

Get your kids to buckle up – without complaining

Seat belts saved around 15,000 lives in 2017, and most people see the value in buckling up. Almost 90 percent of Americans used seat belts in 2018, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).



Members of one group might offer some push-back on seat belt use, however, and they could be in your back seat. Kids testing their independence – and you – can balk at buckling up.

This not only makes a journey miserable before you even pull out of the driveway, it also has the potential to jeopardize safety and violate traffic laws.

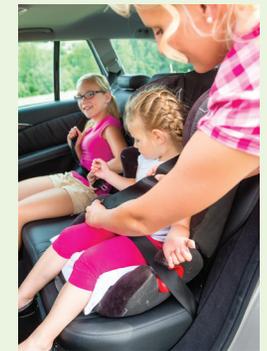
To get kids to buckle up, try these tips from the NHTSA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- **Be a role model.** It might not always seem like it, but you have a strong influence on the habits your children pick up. Model good behavior by buckling up every time you're in the car.
- **Be consistent.** Don't give in to the temptation to avoid buckling up for a short drive. Make it a rule that everyone buckles up, every time.
- **Double-check.** Don't assume that the kids are all safely buckled in. Before every ride, check to make sure that everyone's wearing a seat belt and that it's properly adjusted. (The shoulder belt shouldn't be behind their back or under their arms, for example.)
- **Provide motivation.** Emphasize that not wearing a seat belt has consequences and that wearing one brings rewards. For example, don't let your child use an electronic device until he or she buckles up.
- **It's the law.** If your state has a seat belt law, let kids know that you could get a ticket or be fined for not wearing one. If they're not wearing their seat belt, the fine could come out of their allowance.

Time for a seat belt?

Children should use a car seat or booster seat until they outgrow its size limits or can properly fit into a seat belt. This usually occurs between ages 8 and 12.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the signs below indicate that your child is ready to use a seat belt.



Without slouching, the child is tall enough to sit with his or her:

- Back against the vehicle seat,
- Knees naturally bent over the seat edge, and
- Feet flat on the floor.

The lap belt needs to lie across the hips or upper thighs, rather than the stomach, and the belt should fit snugly across the shoulder and chest. It should not cross the neck or face.

In addition, children under age 13 should ride in the back seat.

