



# Importance of Booster Seats and Seatbelts

## Resources for ages 5-15



Revised 9/2015

# Purpose of this Curriculum

The purpose of this curriculum is to provide hands-on activities and education designed to help families with older children understand why it is important to always wear a seatbelt properly. The activities and script provided in this resource are intended to be used as a supplement to the education already being provided to families by CPS Technicians. CPS Technicians using this resource should continue to educate children and families about best practice recommendations, the importance of riding in the back seat, proper use and installation (where appropriate), the danger of projectiles, and all other topics covered during a typical education session.

This curriculum was designed to be used by CPS Technicians as part of the North Carolina Child Passenger Safety Diversion Program. However, the materials included could be used as part of regular Permanent Checking Station or CPS Clinic activities, as a demonstration at a health or safety fair, or as education to school groups.

## Developmental Considerations

This curriculum is divided for use with 3 different age groups: 5-7 year olds, 8-12 year olds, and 13-15 year olds. While there are some similarities, the curriculum was designed to take into account the developmental stage and restraint needs for each age group. Choose the curriculum that is most appropriate for the family you are working with.



### Ages 5-7

Five to seven year olds are inquisitive and learn best when they are able to explore their world through hands-on activities and discussion. As you work through the activities with a family be sure to encourage the child to be involved by sharing their ideas, explaining what they have learned, and participating in the hands-on activities.



### Ages 8-12

Eight to twelve year olds also learn best through experiential learning. It is important that they are engaged in analyzing, problem solving, and decision making. The activities for this age group are essentially the same as those for the 5-7 year olds. However, they are extended by incorporating scientific concepts that are developmentally appropriate, such as hypothesis testing and Newton's 1st Law of Motion.



### Ages 13-15

Thirteen to fifteen year olds have more advanced reasoning and decision making skills. They are more likely to challenge solutions presented by adults. Instead, they learn best when they are a partner or collaborator in the learning process. The curriculum uses Motivational Interviewing techniques to help teens think through the problem solving process instead of telling them what they "should" do.



# Ages 5-7



## Opening Script

As you start working with the family it is helpful to start by introducing yourself and making sure you understand why they have come to the checking station and if they have any specific comments or concerns that you can address.

For example:

### **Start by introducing yourself and ask the parent/caregiver to explain their situation.**

Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am going to be helping you today. Before we begin I want to understand more about what brought you here today and what you hope to accomplish and then I will go through what information we will cover.

### **Acknowledge what they told you and explain how you will address it.**

Thank you for that information. You mentioned that your son has a habit of taking off his seatbelt while you are driving and that you are here because you need to bring information to the court to get your ticket dismissed. Today we are going to do a number of activities that will help your son understand why it is important to always wear his seatbelt. At the end we will also talk about some strategies you can use to get your son to stay bucked up. When we are finished I will give you the form that you will take to the court.

### **If appropriate, share a personal story about why you became a CPS Technician.**

One of the reasons I do this every month is because I know from experience how difficult it can be to make sure our children are buckled up correctly in the car. There is so much information out there and it can be really confusing. I became a CPS Technician because I wanted to help other parents figure it all out.

# Activity 1: Crash Test Demonstration

Ages 5-7

**Learning Objective:** Kids should be able to explain why it is important to wear seatbelts all of the time.

## Main Points to Discuss:

- Seatbelts are important because they protect us by keeping us **safe in a crash**
- Everyone should ride **properly restrained** at all times
- Ideally, children should ride properly restrained **in the back seat** until they are 13 years old

## Background:

The purpose of these exercises is to demonstrate what can happen when you are not wearing your seatbelt. The experiments are designed to help the child understand that seatbelts protect us by keeping us in position inside the vehicle. The scientific principle being demonstrated is Newton's 1st Law of Motion.

**WATCH:** See a video demonstrating the experiment at <http://bit.ly/crashtestvideo>.

Newton's 1st Law of Motion states: "An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force."

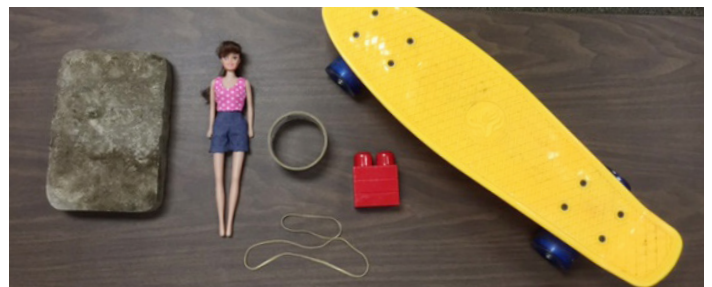
In simple terms, this means that an object that is moving will continue moving exactly the same way until something makes it stop. Similarly, it means that an object that is not moving will never move until something makes it move.

While we do not expect a child age 5-7 to be able to understand and explain this complex scientific principle, we can help them understand a real-world example demonstrating the principle. The script that accompanies the demonstration is designed to help the child understand what they are seeing and make predictions about what may happen next.

It is important for the child to participate in the discussion and demonstration. The script encourages the child to participate by predicting what they think may happen, answering questions, and reinforcing what they learned.

## Supplies Needed:

- Skateboard or larger toy car
- Legos or something else to make a seatback
- Action figure or plastic doll
- Tape
- Rubber bands
- Brick or something else to stop motion of the vehicle



## Instructions:

1. **Construct** a seatback by taping the Legos (or other material) to the skateboard.
2. **Place** the doll on the vehicle (do not tape or use rubber band to restrain). Roll the vehicle towards the brick. Upon impact the vehicle will stop moving and the doll will continue moving forward at its original speed.
3. **Repeat** the demonstration but with the doll taped or using the rubber band as a seatbelt. Upon impact both the vehicle and the doll will stop moving.

It takes some practice to figure out how hard you need to roll the car to get the doll to fly off. We recommend practicing with the materials prior to doing the activity with any children.

Videos showing the activity are provided to help the CPS Technician understand how to set up the activity. These videos are not meant to be used in place of the hands-on activity.

## Crash Test Script

Seatbelts do a very important job. They keep you safe in the car by keeping you in your seat. And the safest place for kids to ride is in the back seat. We are going to do some activities to help us better understand how seatbelts work.

The first thing we are going to do is have a car crash. And we are going to use science to help us understand what happens to the person when the car crashes.

∴ Set up unrestrained demonstration ∴

**ASK CHILD:** In this experiment, we are going to see what will happen to the person in the crash. But first I want you to tell me what you think will happen. The person is *not* wearing a seatbelt. So, do you think the person will stay *on* the car or fly *off* the car?

*Allow child to answer, but accept any answer.*

That is a good guess! Let's see what happens.

∴ Do unrestrained experiment. ∴

**ASK CHILD:** So what happened? Did the person stay in the car or did she keep moving?

*Answer: Kept moving.*

Why do you think the person kept moving?

*Look for an answer like: because she wasn't wearing her seat belt, because she wasn't attached to the car, because there was nothing in the way to stop her...*

Okay, now we are going to try the experiment again, but this time we are going to add seatbelts.

∴ Set up restrained demonstration ∴

**ASK CHILD:** Now our person is wearing a seatbelt. What do you think is going to happen this time? When the car crashes will the person stay on the car or will he keep moving?

∴ Do restrained experiment. ∴

**ASK CHILD:** What happened this time?

*Answer: The person stayed with the car.*

Why did she stay with the car this time?

*Look for an answer like: because she was wearing her seatbelt.*

What do you think this tells us about seatbelts?

*Look for an answer like: they keep us safe, they protect us, etc.*

So if you had a friend who didn't wear their seatbelt, what would you tell them about why it is important for them to wear it?

*Look for an answer like: seatbelts keep us inside the car, seatbelts protect us, seatbelts keep us from flying out and getting hurt.*

Great! So we just learned that seatbelts do a very important job. They protect us when we ride in the car and keep us safe! It is important for everyone in the car to wear their seatbelt all the time. And, the back seat is the safest place for kids to ride.





## Activity 2: Proper Belt Fit

Ages 5-7

**Learning Objective:** Kids should be able to demonstrate proper seatbelt use.

### Main Points to Discuss:

- Kids need to use a **booster seat** with a seatbelt until the seatbelt fits properly on its own
- Proper seatbelt fit means following the **3 Steps for Seatbelt Safety** and wearing the seatbelt properly
- Everyone should ride properly restrained **at all times**
- Ideally, children should ride properly restrained **in the back seat** until they are 13 years old

### Background:

Children need to continue using a booster seat until the seatbelt fits properly on its own. This means that for many children they will need to continue using a booster seat past age 8 or 80 pounds.

Parents need to understand what proper seatbelt fit looks like so that they can determine when the child is big enough to ride using the seatbelt alone.

The script provided is a generic script to help children and parents understand why it is important that they continue using a booster seat until the seatbelt fits properly on its own. By comparing the belt fit with and without the booster seat you provide a visual demonstration of what proper belt fit looks like.



### Supplies Needed:

- Vehicle with lap/shoulder belt or vehicle seat simulator
- Booster seat

## Proper Belt Fit Script

So we know that seatbelts are important and keep us safe. Booster seats are also important because they make the seatbelt fit properly. I am going to show you how your booster seat helps the seatbelt do its job.

But first, let's talk about where we should wear our seatbelts. The seatbelt has two parts: the lap belt and the shoulder belt.

Let's talk about the lap belt first.

**ASK CHILD:** Put your fingers on your hip bones.

*It helps to also demonstrate this while explaining it so the kids know where to find their hip bones.*

Are your hip bones hard or squishy?

*Answer: They are hard.*

Now put your fingers on your belly button. Is your tummy hard or squishy?

*Answer: It's squishy.*

What do you think is going to protect you better in a crash: your strong bones or your squishy tummy?

*Answer: Yes, your strong bones help to protect you.*

Just like a turtle has a hard shell to protect him, your hard bones protect you. So when you wear your seatbelt, you want to make sure it is on your hard hip bones and not your squishy tummy.

Okay, so next we need to talk about the shoulder belt part of your seatbelt. The shoulder belt is important because it keeps the top half of your body in the right place. Now I want you to touch your shoulders. Are your shoulders hard or squishy?

*Answer: They are hard!*

So, we want to make sure that the shoulder belt goes across your hard shoulder bones.

So now we know that our hard bones are going to protect us in a crash. Let's try putting on a seatbelt to see how it fits.



⋮ Do seatbelt booster seat exercise ⋮

### Instructions:

1. **Have** child sit on vehicle seat without booster seat and put on lap/shoulder seatbelt. Point out to the adult all the ways that the seatbelt does not fit on the child (lap belt too high on stomach, shoulder belt not in correct position, knees don't bend over the seat, etc).

**ASK CHILD:** Is the lap belt touching your hard bones or is it on your squishy tummy?

*Answer: Likely will be too high on the child's abdomen.*

And what did we figure out would protect you better in a crash? Your hard bones or your squishy tummy? So is this seatbelt where it belongs?

*Answer: No.*

**NOTE:** If child automatically puts shoulder belt behind back or under their arm, point out why that is not safe.

**Instructions (continued):**

**ASK CHILD:** Can you tell me why you put the shoulder belt (behind back, under arm, etc)?

*Address reasons for wearing seatbelt improperly and demonstrate correct fit. If they are wearing it incorrectly because of comfort they likely still need a booster seat.*

- 2. Repeat** exercise with the booster seat. Point out to the adult how the seatbelt fit is better.

**ASK CHILD:** Is the lap belt touching your hard bones or is it on your squishy tummy?

*Answer: Should be on their upper thigh/hip area.*

**ASK CHILD:** So is this seatbelt where it belongs?

*Answer: Yes.*

Your booster seat has a very important job. It puts you in the right position so that the seatbelt fits properly. You need to keep using your booster seat until the seatbelt fits properly on its own.

- 3. Discuss** the 3 Steps for Seatbelt Safety with parent/caregiver and make sure they understand when it is appropriate for the child to ride without a booster seat (in addition to the legal requirements).

### 3 Steps for Seatbelt Safety

- 1. Sit Tall and Bend Knees:** The child should be able to sit with their bottom against the back of the seat and their knees bent at the front edge of the seat

Children whose knees do not bend at the front edge of the vehicle seat will likely end up slouching down until their knees bend and they are more comfortable. When this happens the seatbelt will come off the hip bones and onto the stomach area. Children whose knees do not bend at the edge of the vehicle seat need a booster seat.

- 2. Shoulder:** The shoulder belt crosses mid-shoulder – not too close to the neck and not too close to the arm.

The shoulder belt helps keep the upper body in place during a crash. Without the protection of the shoulder belt, the upper body can move too far forward during a crash. When this happens the head may strike whatever is in front of it (the back of the front seat or vehicle dashboard depending on where you are sitting) potentially causing significant injuries. If the shoulder belt rubs the neck it is very uncomfortable. If the shoulder belt is too close to the arm it could slide off the shoulder giving less protection.

- 3. Hips:** The lap belt crosses the body on the upper thigh/hip area – not on the stomach.

The position of the lap belt is especially important and is often overlooked. It is important that the lap belt crosses the strong hip bones. In a crash, your bones will help protect you from injury. If your child is not big enough to use the seatbelt alone, the lap belt will be on the stomach instead of the hip bones and in a crash the child could be seriously injured when the lap belt digs into the stomach.



At the end of the car seat check be sure to summarize everything that was covered. Allow the child to participate in the summary by answering questions. Also, if the adult identified any issues with regards to getting the child to buckle or keeping the child buckled properly be sure to help them identify strategies to overcome those challenges.

## For example:

Today we learned why it is important to wear a seatbelt and how it is supposed to fit.

**ASK CHILD:** Can you tell me again why it is important to wear your seatbelt?

*Answer: Looking for something like to keep me safe in the car, to keep me inside the car, etc.*

**TO ADULT:** We also discussed how to determine when a child is ready to ride without the booster seat. Do you have any questions?

For the seatbelt to do its job, you have to make sure you put it on and keep it on every time you are in the car.

**TO ADULT:** That's where you come in. Parents (adults, friends, grandparents, etc) are one of the biggest influences in a child's life so if you wear your seatbelt and require everybody in your car to wear one, you are setting a great example.

At the beginning you mentioned that your child (wouldn't buckle up or regularly unbuckles himself) while you are driving. Let's talk about some ways you might change that behavior.

## Potential suggestions for getting child to buckle up (depends on the child and age, maturity)

- Some parents tell us that it's helpful to set a ground rule in their car that everyone must be buckled and they remind everyone of the rule before each trip.
- Some parents say that they won't start driving unless everyone is buckled.
- Some parents also find it helpful to let their child be in charge or reminding everyone to buckle up. That way the child has a sense of responsibility.

## Potential suggestions for keeping child buckled up (depends on the child and age, maturity)

- The first possibility is to move him back to a car seat with a harness until he can prove to you that he is mature enough to handle the responsibility of sitting in a booster seat.
- Some parents tell us that they have had success with rewarding a child for wearing his seatbelt by allowing him to play with a favorite toy, phone or other electronics in the car.
- You can occasionally scan the car to make sure everyone is still buckled correctly. If not pull over.

What are some strategies you think you can use to make sure *[child's name]* is buckled and stays buckled for every trip?

*Reinforce good ideas and help problem solve if there are specific issues with getting the child to buckle or stay buckled.*

# Ages 8-12



## Opening Script

As you start working with the family it is helpful to start by introducing yourself and making sure you understand why they have come to the checking station and if they have any specific comments or concerns that you can address.

For example:

**Start by introducing yourself and ask the parent/caregiver to explain their situation.**

Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am going to be helping you today. Before we begin I want to understand more about what brought you here today and what you hope to accomplish and then I will go through what information we will cover.

**Acknowledge what they told you and explain how you will address it.**

Thank you for that information. You mentioned that your son has a habit of taking off his seatbelt while you are driving and that you are here because you need to bring information to the court to get your ticket dismissed. Today we are going to do a number of activities that will help your son understand why it is important to always wear his seatbelt. At the end we will also talk about some strategies you can use to get your son to stay bucked up. When we are finished I will give you the form that you will take to the court.

**If appropriate, share a personal story about why you became a CPS Technician.**

One of the reasons I do this every month is because I know from experience how difficult it can be to make sure our children are buckled up correctly in the car. There is so much information out there and it can be really confusing. I became a CPS Technician because I wanted to help other parents figure it all out.

# Activity 1: Crash Test Demonstration

Ages 8-12

**Learning Objective:** Kids should be able to explain why it is important to wear seatbelts all of the time.

## Main Points to Discuss:

- Seatbelts are important because they protect us by keeping us **safe in a crash**
- Everyone should ride **properly restrained** at all times
- Ideally, children should ride properly restrained **in the back seat** until they are 13 years old

## Background:

The purpose of these exercises is to demonstrate what can happen when you are not wearing your seatbelt. The experiments are designed to help the child understand that seatbelts protect us by keeping us in position inside the vehicle. The scientific principle being demonstrated is Newton's 1st Law of Motion.

**WATCH:** See a video demonstrating the experiment at <http://bit.ly/crashtestvideo>.

Newton's 1st Law of Motion states: "An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force."

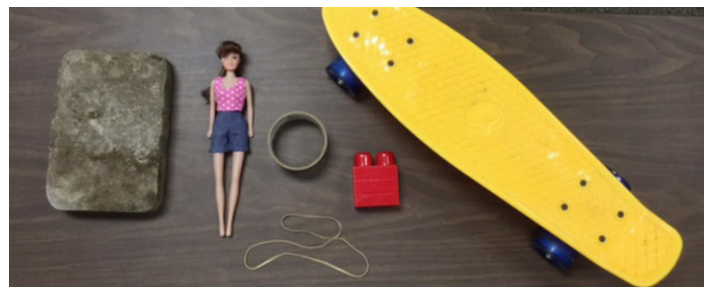
In simple terms, this means that an object that is moving will continue moving exactly the same way until something makes it stop. Similarly, it means that an object that is not moving will never move until something makes it move.

While we do not expect a child age 8-12 to fully understand and explain this complex scientific principle, we can help them understand a real-world example demonstrating the principle. The script that accompanies the demonstration is designed to help the child understand what they are seeing and make predictions about what may happen next.

It is important for the child to participate in the discussion and demonstration. The script encourages the child to participate by predicting what they think may happen, answering questions, and reinforcing what they learned.

## Supplies Needed:

- Skateboard or larger toy car
- Legos or something else to make a seatback
- Action figure or plastic doll
- Tape
- Rubber bands
- Brick or something else to stop motion of the vehicle



## Instructions:

1. **Construct** a seatback by taping the Legos (or other material) to the skateboard.
2. **Place** the doll on the vehicle (do not tape or use rubber band to restrain). Roll the vehicle towards the brick. Upon impact the vehicle will stop moving and the doll will continue moving forward at its original speed.
3. **Repeat** the demonstration but with the doll taped or using the rubber band as a seatbelt. Upon impact both the vehicle and the doll will stop moving.

It takes some practice to figure out how hard you need to roll the car to get the doll to fly off. We recommend practicing with the materials prior to doing the activity with any children.

Videos showing the activity are provided to help the CPS Technician understand how to set up the activity. These videos are not meant to be used in place of the hands-on activity.



## Crash Test Script

Seatbelts do a very important job. They keep you safe in the car by keeping you in your seat. And the safest place for kids to ride is in the back seat. We are going to do some activities to help us better understand how seatbelts work.

The first thing we are going to do is have a car crash. And we are going to use a scientific field called physics to help us understand what happens to the person when the car crashes. Physics is a science that studies the rules about how and why everything moves in the universe. It helps us understand why things move the way they do.

::: Set up unrestrained demonstration :::

**ASK CHILD:** Have you ever heard of the word “hypothesis?”

*If yes: Ask them to explain it to you. If no: A hypothesis is what you think will happen in the experiment.*

For this experiment, we are going to have a car crash. This person is *not* wearing a seatbelt. What is your hypothesis for this experiment?

*Allow child to answer, but accept any answer.*

That is a good guess! Let’s see what happens.

::: Do unrestrained experiment. :::

**ASK CHILD:** So what happened? Did the person stay in the car or did she keep moving?

*Answer: Kept moving.*

Why do you think the person kept moving?

*Look for an answer like: because she wasn’t wearing her seat belt, because she wasn’t attached to the car, because there was nothing in the way to stop her...*

Okay, now we are going to try the experiment again, but this time we are going to add seatbelts.

::: Set up restrained demonstration :::

**ASK CHILD:** Now our person is wearing a seatbelt. What is your hypothesis for this experiment?

::: Do restrained experiment. :::

**ASK CHILD:** What happened this time?

*Answer: The person stayed with the car.*

Why did she stay with the car this time?

*Look for an answer like: because she was wearing her seatbelt.*

What do you think this tells us about seatbelts?

*Look for an answer like: they keep us safe, they protect us, etc.*

So if you had a friend who didn’t wear their seatbelt, what would you tell them about why it is important for them to wear it?

*Look for an answer like: seatbelts keep us inside the car, seatbelts protect us, seatbelts keep us from flying out and getting hurt.*

Great! So we just learned that seatbelts do a very important job. And we know this because science tells us that when something is moving it is going to keep on moving until something stops it. It is important for everyone in the car to wear their seatbelt all the time. And, the back seat is the safest place for kids to ride.



## Activity 2: Proper Belt Fit

Ages 8-12

**Learning Objective:** Kids should be able to demonstrate proper seatbelt use.

### Main Points to Discuss:

- Kids need to use a **booster seat** with a seatbelt until the seatbelt fits properly on its own
- Proper seatbelt fit means following the **3 Steps for Seatbelt Safety** and wearing the seatbelt properly
- Everyone should ride properly restrained **at all times**
- Ideally, children should ride properly restrained **in the back seat** until they are 13 years old

### Background:

Children need to continue using a booster seat until the seatbelt fits properly on its own. This means that for many children they will need to continue using a booster seat past age 8 or 80 pounds.

Parents need to understand what proper seatbelt fit looks like so that they can determine when the child is big enough to ride using the seatbelt alone. Regardless of what the law says, many children in this age range (particularly the younger or smaller children) will need a booster seat to help the seatbelt fit properly.

The script provided is a generic script to help children and parents understand why it is important that they continue using a booster seat until the seatbelt fits properly on its own. By comparing the belt fit with and without the booster seat you provide a visual demonstration of what proper belt fit looks like.



### Supplies Needed:

- Vehicle with lap/shoulder belt or vehicle seat simulator
- Booster seat

## Proper Belt Fit Script

So we know that seatbelts are important and keep us safe. Booster seats are also important because they make the seatbelt fit properly. I am going to show you how your booster seat helps the seatbelt do its job.

But first, let's talk about where we should wear our seatbelts. The seatbelt has two parts: the lap belt and the shoulder belt.

Let's talk about the lap belt first.

**ASK CHILD:** Put your fingers on your hip bones.

*It helps to also demonstrate this while explaining it so the kids know where to find their hip bones.*

Are your hip bones hard or soft?

*Answer: They are hard.*

Now put your fingers on your belly button. Is your stomach hard or soft?

*Answer: It's soft.*

What do you think is going to protect you better in a crash: your strong bones or your soft stomach?

*Answer: Strong bones.*

Yes, your bones are like your armor inside your body. So when you wear your seatbelt, you want to make sure it is on your hard bones and not your soft stomach. Okay, so next we need to talk about the shoulder belt part of your seatbelt. The shoulder belt is important because it keeps the top half of your body in the right place. Now I want you to touch your shoulders. Are your shoulders hard or soft?

*Answer: They are hard!*

So, we want to make sure that the shoulder belt goes across your hard shoulder bones.

So now we know that our hard bones are going to protect us in a crash. Let's try putting on a seatbelt to see how it fits.

::: Do seatbelt booster seat exercise :::

### Instructions:

1. **Have** child sit on vehicle seat without booster seat and put on lap/shoulder seatbelt.

**NOTE:** If child automatically puts shoulder belt behind back or under their arm, point out why that is not safe.

**ASK CHILD:** Can you tell me why you put the shoulder belt (behind back, under arm, etc)?

*Address reasons for wearing seatbelt improperly and demonstrate correct fit. If they are wearing it incorrectly because of comfort they likely still need a booster seat.*

2. *If the seatbelt fits properly on its own, the child meets the legal requirements for riding without a booster seat, and the child passes the 3 Steps for Seatbelt Safety, **discuss** the importance of wearing a seatbelt properly all the time.*

**SAY TO CHILD:** The seatbelt has a very important job. It keeps you on your seat inside the car. As we talked about before, the lap belt should go snugly across your hard hip bones and the shoulder belt should go across your shoulder and not be behind your back. You need to wear your seatbelt correctly every time you ride in a car.

3. *If the seatbelt does not fit properly, the child does not meet the legal requirements for riding without a booster seat, or the child does not pass the 3 Steps for Seatbelt Safety, **continue** with the demonstration.*



**Instructions (continued):**

4. **Point out** all the ways that the seatbelt does not fit on the child (lap belt too high on stomach, shoulder belt not in correct position, knees don't bend over the seat, etc.)

*ASK CHILD:* Is the lap belt touching your hard bones or is it on your soft stomach? And what did we figure out would protect you better in a crash? Your hard bones or your soft stomach?

*Answer: Hard bones.*

*ASK CHILD:* So is this seatbelt in the best place to protect you?

*Answers will vary depending on belt fit.*

5. **Repeat** exercise with the booster seat. Point out how the seatbelt fit is better.

*ASK CHILD:* Is the lap belt touching your hard bones or is it on your soft stomach?

*Answer: Should be on the upper thigh/hip area.*

*ASK CHILD:* Now, is this seatbelt in the best place to protect you?

Right! Your booster seat has a very important job. It puts you in the right position so that the seatbelt fits properly. You need to keep using your booster seat until the seatbelt fits properly on its own.

6. **Discuss** the 3 Steps for Seatbelt Safety with parent/caregiver and make sure they understand when it is appropriate to ride without a booster seat (in addition to the legal requirements).

### 3 Steps for Seatbelt Safety

1. **Sit Tall and Bend Knees:** The child should be able to sit with their bottom against the back of the seat and their knees bent at the front edge of the seat

Children whose knees do not bend at the front edge of the vehicle seat will likely end up slouching down until their knees bend and they are more comfortable. When this happens the seatbelt will come off the hip bones and onto the stomach area. Children whose knees do not bend at the edge of the vehicle seat need a booster seat.

2. **Shoulder:** The shoulder belt crosses mid-shoulder – not too close to the neck and not too close to the arm.

The shoulder belt helps keep the upper body in place during a crash. Without the protection of the shoulder belt, the upper body can move too far forward during a crash. When this happens the head may strike whatever is in front of it (the back of the front seat or vehicle dashboard depending on where you are sitting) potentially causing significant injuries. If the shoulder belt rubs the neck it is very uncomfortable. If the shoulder belt is too close to the arm it could slide off the shoulder giving less protection.

3. **Hips:** The lap belt crosses the body on the upper thigh/hip area – not on the stomach.

The position of the lap belt is especially important and is often overlooked. It is important that the lap belt crosses the strong hip bones. In a crash, your bones will help protect you from injury. If your child is not big enough to use the seatbelt alone, the lap belt will be on the stomach instead of the hip bones and in a crash the child could be seriously injured when the lap belt digs into the stomach.

At the end of the car seat check be sure to summarize everything that was covered. Allow the child to participate in the summary by answering questions. Also, if the adult identified any issues with regards to getting the child to buckle or keeping the child buckled properly be sure to help them identify strategies to overcome those challenges.

## For example:

Today we learned why it is important to wear a seatbelt and how it is supposed to fit.

**ASK CHILD:** Can you tell me again why it is important to wear your seatbelt?

*Answer: Looking for something like to keep me safe in the car, to keep me inside the car, etc.*

**TO ADULT:** We also discussed how to determine when a child is ready to ride without the booster seat. Do you have any questions?

For the seatbelt to do its job, you have to make sure you put it on and keep it on every time you are in the car.

**TO ADULT:** That's where you come in. Parents (adults, friends, grandparents, etc) are one of the biggest influences in a child's life so if you wear your seatbelt and require everybody in your car to wear one, you are setting a great example.

At the beginning you mentioned that your child (wouldn't buckle up or regularly unbuckles himself) while you are driving. Let's talk about some ways you might change that behavior.

## Potential suggestions for getting child to buckle up (depends on the child and age, maturity)

- Some parents tell us that it's helpful to set a ground rule in their car that everyone must be buckled and they remind everyone of the rule before each trip.
- Some parents say that they won't start driving unless everyone is buckled.
- Some parents also find it helpful to let their child be in charge or reminding everyone to buckle up. That way the child has a sense of responsibility.

## Potential suggestions for keeping child buckled up (depends on the child and age, maturity)

- Some parents tell us that they have had success with rewarding a child for wearing his seatbelt by only allowing him to use electronic devices in the car if he is buckled.
- You can occasionally scan the car to make sure everyone is still buckled correctly. If not, remind them.
- Some parents tell us that if their child is being very resistant and won't stay buckled, they pull the car over and wait until the child buckles up.

What are some strategies you think you can use to make sure *[child's name]* is buckled and stays buckled for every trip?

*Reinforce good ideas and help problem solve if there are specific issues with getting the child to buckle or stay buckled.*

# Ages 13-15



## Activity 1: Importance of Seatbelts

**Learning Objective:** Teens should be able to list reasons why they should wear a seatbelt and be able to identify strategies to increase their own seatbelt use.

### Main Points to Discuss:

- Teen's perspective of **pros and cons** of seatbelt use
- **Risks** of not wearing a seatbelt
- Teen's **strategies** to wear a seatbelt more often

### Background:

The purpose of this activity is to use Motivational Interviewing techniques to help teens think through the reasons why it is important to wear a seatbelt and help them to come up with strategies they could use to help them to wear it all of the time. The job of the CPS technicians is not to lecture the teen or tell them what they "should", but instead help them with the problem solving process. Motivational Interviewing uses specific communication techniques. The techniques can be easily remembered by the acronym OARS, which stands for Open-ended Questions, Affirmations, Reflective Listening, and Summarizing.



**Open-ended questions:** Use open ended questions throughout the meeting to gather information about the teen and to establish a positive dialogue. Open ended questions usually start with “what” “why” or “how.” You want to avoid close-ended questions that can only be answer with a “yes” or “no” response. Examples of open-ended questions:

- What brought you here today?
- Tell me about wearing your seatbelt. What are the good things and the not so good things about it?
- If you wanted to wear your seatbelt more, how would you go about it?

**Affirmations:** Use affirmations to emphasize a strength or positive action of the teen. You can also acknowledge difficulties the teen might face. Examples of affirmations:

- I understand it’s hard to remember to wear your seatbelt when you are riding with your friends.
- It’s clear that you are really trying to wear your seatbelt more.

**Reflective Listening:** Use reflective listening to repeat back or rephrase what you hear the teen saying. This help the teen know that you are actively listening and understand what they are saying. Examples of reflective listening:

- It sounds like not wearing seatbelt has been a way for you to fit in with your friends.
- So, you feel like seatbelts don’t really keep you safe.

**Summarizing:** Use summarizing to review the information that has been discussed. Summarizing can be helpful when you have covered a lot of information and you want to move to a different topic or when the meeting is ending. Examples of summarizing:

- Let me see if I understand what you told me so far.
- Okay, here’s what I’ve heard so far. What have I missed?

### Supplies:

- Teen seatbelt questionnaire
- If available: Electronic device to show YouTube clip



# Importance of Seatbelts Script

Hello my name is *[your name]* and I am going to be helping you today. I understand that you are here today because your parent/the driver got a ticket because you were not wearing your seatbelt. I want to talk with you about how not wearing your seatbelt can affect your safety. But first, I want you to fill out this short questionnaire for me.

:: Hand the teen the Seatbelt Questionnaire::

## 1. Assess teen's risk status

**ASK TEEN:** Before we begin I want to understand more about what brought you here today. So, what was the situation that led to the ticket?

*REPHRASE OR SUMMARIZE*

It sounds like your parent/the driver got the ticket because *[reason]*. Is that right?

**ASK TEEN:** In general, how do you feel about wearing your seatbelt?

*AFFIRM POSITIVE ATTITUDE/ACTION OR ACKNOWLEDGE A STRUGGLE*

For example: I understand that you try to wear your seatbelt most of the time. But, it sounds like sometimes it can be hard for you to remember to wear it.

## 2. Evaluate pros and cons of seatbelt use

**ASK TEEN:** What are some of the main reasons you wear your seatbelt?

*If they have a hard time coming up with reasons, refer back to the answers they provided on the Seatbelt Questionnaire. For example: On the Seatbelt Questionnaire you said you wear your seatbelt because...*

*AFFIRM REASONS FOR WEARING SEATBELT*

Those are all great reasons for wearing your seatbelt.

*PROVIDE ALTERNATE REASON FOR WEARING A SEATBELT*

Just like you, one of the main reasons I wear my seatbelt is because I don't want to get hurt. But another big reason I wear it is because I don't want to hurt other people. Most people don't realize that if they don't wear their seatbelt they can hurt the other people in the car with them.

If Electronic Device is Available:

After seeing some videos of real crashes, I realized what can really happen if I don't have my seatbelt on.

Let me show you this one that I think is a good example.

**WATCH:** View the crash video at <http://bit.ly/crash15>.

**ASK TEEN:** Can you imagine what would happen if there were other people in the car?

*REPEAT/REPHRASE TEEN'S RESPONSE*

For example: You're right! If there had been other people in the car they would've *[been really hurt, smashed into each other]*.

If Electronic Device is Not Available:

**ASK TEEN:** Can you imagine what would happen inside of a car if there was a crash and some people aren't belted? Do you think they would *[smash into each other, land on each other, hurt each other]*?

*REPEAT/REPHRASE TEEN'S RESPONSE*

You're right! When there is crash, people fly all over the car if they don't have a seatbelt on and they can *[smash into each other, land on each other, hurt each other]*.

*USE "I STATEMENT" TO EMPOWER TEEN*

So, that's why I always wear my seatbelt and make sure everyone in the car does. If someone's in the car with me and doesn't want to wear their seatbelt, I just say, "It's fine if you don't care if you get hurt, but you have to wear it because I don't want you to crash into me if we have a wreck."

**ASK TEEN:** Do you think saying something like that to your parents/siblings/friends would make them buckle up?  
*If they say no, ask them what else they think they could do.*

**ASK TEEN:** So, we've talked about the reasons you DO wear your seatbelt, but what are some reasons you DON'T wear it?

*If they have a hard time coming up with reasons, refer back to the answers they provided on the Seatbelt Questionnaire.*

*ACKNOWLEDGE THE REASONS THEY DON'T WEAR A SEATBELT*

I understand that sometimes you don't wear your seatbelt because *[reason]*.

**ASK TEEN:** How do you think the reasons you wear your seatbelt compare to the reasons you don't wear it?

*SUMMARIZE*

Let me see if I understand what you told me so far. On the one hand you said that you wear your seatbelt because *[reason]*, and on the other hand, you said that sometime you don't wear your seatbelt because *[reason]*. But overall, you think that the advantages of wearing your seatbelt outweigh the disadvantages. Does that sound about right?

### 3. Educate about risks of not wearing a seatbelt

I want to thank you for coming and talking with me today. One of the main reasons I became a *[Police Officer/Firefighter/Nurse/EMT/etc.]* is because I know from experience the life-and-death consequences of not wearing a seatbelt.

*If possible, use a personal story or connection to convey the risks of not wearing a seatbelt.*

Car crashes are the #1 cause of death among teens in North Carolina, and being buckled up is the best way you can protect yourself and other people in the car.

And as you know now, in North Carolina it's the law that everyone has to be buckled up, no matter if they are in the front seat or backseat.

**ASK TEEN:** Do you have any questions about what we talked about today?