



Buyer's Guide to Used Child Restraints

Condition should come before price when shopping for a used child restraint.

The price of a child restraint should not be used as the main determining factor when selecting a child restraint to use. The most expensive model is not necessarily safer than a basic inexpensive model. On the other hand, the low cost of a used child restraint (or no cost for a hand-me-down) is not worth it if you end up with an unsafe seat.

Parents and other caregivers can obtain good, safe second-hand child restraints but should use caution in selecting one and must decide if the lower cost of a used restraint is really worth it. Most of the newer models are more convenient and easier to use than older models. An inexpensive but hard-to-use restraint may not be a bargain over time. Without a doubt, an unsafe child restraint is no bargain at all!

When deciding whether or not to purchase a second-hand child restraint or to use any other "hand-me-down," check to be sure that:

- The child restraint has a full set of labels giving the manufacturer, model number, date of manufacture and statement that it complies with "all applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards." Restraints without these important labels can not be identified for sure, may not be safe, and should not be used!
- The restraint has not passed the expiration date indicated on the label or shell or, if there is no expiration date, that it is less than ten years old. Some models are labeled with an expiration date, some manufacturers set a six year limit, and any restraint older than ten years should not be used!
- The restraint has not been recalled or, if there was a recall issued on it, that any defects have been corrected. To find out for sure, call the manufacturer.
- You have a copy of the manufacturer's instruction book, not just the basic installation and use labels. If you don't, call the manufacturer to request a copy.

- The restraint has all its parts, such as harness straps, retainer clip, padding and cover, tether strap, etc. If parts are missing, do not use the restraint until the replacement parts are obtained and properly installed.
- The restraint is free from cracks, bends, or breaks in the frame or shell. If damaged, the restraint may not hold up in a crash and should not be used!
- The harness straps are not worn or frayed. If so, the restraint is not safe and should not be used until a replacement harness is obtained from the manufacturer and properly installed!
- The buckle area is free from rust and the buckle latch mechanism fastens securely, remains fastened, and unfastens smoothly. If not, the restraint is not safe and should not be used until a replacement buckle is obtained and properly installed!
- The restraint has never been involved in a serious crash. Crash-involved restraints may be weakened even if there is no apparent damage. If so, the restraint may not be safe and should not be used!

Check to be sure...



- ✓ Labeled with manufacturer, model, and date
- ✓ Less than 10 years old
- ✓ No uncorrected recalls
- ✓ All manufacturer's instructions
- ✓ All parts present
- ✓ Frame, shell and all parts are in good condition, working smoothly
- ✓ Has not been used in a crash

Prospective buyers should be able to answer "yes" to all seven items. If not, the restraint is not a safe buy.