in a crash, or the child may be torn from your arms.
- **Never** ride in the cargo area of a station wagon, van, or pickup! Anyone riding in the cargo area could be thrown out and severely injured or killed.
- No one seat is 'best', The 'best' child safety seat is the one that fits your child and can be installed correctly.
- Children age 12 and under should ride properly restrained in back.



## CHOOSING AND USING THE CORRECT SEAT

New child safety seats and booster seats come with registration cards. Be sure to register your new seat so you will be notified if there is a recall. If you don't have a card, call the safety seat manufacturer.

**AGE:** Birth to 1 year

**WEIGHT:** Up to 35 pounds

**TYPE OF SEAT:** Infant-only (A) or Rear-facing Convertible (B)

**DIRECTION TO FACE:** Infants should ride rear-facing to at least 1 year of age **AND** at least 20 pounds, longer if possible. The seat should be at a 30-45 degree angle to keep the child's head from falling forward. Do not tip it too far back or the child could come out of the seat in a crash.

**NOTE:** Infants who outgrow a smaller infant-only seat before 1 year of age should ride rear-facing in a child safety seat with a higher rear-facing weight limit (over 22 pounds).

**AGE:** Over 1 year to 4 years old

**WEIGHT:** Over 20 pounds, up to 40 pounds

**TYPE OF SEAT:** Convertible or Forward-Facing Only seat

**DIRECTION TO FACE:** A child over 1 year of age **AND** over 20 pounds may ride facing forward. Use the upright position or the position recommended by the manufacturer.

**NOTE:** Keep the child in a child safety seat with a full harness as long as possible, preferably until 4 years old. For children 40 pounds or more who are too young or too active to sit still in a booster seat, or if a vehicle has only lap belts, look for child restraints with harnesses labeled for use over 40 pounds.

**AGE:** 4 to 8 years old

**WEIGHT:** Over 40 pounds

**TYPE OF SEAT:** Belt-positioning Booster Seat, backless (D) or high-back (C)

**DIRECTION TO FACE:** Forward-Facing

**NOTE:** All children who have outgrown child safety seats should be properly restrained in booster seats until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are 4' 9" tall.

**WARNING:** The back seat is the safest place in a crash. Children age 12 and under should ride properly restrained in back. Infants riding rear-facing must **NEVER** be placed in front of an airbag.

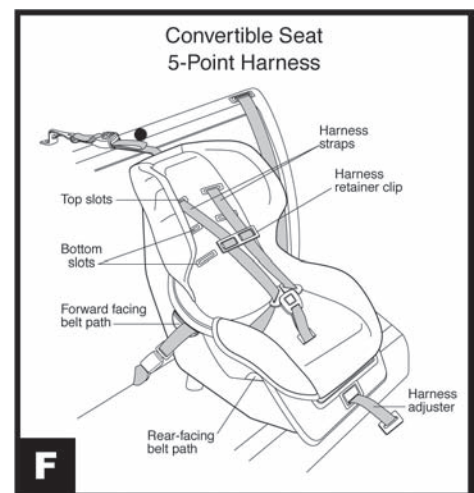


## IS THE CHILD SAFETY SEAT IN THE VEHICLE THE RIGHT WAY?

- Each child safety seat needs a safety belt or LATCH to hold it in place. LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children) is a system designed to make safety seat installation easier.
- Check the safety seat instructions and the vehicle owner's manual for tips on using the safety belts or LATCH to install a safety seat (E).
- If using safety belts, put the vehicle safety belt through the correct belt path on the child safety seat (see F below). Check the child safety seat instructions or look for labels on the seat that mark the safety belt path. Use the correct belt path for the direction the safety seat is facing.
- The child safety seat must stay tight at all times. Check for tight fit by holding the seat at the belt path and by pulling the seat side to side and forward. The child safety seat should not move more than one inch sideways or toward the front of the vehicle.

## IS THE HARNESS POSITIONED THE RIGHT WAY AND BUCKLED SNUGLY ON THE CHILD?

- The harness straps must fit on strong parts of the body: the shoulders and hips.
- Use the correct slots for the harness (F). Using the wrong slots can cause serious injury. Check the manufacturer's instructions for the correct placement of the harness straps.
- Keep straps on the child's shoulders, not arms. Keep straps flat on the child's shoulders and snug enough to keep the child from moving forward.
- Place the harness retainer clip at armpit level (F).



## WHEN IS A CHILD READY FOR THE ADULT SAFETY BELT?



- Until age 8, most children have not developed strong hipbones, and their legs and body are too short to allow for proper fit of a safety belt. Safety belts are designed for adults.
- To be able to fit in a safety belt, a child must:
  - ☑ Be tall enough to sit without slouching,
  - ☑ Keep his/her back against the vehicle seat back,
  - ☑ Keep his/her knees completely bent over the edge of the seat,
  - ☑ Keep his/her feet flat on the floor, and
  - ☑ Be able to stay comfortably seated this way.

- The lap belt must fit low and tight across the upper thighs. The shoulder belt should rest over the center of the shoulder and across the chest (G).
- **Never** put the shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back. This can cause severe internal injuries in a crash. If the safety belt does not fit properly the child should use a belt-positioning booster seat.
- Always check belt fit on the child in every vehicle. A belt-positioning booster seat may be needed in some vehicles and not in others.

**ALWAYS** read and follow the child safety seat instructions and the vehicle owner's manual!

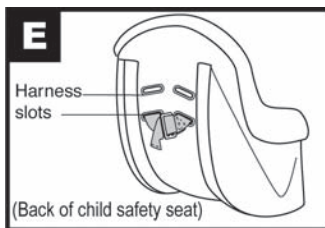
# TIP #2: TRAVELING SAFELY WITH INFANTS, TODDLERS, AND PRESCHOOLERS

## INFANTS: BIRTH TO 1 YEAR OLD

The safest way for infants to ride is rear-facing in the back seat. Rear-facing child safety seats protect the infant's head, neck, and back in a crash. The infant should ride rear-facing until at least 1 year of age **AND** at least 20 pounds, longer if possible.

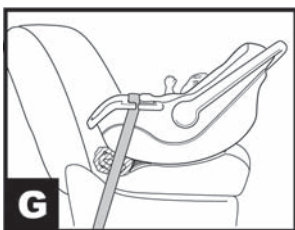
### Two kinds of child safety seats for babies:

1. Small, lightweight "infant-only" child safety seats are designed for rear-facing only (A).
  - Baby's head must be at least one inch below the top of the seat.
  - The label on the seat gives the upper weight.
2. Larger "convertible" seats can be used rear-facing (B) from about 5 to 35 pounds.
  - Some older models only go up to 20-22 pounds rear-facing. Always check the label and instructions for the rear-facing weight limit.
  - If a baby under 1 year old grows too tall or too heavy for an infant-only seat, a convertible seat with a higher rear-facing weight limit (over 22 pounds) is recommended.
  - Convertible safety seats may be turned around to face the front when the baby is over 1 year old **AND** at least 20 pounds (C). It is recommended that a child ride rear-facing as long as she/he fits. Follow the seat manufacturer's instructions.
  - A convertible seat with a 5-point harness works best for a newborn baby. Seats with a padded overhead shield do not fit small babies properly. The shield comes up too high and may make proper adjustment of the harness difficult. (D).



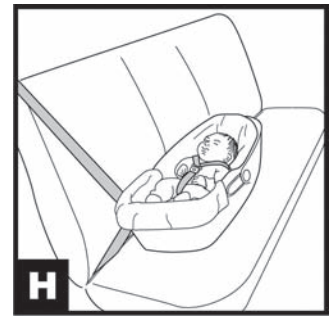
### BUCKLING BABY IN THE SAFETY SEAT

- Use the lowest harness slots (E) for a newborn infant. Keep the straps in the slots at or below the baby's shoulders for the rear-facing position.
- Harness straps must fit properly on the baby's shoulders and between the legs. Dress the baby in clothes that keep the legs free.
- Keep harness straps very snug and flat on baby's shoulders, not arms. If the harness is even slightly loose, the baby can be thrown out of the seat.
- Place the plastic harness retainer clip (F) near the child's armpits to hold the harness straps on the shoulders. Check instructions if the seat doesn't have a harness clip.
- Always buckle baby in the seat first, then place blankets **OVER** the harness.
- If baby needs support, fill empty spaces with small, rolled blankets on each side of the baby's shoulders and head (F). A rolled diaper or small towel can also be put between her/his legs behind the crotch strap.
- Thick padding should **NOT** be put under or behind the baby.
- Babies must ride sitting in a semi-reclined (halfway back or a 30-45 degree angle from vertical) to keep the airway open.
- If the safety seat is too upright for the baby, and the base is not adjustable, put a tightly rolled bath towel, or part of a foam pool noodle, under the front edge of the child safety seat to tilt it back a little (G). Do not tip it too far back or the child could be ejected.



## WHAT ABOUT SEATS FOR PREEMIES?

- A baby born earlier than 37 weeks may need to use a car bed if he/she has any problems breathing or other medical problems when sitting semi-reclined.
- Ask the baby's doctor if the baby needs to be tested for breathing problems or other medical problems before he/she is discharged from the hospital.
- If the baby's doctor recommends it, a baby with medical problems may need to ride lying flat in a car bed (H).

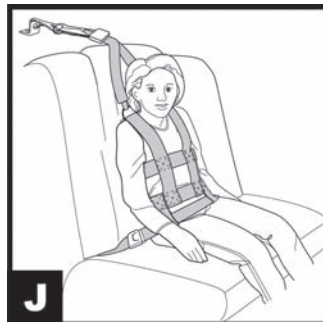


## TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS: 1 TO 4 YEARS OLD

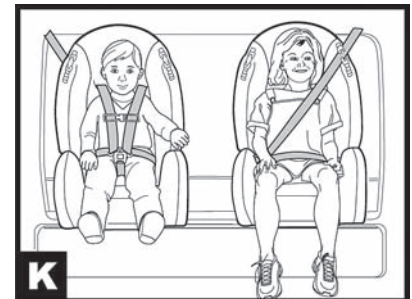
Children over 1 year old AND over 20 pounds may face forward in a convertible seat (I), forward-facing child vest (J), or a combination child seat/booster (K). Some child safety seats are built into the vehicle seat. A child should ride in a child safety seat with a harness until about 4 years old.



This convertible seat (a seat that can be used rear-facing or forward-facing) may face the front for a child **OVER** 1 year old AND **OVER** 20 pounds.



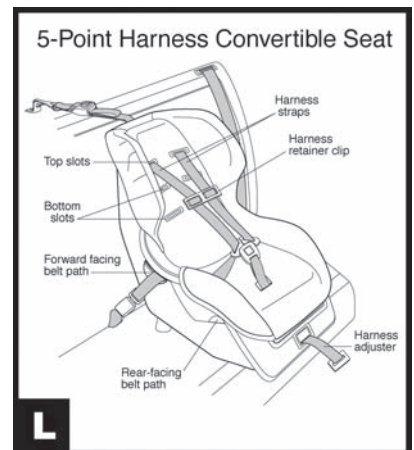
This vest requires use of a tether. The vehicle's safety belt goes through loops near the hips.



This combination child seat/booster is used with the harness (left) for younger children and with the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt (right) for older children. Remove the harness before using with the lap and shoulder belt. Check the manufacturer's instructions for weight limits.

Most toddlers and preschoolers (up to age 4) are not big enough or old enough for a belt-positioning booster seat. They need a full harness for upper body protection and to hold them in their seats. A full harness should be used as long as possible. **Follow the manufacturer's instructions and weight limit.**

For children 40 pounds or more who are too young or too active to sit still in a booster seat, or if a vehicle has only lap belts, use child restraints labeled for use over 40 pounds.



5-Point Harness Convertible Seat

## USING FORWARD-FACING CHILD SAFETY SEATS

- When a child rides in a safety seat that faces forward, harness straps (L) must be at or above the child's shoulders.

Most convertible seats require use of the top-most slot for the forward-facing position. These slots are reinforced to prevent the seat from failing in a crash.

**Check the manufacturer's instructions for the best and safest placement of the harness straps.**

- Place the harness retainer clip (L) at armpit level. Check the instructions if the seat doesn't have a harness clip.
- Use the correct belt path (L) for the direction the seat is facing. Check the instructions and look for labels on the safety seat.

**ALWAYS read and follow the child safety seat instructions and the vehicle owner's manual!**

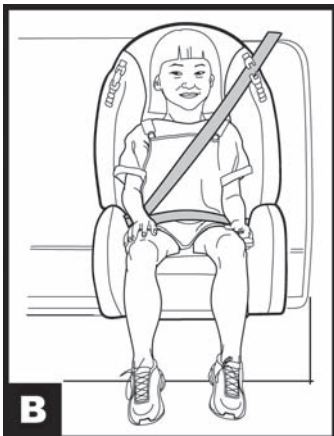
## TIP #3: TRAVELING SAFELY WITH PRESCHOOL & SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

A child should stay in a child safety seat with a full harness as long as possible, until about 4 years old. If the child's shoulders are above the top set of harness slots, a combination child seat/booster seat with higher harness slots is a good choice.



- A child over 4 years old may be ready for a booster seat. Booster seats make the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt fit properly. They keep the lap belt from causing injury to the child's abdomen and keep the shoulder belt in place to give the child upper body protection.
- Some younger children may outgrow the weight limit of their child safety seat with a harness and may not be ready to stay seated properly in a booster seat. Look for a child restraint with a higher weight limit.
- All children who have outgrown child safety seats should be properly restrained in booster seats until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are 4' 9" tall. Always make sure the child fits the adult safety belt properly.

### SAFETY RESTRAINTS FOR OLDER CHILDREN



- **Backless belt-positioning booster seats (A).** Use the vehicle lap and shoulder belt and provide good belt fit on the child. Some older types may come with a removable shield; remove the shield and use the seat with the vehicle lap and shoulder belt.
- **High-back belt-positioning booster seats (B).** Use the vehicle lap and shoulder belt. Some are combination child seat/booster seats with a removable harness (C). They can be used with the harness for a younger child under 40 pounds and then as a belt-positioning booster seat for an older child.
- **Specialized restraints** include child safety seats with harness labeled for use over 40 pounds, and other harness or shield type restraints. Check for a label stating seat meets federal safety standards. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

### CHOOSING THE RIGHT RESTRAINT FOR THE CHILD AND VEHICLE



- A belt-positioning booster seat (A or B) is the best choice if the car has combination lap and shoulder belts in the rear seat, and the child has outgrown the forward facing seat.
- If the child's ears come above the top of the vehicle seat, use a booster seat with a high back to improve neck protection (B). A specialized restraint may also be an option.
- A combination child seat/booster seat with a removable harness (C) may fit a child from **OVER** age 1 to age 8 or more. Check the label for the weight limit on the harness.
- If the vehicle only has lap belts it's safer for a child to use a lap belt than to ride without any restraint. Be sure to keep the lap belt low and snug across the thighs. If the lap belt rides up on the stomach it could cause serious injuries in a crash. Other options could include having shoulder belts installed.

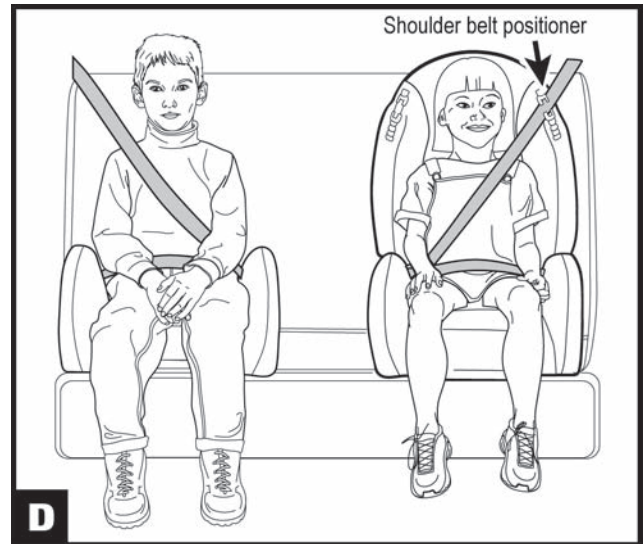
**Warning:** Devices advertised to improve belt fit for older children and adults are presently not covered by government standards. These products are not recommended. They may help with shoulder belt comfort, but may put too much slack in the shoulder belt or cause the lap belt to ride up. **Belt-positioning booster seats are the best solution for children who don't fit the adult safety belt.**

## WHY USE A BOOSTER SEAT INSTEAD OF AN ADULT SAFETY BELT?

- Safety belts were designed for adults. Until age 8, most children have not developed strong hipbones, and their legs and body are too short to allow for proper fit of a safety belt.
- Many young children do not sit still enough or straight enough to keep lap belts low across their thighs. A belt that rides up on the tummy could cause serious internal injuries.
- Booster seats are comfortable for children because they allow their legs to bend normally, and they enjoy being able to see out of the window.

## USING A BELT-POSITIONING BOOSTER SEAT (D)

- Place the booster seat flat on vehicle seat.
- Sit the child on the booster seat, place the lap and shoulder belt over the child and buckle the safety belt.
- Adjust the lap belt so it lays snugly across child's upper thighs, not across the tummy.
- Adjust the shoulder belt and thread through shoulder belt positioner (if available) so that shoulder belt lays snugly across the center of the child's shoulder. Check safety belt fit often.
- Buckle the booster seat in even when the child is not in it. A loose booster seat can injure others in a crash.



## WHEN IS A CHILD READY FOR THE ADULT SAFETY BELT?

- To be able to fit a safety belt, a child must:
  - Be tall enough to sit without slouching,
  - Keep his/her back against the vehicle seat back,
  - Keep his/her knees completely bent over the edge of the seat,
  - Keep his/her feet flat on the floor, and
  - Be able to stay comfortably seated this way.
- The lap belt must fit low and tight across the upper thighs. The shoulder belt should rest over the center of the shoulder and across the chest (E).
- **NEVER** put the shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back. This can cause severe head injuries or internal injuries in a crash. If the safety belt does not fit properly the child should use a belt-positioning booster seat.
- Always check belt fit on the child in every vehicle. A belt-positioning booster seat may be needed in some vehicles and not in others.

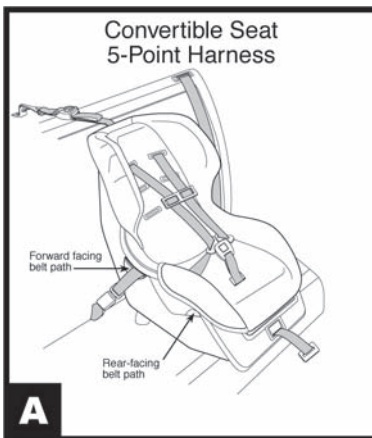
**ALWAYS read and follow the child safety seat instructions and the vehicle owner's manual!**

## TIP #4: IS THE CHILD SAFETY SEAT SECURE IN THE VEHICLE?

- To do its job, a child safety seat must be held tightly against the vehicle seat back. If the lap part of the safety belt is not tight or the child safety seat slides around on the vehicle seat, the child may not be protected by the safety seat.
- ALWAYS read the instructions that come with the child safety seat and the section on child safety seats (child restraints) in the vehicle owner's manual.
- If you cannot attach the seat tightly, contact the child safety seat or vehicle manufacturer customer service number for help or contact the U.S. Department of Transportation Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236) or [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).

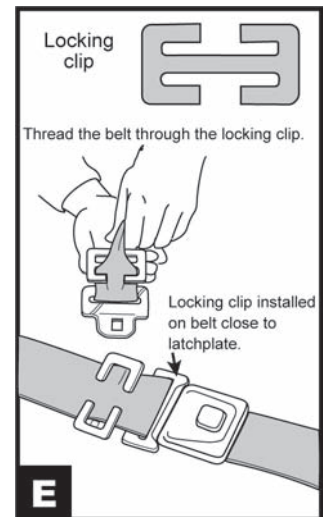
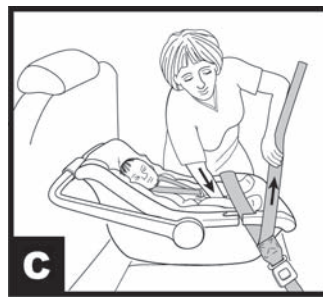
**WARNING:** The back seat is the safest place in a crash. Children age 12 and under should ride properly restrained in back. Infants riding rear-facing must **NEVER** be placed in front of an active air bag. Infants must **ALWAYS** ride facing the rear of the car.

### HOW TIGHTLY SHOULD A CHILD SAFETY SEAT BE ATTACHED?



The lap part of the belt must hold the child safety seat firmly in place.

- Place the safety belt through the correct belt path (A) and pull all the slack out of the lap part of the belt.
- To make it tight, push the child safety seat down into the vehicle seat cushion and pull the belt. Push down on the child safety seat with your full weight to get the belt really tight (B, C).
- To check for a tight fit, grasp the child safety seat where the belt is holding it and pull the safety seat toward the front of the vehicle and move it from side to side.
- If the belt loosens (D) or the child safety seat slides forward or sideways more than one inch, the child may not be well protected. You may need to use a locking clip or try another seating location in the vehicle.



Some lap and shoulder belt systems may require the use of a locking clip. Check the vehicle owner's manual. If a locking clip is needed, follow these steps:

- Put the belt through the child safety seat's correct belt path (A) and buckle it.
- Push down on the child safety seat. Pull up on the shoulder end of the belt until the lap belt is pulled tight. (C)
- Hold the two parts of the belt together at the latchplate and unbuckle the belt.
- Put both parts of the belt through the locking clip as shown (E), close to the latchplate.
- Buckle the belt again. If you put the clip on correctly, the belt will now stay tight around the child safety seat.

Remove the locking clip when the belt is not holding a child safety seat.

**WARNING:** This is the ONLY way a regular locking clip that comes with most child safety seats may be used. Using it any other way or on any other type of safety belt can cause serious injuries.

## A TETHER CAN HELP KEEP A CHILD SAFETY SEAT SECURE. -

- A tether is a strap that connects the top of a child safety seat to an anchor bolted to the vehicle's frame (F). A tether strap helps keep a safety seat tightly installed.
- Tethers are used along with the vehicle safety belt or a lower anchorage system, LATCH (see below).
- Almost all forward-facing child safety seats manufactured after September 1, 1999, have a tether strap.
- Some manufacturers have tether kits for their older safety seats. Do not attempt to install a tether on a child safety seat not made to use one.
- Almost all passenger vehicles manufactured after September 1, 2000, and many late 1990s vehicles are required to have tether anchors. They can be located in many different places; check the vehicle owner's manual for instructions.
- Many older vehicles have holes pre-drilled above or behind the rear seat; some vehicles have pre-threaded nuts installed. Read the vehicle owner's manual for more details.

### TO USE A TETHER:

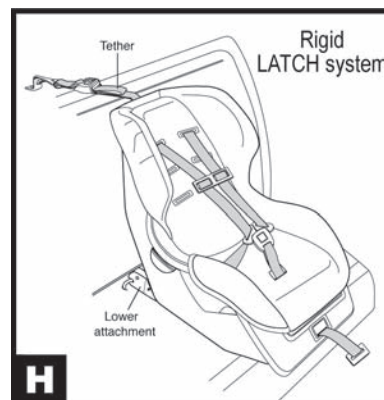
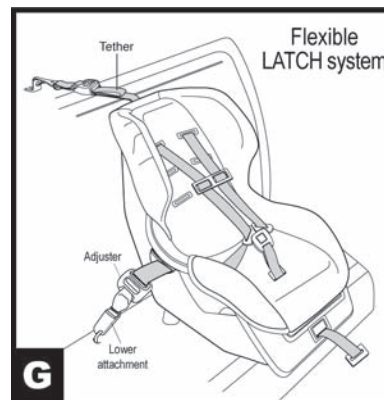
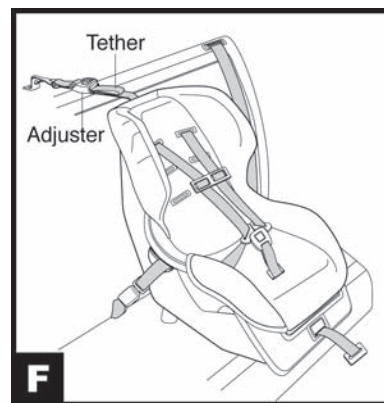
- Properly install the child safety seat using the vehicle safety belt system or LATCH system.
- Attach the tether hook to the correct anchor point in the vehicle; check owner's manual.
- Pull tether strap adjuster (F) so the strap is snug.
- Some tethers have a metal slide adjuster to tighten the strap. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

**WARNING: ALWAYS** follow the child safety seat manufacturer's instructions for using the tether strap. Do **NOT** use the tether strap for rear-facing seats unless the manufacturer provides instructions to do so. Use **ONLY** designated tether anchor locations. Using anything else, such as cargo tie-downs, can cause serious injury to a child.

## A NEW CHILD SAFETY SYSTEM: LOWER ANCHORS AND TETHERS FOR CHILDREN (LATCH)

LATCH is designed to make child safety seat installation easier. LATCH is required on all child safety seats and in all vehicles made after September 1, 2002. With the LATCH system, the vehicle safety belt is not used.

- Vehicles will have a top tether anchor and two lower anchor points. The lower anchor points can be found between the vehicle's seat cushion and the seat back.
- Most child safety seats will have a top tether strap and all will have two lower attachments. The lower attachments are hooks or connectors attached to straps (flexible, G) or part of the child seat frame itself (rigid, H).
- Flexible attachments have adjusters (G) to tighten the straps. To check for a tight fit, grasp the child safety seat where the straps are holding it and pull the safety seat toward the front of the vehicle and move it from side to side. The safety seat should not move more than one inch.



**ALWAYS read and follow the child safety seat instructions and the vehicle owner's manual!**

## TIP #5: SAFETY RECALLS, SECOND-HAND SEATS, SEATS IN CRASHES

### WHEN YOU HEAR ABOUT A CHILD SAFETY SEAT BEING RECALLED:

- Find out which models and manufacture dates are involved. Knowing the date of manufacture will help you find out if your child safety seat is one being recalled.
- Call the company's toll-free number or visit its web site for information.
- If you are not sure if the child safety seat has been recalled, contact the manufacturer or the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's toll-free Auto Safety Hotline (1-888-DASH-2-DOT) or [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).
- If the child safety seat is recalled, be sure to get it fixed right away.

#### WHEN YOU CALL: Have this information on-hand.

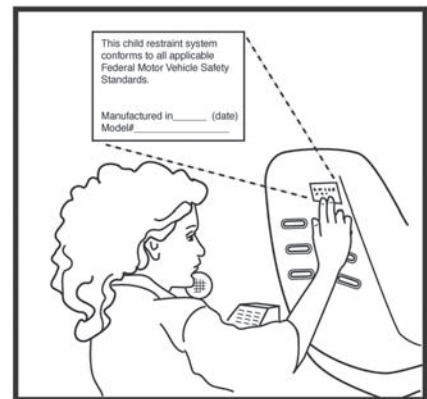
Manufacturer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Model Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Model Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Manufacture: \_\_\_\_\_

This information is printed on labels attached underneath, on the side, or the back of the child safety seat. Some of the information may be in number codes.



### CHILD SAFETY SEAT REUSE AFTER CRASH:

Current research shows that child safety seats are very tough and still provide good protection even after being involved in a minor crash. A minor crash is one in which **ALL** of the following apply:

- Careful inspection of the seat, including looking under movable padding, doesn't show any cracks or warping that might have been caused by the crash.
- The vehicle in which the safety seat was installed was able to be driven away from the crash.
- The vehicle door nearest the child safety seat was undamaged.

### CAN A RECALLED SAFETY SEAT STILL BE USED?

Many problems are minor, but some are serious. All problems should be fixed as soon as possible. If you don't have another child safety seat to use, keep using the recalled one while you wait for the repair kit, if the recall notice says you can. Using a recalled child safety seat is almost always safer than letting a child ride in a safety belt.

### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH MY SAFETY SEAT?

If you think the child safety seat has a problem that could be a safety defect, call the child safety seat manufacturer and the DOT Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236) to report it. Many serious problems are discovered from reports by parents.

### HOW AND WHY SHOULD I LET THE MANUFACTURER KNOW I OWN A CHILD SAFETY SEAT?

New child safety seats come with registration cards. When you buy a new seat, be sure to register it. If you have an older child safety seat, call the Auto Safety Hotline or the manufacturer to find out how to register it. The manufacturers need this information to send you a letter if a child safety seat is recalled. If you move, be sure to notify the manufacturer.

- There were no injuries to any of the vehicle occupants and
- The air bags (if any) did not deploy.

It is important never to use a child safety seat that has been involved in a moderate to severe crash.

### USING A SECOND-HAND CHILD SAFETY SEAT?

Use the checklist below. If all statements can be checked then the second-hand child safety seat may be okay to use.

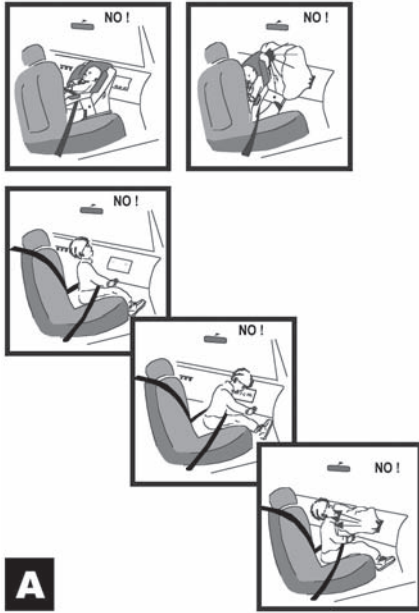
- The seat has never been involved in a moderate to severe crash.
- The seat has labels stating date of manufacture and model number. (This is needed to find out if there is a recall or if the seat is too old).
- The seat has no recalls. (Contact the manufacturer, some problems can be fixed).
- The seat is less than 6 years old. (Normal wear and tear may cause the seat to not work as well).
- The seat has all its parts. (Some parts can be ordered from the manufacturer).
- The seat has its instruction book. (This can be ordered from the manufacturer).

**ALWAYS read and follow the child safety seat instructions and the vehicle owner's manual!**

For more information, contact the DOT Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236) or [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)



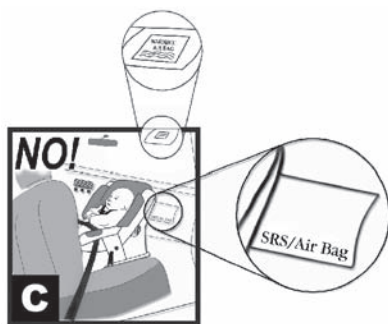
## TIP #6: CHILD PASSENGERS AND AIR BAGS



These children are in great danger!



This car has a passenger air bag, so baby always rides in the back seat.



Look for warning labels on the visor and embossed letters on the dashboard.

### AN INFANT OR CHILD RIDING IN THE FRONT SEAT CAN BE SERIOUSLY INJURED OR KILLED BY THE INFLATING AIR BAG (A).

- To do its important job, an air bag comes out of the dashboard very fast, faster than the blink of an eye. Many people's lives have been saved by air bags. However, the force of an air bag can hurt people who are too close to it.
- Infants in the front seat have been killed when the rear-facing child safety seat is hit with great force causing a fatal brain injury. Older children are killed from impact by the air bag because they are "out of position" – either unbuckled, or not wearing the shoulder portion of the safety belt. During pre-crash braking, the child's upper body can be thrown forward toward the air bag at the time it is triggered causing severe head or neck injuries.

### PREVENT INJURIES TO ADULTS AND CHILDREN FROM AIR BAGS BY FOLLOWING THESE SAFETY STEPS:

- Infants in rear-facing child safety seats must **NEVER** ride in the front seat of a vehicle that has an activated passenger air bag. Infants under 1 year old must ride facing the rear of the car in the back seat (B).
- Children 12 and under should ride properly restrained in the back seat. They should use child safety seats, booster seats, or safety belts appropriate for their age and size.
- Everyone should be buckled up with both lap **AND** shoulder belts on every trip. Driver and front passenger seats should be moved as far back from the dashboard as practical. Make sure the shoulder belt stays in place and do not lean toward the air bag compartment.
- If you must put a child riding in a forward-facing child safety seat or booster in the front, make sure the safety seat is correctly installed, the child is correctly buckled up with the harness very snug and the vehicle seat is moved as far back as possible.
- If the vehicle has side air bags, NHTSA recommends that children be properly restrained and in a proper seating position at all times. Check web site for more information.

### HOW TO KNOW IF YOUR VEHICLE HAS A FRONT OR SIDE AIR BAG.

- To check if your vehicle has air bags, look for the letters "SRS", "IRS", "SIR", "SIPS", "SIAB", "IC" or the words "Air Bag" embossed on the cover of the storage compartment (C).
- Look for a warning label on the sun visor, vehicle door, safety belt or vehicle seat (C).

### SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PICKUP TRUCKS AND SPORTS CARS

Many newer pickup trucks and sports cars have switches to shut off the passenger air bag. It is very important to turn off the air bag if there is an infant riding in the front seat in a rear-facing safety seat. If the vehicle seat cannot be moved back for an older child using a child safety seat, booster seat, or safety belt, then the air bag should be turned off. If there is no rear seat and no air bag shut-off switch, a rear-facing infant must **NOT** ride in the vehicle.

### OBTAINING AN AIR BAG ON-OFF SWITCH

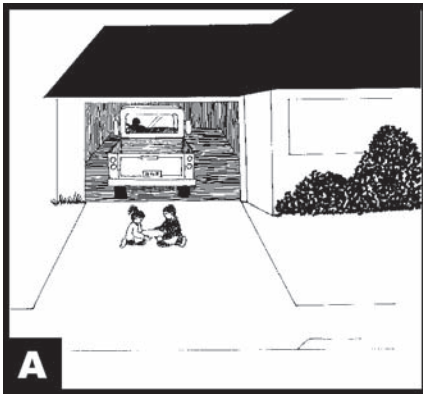
You may be able to obtain an air bag on-off switch if you can certify that you or a passenger is in a high risk group. For more information, contact an auto dealer or the DOT Auto Safety Hotline.

**ALWAYS read and follow the child safety seat instructions and the vehicle owner's manual!**

For more information, contact the DOT Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236) or [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)



## TIP #7: PLAY IT SAFE: WALKING AND BIKING SAFELY



Children are often hurt by backing vehicles.

Children hit by cars can be hurt or killed, even when cars are moving slowly. Toddlers (1 and 2 year olds) are most often hurt by a backing vehicle. If a child is playing in a driveway or parking area (A), a driver may not see her/him. Preschoolers (3 and 4 year olds) are most often hit when running across a street near home.

Falls from tricycles or other play vehicles can cause serious head and brain injury. These injuries to young children can be as serious as injuries to older children falling from bikes.

### DANGERS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN ON THE MOVE:

- darting out into traffic from the middle of the block;
- playing in or near the street; and
- riding a tricycle or bike in a parking lot, driveway, or street.

### YOUNG CHILDREN ARE NOT SMALL ADULTS!

- They cannot judge speed or distance of vehicles moving toward them.
- They move quickly and can run into the street without warning.
- They don't know safety rules and expect adults to watch out for them.
- They are small and hard for drivers to see.



Hold your child's hand so she/he doesn't run into the street.

### TAKE THESE STEPS TO SAFETY:

#### ■ Supervise, supervise, supervise

Parents and caregivers must watch toddlers and preschoolers closely when they are near parked or moving vehicles. To supervise properly, you must be near your child at all times, not watching from a distance. Hold your child's hand when you walk together along the street (B).

#### ■ Get them in the habit

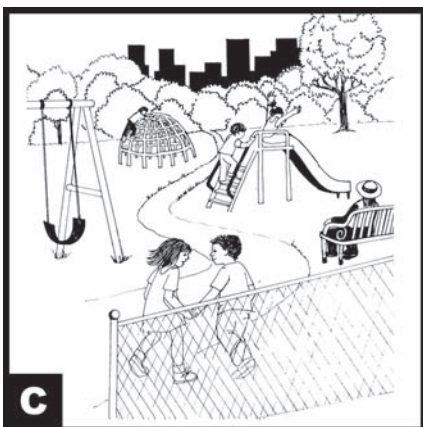
When walking, talk to your child about street safety. Show him/her how to stop at the edge of the street and look for cars. Don't expect your young child to do this by herself/himself. Start children wearing helmets with their first tricycles or play vehicles. When children begin helmet use early, they are more likely to keep the habit in later years. Make a rule: No helmets, no bike.

#### ■ Set a safe example

Young children learn by watching adults. Show them safe ways to cross streets and always wear a helmet when you ride a bike.

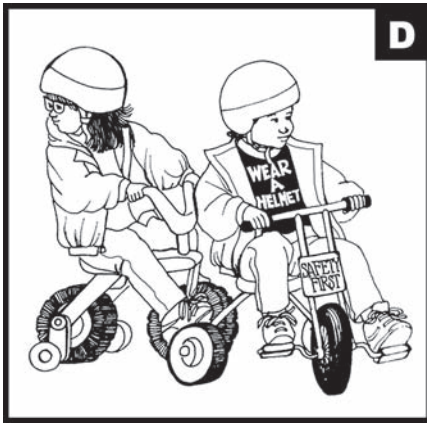
#### ■ Find safe places to play

Keep children away from traffic (C). Fenced yards, parks, or playgrounds are good places for your child to ride and play.



Parks and playgrounds are safe places to play away from traffic.

Are there safe play places for children in your neighborhood? If not, talk with neighbors, police, and community planners about ways to improve the area.



**D**

Start helmet use early; even when riding a tricycle or play vehicle.

## HEAD OUT SAFELY!

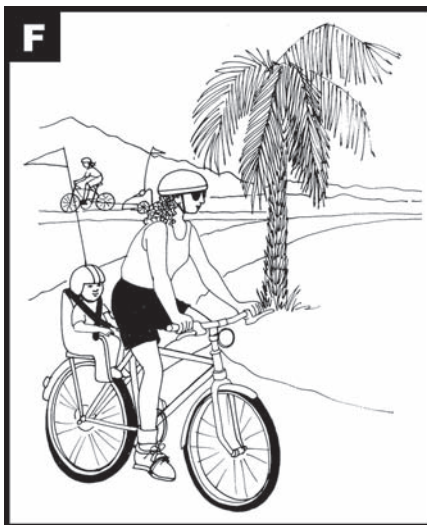
- Wearing a bike helmet is the most important way for your child to stay safe on a play vehicle, tricycle, or bike. A helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent when worn correctly.
- Toddler helmets are lightweight, because a toddler's neck is not strong enough for a regular helmet. Also, these helmets come down low around the back of the head for more coverage (D).
- Insist that your child wear a helmet whenever he/she rides. If your child's preschool uses tricycles, work with the school to make helmets available. Urge the school to have a policy requiring helmet use.
- Every new helmet must meet the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Standard and display a label stating that it meets the standard. On older helmets, look for a CPSC , ASTM<sup>1</sup> , ANSI<sup>2</sup> , or Snell<sup>3</sup> sticker inside the helmet.



**E**

## THE RIGHT FIT IS IMPORTANT!

- Make sure the helmet covers the upper part of the forehead and sits level on the head (two finger widths above the eyebrows). (E)
- Use the foam pads inside to fit the helmet snugly so it doesn't slip around.
- Adjust the chin strap tightly enough so the helmet pulls down when the child opens his mouth.
- Adjust the two side straps so they meet in a 'V' right under each ear.



**F**

Only children over age 1 have the neck strength to wear helmets and ride on the back of bikes.

## CARRYING YOUR CHILD SAFELY ON A BIKE (F):

- **NEVER** carry a baby under age 1 on a bicycle. A baby does not have the neck strength to wear a helmet. The baby's back is not strong enough to sit straight with the motion of the bike.
- When a child is old enough to ride on an adult's bike, only a skilled rider should carry him/her.
  - Ride only in safe areas like parks, bike paths, or quiet streets.
  - Make sure both adult and child are wearing properly fitting helmets.
  - Make sure the child carrier has a high back, a lap and shoulder harness, and foot guards to keep feet away from the spokes.
  - Make sure the bike trailer has a high-back seat and a lap and shoulder harness.
  - Check that the carrier or trailer is fastened firmly to the bike.
  - Buckle the harness snugly around the child.

<sup>1</sup>American Society for Testing and Materials  
<sup>2</sup>American National Standards Institute  
<sup>3</sup>Snell Memorial Foundation

## TIP #8: KIDS ON THE MOVE: WALKING AND BIKING SAFELY

### LEARNING TO BE TRAFFIC SMART

Children in kindergarten through third grades (5 to 10 years old) are learning to become independent. They enjoy walking, riding bikes, and playing outside. They don't have the judgement to cope with traffic by themselves yet, but they can begin to understand safety rules.

### WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW:

- Parents often think their children are able to handle traffic safely by themselves before they are actually ready.
- Children don't have the skills to handle these risky situations until about age 10.
- Boys are much more likely than girls to be injured or killed in traffic, on average boys take more risks.
- Bicycles are vehicles. Children should not ride bikes in the road until they fully understand traffic rules and show they can follow them.
- Children often act before thinking and may not do what parents or drivers expect.
- Children assume that if they see the driver, the driver sees them.
- Children can't judge speed and they think cars can stop instantly.
- Children are shorter than adults and can't see over cars, bushes, and other objects.



Many children are hit by cars when running into the street.

### WALKING RISKS

Nearly one-third of the 5 to 9 year old children killed by motor vehicles are on foot. They are hit by cars most often when playing near home. They tend to run into the street in the middle of the block, where drivers don't expect them (A).

### BICYCLING RISKS

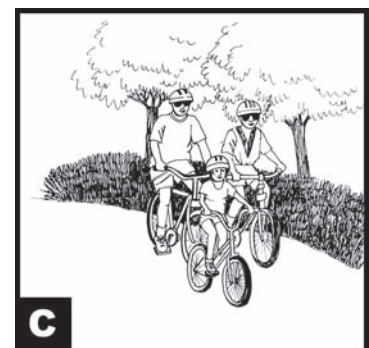
Children can be hurt riding on or off the road. Most children who are killed in bike crashes are 7 to 12 years old. The most serious injuries children get while biking are head and brain injuries. These injuries can cause death or lifelong disability.

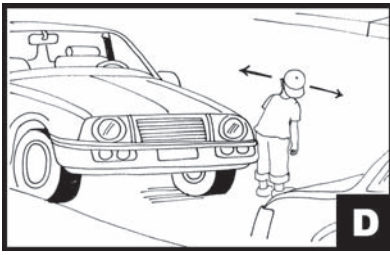


Hold your child's hand so she/he doesn't run into the street.

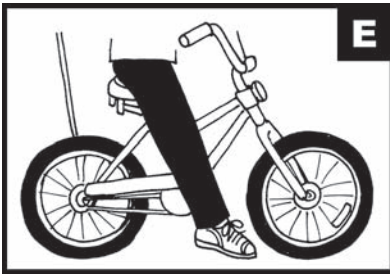
### TAKE THESE STEPS TO SAFETY:

- **Set limits for your child**  
As your children grow, set appropriate limits on where they can walk or bike safely. Don't expect them to be responsible or to start to behave safely until about age 10.
- **Teach safe walking habits**  
Begin to teach your child how to cross streets safely (see next page). Give them plenty of chances to practice when you are with them (B).
- **Find safe places for bicycling and walking**  
Find places away from streets, driveways, and parking lots. Good choices are fenced yards, parks, trails/paths, or playgrounds.
- **Set an example yourself**  
Young children learn by watching their parents and other adults. Cross streets properly and always wear a helmet when you ride a bike (C). When you are driving, obey speed limits, wear your safety belt and watch for children. Allow your children the opportunity to practice safe walking and riding when you are with them.





Show older children how to look both ways and around parked cars or objects blocking his/her view.



A child should be able to have his/her feet flat on the ground when sitting on the bike seat.



Correct helmet fit is very important!

## TEACH THE “SAFE STREET CROSSING” METHOD. TEACH YOUR CHILD TO:

- Cross with an adult or older friend. (Young children still need supervision around traffic up to about age 10).
- Cross at an intersection where there are signals.
- Use the crosswalk when crossing near a corner. Watch for turning vehicles.
- Stop at the curb. Look left, right, left, and over your shoulder for traffic. Continue to look as you cross the street.
- Stop to look around parked cars or other objects that block the view of traffic (D). Let oncoming traffic pass, then look again before crossing. as you cross.
- Make eye contact with drivers to make sure they see you.

## HELP YOUR CHILD BIKE SAFELY:

### ■ A kid-size bike is right

A big bike “to grow into” is not easy to learn on or to ride safely. A child should be able to sit on the seat with knees straight and feet flat on the ground (E). Also make sure the child can straddle the bike with at least one or two inches between the top bar and the child’s crotch.

### ■ Insist on bike helmet use

A brain injury cannot be cured! Bike helmets can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent when worn correctly. Make it clear to your child that she/he must wear a helmet on every ride. It also is important to wear a helmet when doing other sports, like in-line skating and skateboarding.

## SELECTING AND FITTING A BIKE HELMET

- Every new helmet must meet the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Standard and display a label stating that it meets the standard. On older helmets, look for a CPSC , ASTM<sup>1</sup>, ANSI<sup>2</sup>, or Snell<sup>3</sup> sticker inside the helmet.
- Use foam pads inside to fit the helmet snugly so it doesn’t move on the head.
- Fit the helmet so the front is two finger widths above the eyebrows. Teach your child to wear their helmet the correct way (F).
- Adjust the two side straps so they meet in a “V” right under each ear.
- Adjust the chin strap snugly under the chin. Make it tight enough so the helmet pulls down when the child opens his mouth.
- Check often to make sure straps stay snug and the helmet stays level on the head.

## ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO WEAR HIS/HER HELMET

- Let your child help choose the helmet.
- Explain that a helmet is “just part of the gear,” as it is with football, race car driving, or hockey.
- Praise your child for wearing his/her helmet.
- Talk to other parents, so that all neighborhood families encourage the same safety rules.
- Be a role model and wear your bike helmet.

<sup>1</sup>American Society for Testing and Materials

<sup>2</sup>American National Standards Institute

<sup>3</sup>Snell Memorial Foundation

## TIP #9: BEYOND THE FRONT YARD: CREATING SAFER STREETS AND PLAY PLACES FOR CHILDREN

Crawling... walking... bike riding... in-line and roller skating. As babies grow into school kids they move farther and faster. They love to be on the move-- to the neighbor's house, the school yard, the park or the store! These activities are great for your children, if your neighborhood has safe playgrounds, sidewalks, and parks.

Young children need safe places for active play. They need safe ways to get themselves to school, sports events, and other points of interest. Yet, many communities today are not kid-friendly for walking and biking.

### HOW SAFE ARE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS AND RECREATION SITES?

#### Pedestrian-friendly neighborhood streets include:

- Places to walk off the street (sidewalks, wide shoulders).
- Sidewalks and wide shoulders that make walking easy (no overgrown bushes, dangerous ditches, trash bins, or parked cars in the way).
- Places to cross the streets easily and safely (crosswalks, traffic signals).
- Crossing Guards near schools to help children cross.
- Courteous drivers that obey the speed limits and stop for pedestrians.
- Safe play areas for children.

#### Safe places for children to play outdoors include:

- Areas that are fenced-in or away from busy streets and traffic.
- Playgrounds where equipment is in good shape.
- Play areas with soft surfaces (wood chips, rubber, sand) below swings and climbing structures.
- Grassy areas for games.
- Paths for bicycling.

### YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

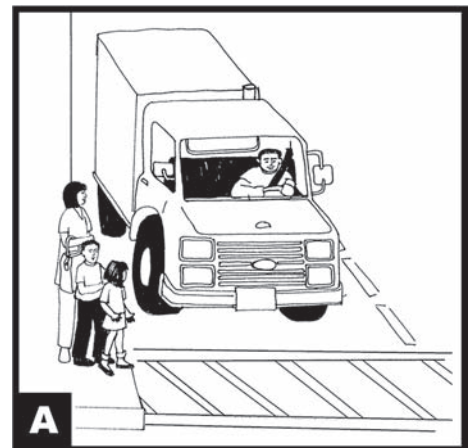
There are things you can do to create safer streets and play areas for children.

#### Things that you can do yourself:

- As a driver, set an example by stopping and giving pedestrians the right of way (A).
- Share the road safely with bicyclists.
- Obey speed limits, especially in neighborhoods where children play. Be extra careful in school zones.

#### Things you can do with others:

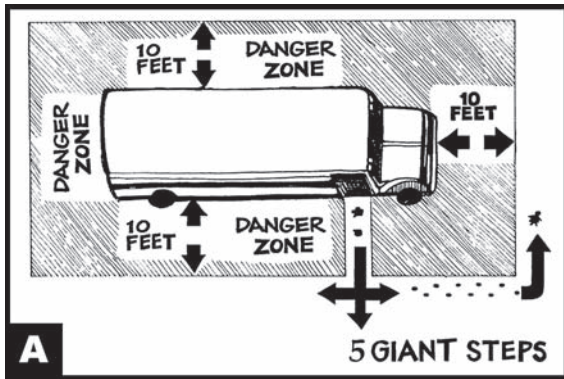
- Do a safety audit of your neighborhood using the "Walkability Checklist" or "Bikeability Checklist" (see below).
- Share the results with others in your community who are concerned with child safety: neighbors, police officers, traffic engineers, school transportation directors, parent-teacher associations, and other community groups.
- Write letters to your newspaper and speak up at public meetings.
- Work with your city or county traffic safety engineer to identify ways to make the streets safer.
- Encourage construction of playgrounds near homes, if needed, so children don't have to play in streets and parking areas.



To get the Walkability or Bikeability Checklist (check for availability in Spanish) or for more information, visit [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)



## TIP #10: SCHOOL BUS STOPS



The Danger Zone is the area on all sides of the bus where children are in the most danger of being hit. Children should stay ten feet away from the bus (or as far away as they can) and never go behind it. They should take five giant steps in front of the bus before crossing, so they can be seen by the driver.

### SCHOOL BUSES ARE THE SAFEST WAY TO GET TO SCHOOL.

School buses are nearly 8 times safer than passenger vehicles. But children must take care when boarding or leaving the bus. While an average of 7 school-age passengers are killed in school bus crashes each year, 19 are killed getting on and off the bus.

Most of those killed are children, five to seven years old. They are hit in the danger zone around the bus (A), either by a passing vehicle or by the school bus itself. It is illegal for a vehicle to pass a bus with its red light flashing.

Young children are most likely to be hit because they:

- hurry to get on or off the bus,
- act before they think and have little experience with traffic,
- assume motorists will see them and will wait for them to cross,
- don't always stay within the bus driver's sight, or
- drop something as they get off the bus and run into the path of the bus to pick it up.

### TEACH YOUR CHILD TO GET ON AND OFF THE BUS SAFELY:

- When getting on the bus, stay away from the danger zone and wait for the driver's signal. Board the bus one at a time.
- When getting off the bus, look before stepping off the bus to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder (side of the road). Move away from the bus.
- Before crossing the street, take five "giant steps" out from the front of the bus, or until the driver's face can be seen (A). Wait for the driver to signal that it's safe to cross.
- Look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the bus to make sure traffic is stopped. Keep watching traffic when crossing.

### SAFETY STEPS YOU CAN TAKE:

- Supervise children to make sure they get to the stop on time, wait far away from the road, and avoid rough play.
- Teach your child to ask the driver for help if he/she drops something near the bus. If a child bends down to pick up something, the driver cannot see him/her and the child may be hit by the bus. Have your child use a backpack or book bag to keep loose items together.
- Make sure clothing and backpacks have no loose drawstrings or long straps, to get caught in the handrail or bus door.
- Encourage safe school bus loading and unloading.
- If you think a bus stop is in a dangerous place, talk with your school office or transportation director about changing the location.

### LEARN AND FOLLOW SCHOOL BUS STOP LAWS:

Laws exist to protect children getting on and off the bus AND protect you from a tragedy. Check with your school or police department for more information on your state's laws. Here are some rules:

- Vehicles must stop when the bus displays flashing red warning lights and extends the stop signal arm (B). Vehicles may not pass until the flashing red lights and signals are turned off.
- Vehicles traveling in the **same** direction as the bus are always required to stop. In some states, vehicles moving in the **opposite** direction on a divided roadway are also required to stop. Check the law in your state.
- Never pass on the right side of the bus, where children enter or exit. This is illegal and can have tragic results.

Violation of these laws can result in a citation and fine. In many places, school bus drivers can report passing vehicles.





## TIP #11: HANDRAILS & DRAWSTRINGS: SCHOOL BUS HAZARD



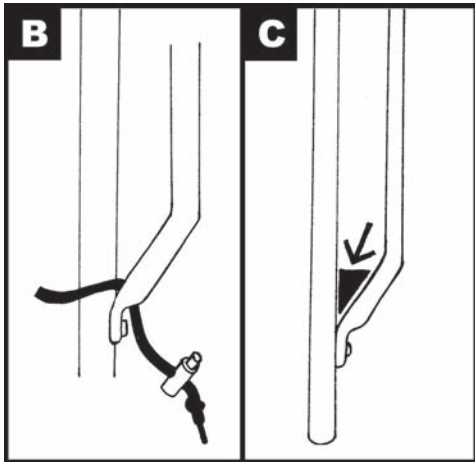
As a child gets off the bus, a drawstring or backpack strap can catch in the handrail.

### DRAWSTRINGS CAN BE DANGEROUS

Children's clothing, especially drawstrings, can cause death or injury. A drawstring can catch in a small gap in playground equipment, a bus handrail, or a bolt. As a child gets off the school bus, a dangling drawstring or loose object may catch in the handrail. If the bus doors close and the child isn't seen, she/he could be dragged and run over by the wheels (A).

Items that can cause these problems include:

- jackets, sweatshirts, and other clothing with drawstrings at the neck or waist
- backpack straps
- dangling key chains
- scarves
- belt buckles
- other loose items of clothing



How a drawstring can catch in the gap of a bus handrail.

One type of repair to a faulty handrail.

### SCHOOL BUS IMPROVEMENTS HELP REDUCE THE DANGER:

- School bus manufacturers and school districts have repaired or are repairing the handrails on old buses (B and C).
- New buses are being designed to make handrails safer.
- Bus drivers are trained to watch children as they get off the bus. Your child's bus driver should make sure each child has completely cleared the bus when leaving. He/she should look for clothing that could get caught.



These drawstrings are too long. They have large toggles that are more likely to catch.

Clothes without drawstrings are safer.

### SIMPLE STEPS MAKE CLOTHING SAFER:

- Choose clothes without drawstrings - snaps, Velcro, buttons, or elastic are better choices (D).
- Remove hood and neck strings.
- Remove drawstrings from the waist and bottom of coats.
- Warn children about dangling key rings, large buckles, and other objects hanging from their backpacks.

