

Are they sitting safely?

This month, we bring you a selection of Best Buy child car seats from www.which.co.uk suitable for different ages, plus advice on fitting them

With car registration plates changing next month, you or a family member may be buying a new car. If so, you may want a suitable child seat for it.

We have more than 20 Best Buy seats at www.which.co.uk/childcarseats, so you're bound to find one for your car and your budget.

You must, by law, fit a seat for a child aged 12 or younger. The model you need will depend on the child's weight.

In this article, we bring you the top scoring and lowest priced Best Buys across the weight groups, so there should be choices for most families. We also review our first Best Buy carry cot, designed to

keep sleeping babies safe. Go to our website for full testing results.

All new cars can take an Isofix seat – one fitted directly to brackets instead of being secured with the seat belt. These are generally easier to install and will remain more stable in crashes.

More than half the current Best Buys at www.which.co.uk/childcarseats use Isofix brackets. If you want a belt-fitted seat, we also have Best Buys to choose from.

If you are looking to buy a new car next month, we have hundreds of models tested at www.which.co.uk/cars, and we'll bring you a full report of child car seats, including the latest models, in the magazine and online in June.



Best Buys Group 0+ (Newborn to 13kg) 22 tested, 11 Best Buys reviewed at www.which.co.uk/childcarseats

82% MAXI COSI CABRIOFIX WITH EASYFIX BASE £200

Our testing has become even tougher since we first made the Maxi Cosi Cabriofix with Easyfix base a Best Buy back in 2006.

Happily, it passed the new test with flying colours, achieving our first five star (excellent) rating for a child car seat.

Crash protection is excellent, and the instructions are clear.

It scores 82% only with its Easyfix base (an Isofix system) so if your car doesn't have this, go for another Best Buy.

The base is heavy, so you might want to leave it fixed in the car.

Pros Excellent crash test results.

Cons Heavy base.



81% BRITAX COSY TOT PREMIUM (ISOFIX) £195

You can install this seat (rearward-facing) using Isofix mounts or the three-point adult seat belt. It's a Best Buy for both.

These results are for using the seat with Isofix mounts. It performs excellently in a front or side impact crash and stays stable in all circumstances.

A support leg stands on the floor of the car to add stability in a front crash.

This won't fit all cars, but Britax's website lists compatible models. The seat is easy to install and use. The harness can easily be adjusted as the child grows, without having to unthread it from the seat.

Pros The seat is easy to install and use and is a Best Buy in seat-belted and Isofix versions.

Cons None.



71% HAUCK ZERO PLUS £70

This protects babies weighing up to 13kg excellently in front or side crashes.

It's a little tricky to install due to the seat belt guides being partially hidden by the ill-fitting cover.

However, if care is taken, it should be fine to fit correctly.

It's very light and can be bought separately or as part of a pushchair travel system. It's compatible with systems from several pushchair manufacturers. Excellent leg support and padding add to the baby's comfort and, once the seat is fixed in the car, buckling up is straightforward. We'd like the instructions and safety advice to be clearer. As with all rearward-facing seats, this shouldn't be used in the front passenger seat if the front airbag's active.

Pros Excellent crash protection.

Cons Tricky to install.



Best Buys Group 1 (9kg to 18kg) 15 tested / 5 Best Buys reviewed at www.which.co.uk/childcarseats

75% MAXI COSI PRIORIFIX £240

This is one of the safest Group 1 seats suitable for children aged one to four. It can be fixed using Isofix mounts or seat belts.

There's a support leg which rests on the car floor for extra stability. This needs a flat, solid floor, so it won't suit all cars – refer to manufacturer guidelines before buying. If installed correctly, an indicator on the leg turns green.

The Priorifix is well padded and provides good leg support. It has a high back, so taller children will be able to continue to use it up to the point where they reach the recommended weight limit.

Pros Safest seat for this group. Easy to use and with clear instructions.

Cons It's heavy (11kg) so it may be best to leave it installed.



78% KIDDY INFINITYPRO £130

A child in this seat is well protected if the car is involved in a front or side-on crash.

It's secured in a forward-facing position using the adult seat belt, which feeds over and through a body shield designed to spread loads transmitted to the child in a crash.

It performs well in a front crash and even better in a side impact crash, when it achieves top marks for protecting the child.

The InfinityPro is easy to fit, lightweight and easy to handle. Feeding the seat belt over and through the seat's 'body shield' is straightforward, as is buckling it up with the child in position. All this is aided by clear instructions, minimising the chances of it being fitted incorrectly.

It has excellent padding and good leg and head support.

The seat cover is machine washable.

Pros Performs well in front and side crash.

Cons None.



71% CHICCO KEY1 ISOFIX £170

The height of the shoulder straps on the Chicco Key1 Isofix, a seat designed for children aged one to four can be adjusted easily, without having to unthread the harness.

However, if you were to move it from car to car, you might need help, as it weighs in at a hefty 13kg.

It offers protection to Best Buy standard only as an Isofix seat.

There is a seatbelt version too, which is called the Chicco Key 1 X-Plus.

However, the seat doesn't offer as much protection when secured with seat belts, so we can recommend it only as an Isofix seat.

Pros The shoulder straps are easily adjustable and it's easy to buckle.

Cons The seat belt version of this model does not perform as well as the Isofix seat.



Which? online New cars

If you are looking to buy a new car when registration plates change next month, you can watch videos of our test drives and read our reviews of some of the latest models.

You can also find our Best Buys in categories ranging from 4x4s to superminis and read the *Which? Car Buying Guide* which has fuel consumption results and advice on comfort and practicality.

Visit www.which.co.uk/cars to find out more.



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Kiddy InfinityPro
www.kiddy.de
Maxi Cosi
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Fitting your seat

Up to six to eight child car seats in every ten are not fitted correctly. Our video at www.which.co.uk/fitchildcarseats gives you extra help



1

Choose your seat

Find out which car seat group is best for your child's weight.



3

Car seat fittings

We show you how to spot Isofix brackets, which can be hidden on certain cars.



2

Belting up

Our video advises you on how tight belts should be to keep the child seat secure.



Best Buys Group 2/3 (15 to 36 kg) 11 tested / 5 Best Buys reviewed at www.which.co.uk/childcarseats

77% BRITAX EVOLVA 2/3 ISOFIT £120

Unusually for a seat in this group, this Best Buy uses Isofix.

The Isofix mounting for the base doesn't actually improve safety, it's just more convenient to use than the Ultra version (also a Best Buy, which isn't held to the car except when the belted child sits in it).

This is the main difference between the Evolva 2/3 Isofit and Evolva 2/3 Ultra, the Isofit allows you to lock the base to the Isofix mounts in your car, so when it's empty it won't fly around on the back seat.

Visit www.which.co.uk/reviews/child-car-seats to

watch video footage of how

the Evolva 2/3 Isofit fares in its crash test.

Pros One of the easiest seats to use we've tested.

Cons None.



75% MAXI COSI RODI XR £80

This booster seat with backrest is among the easiest-to-use seats we've tested.

It uses the three-point adult seat belt to secure the seat and child.

As with many seats in this weight category, the high back is good for taller children. In some cars it touches the head restraints so these may need removing to allow the seat to sit flat against the seat-back.

It's well padded, and offers good leg support and a comfortable ride for the child.

Head support is good, and risk of injury is low in side crashes. In a front crash this risk is relatively higher, though still acceptable.

Pros The high back is good for taller children.

Cons The seat cover is difficult to remove.



72% CONCORD LIFT EVO PT £68

This comfortable booster seat with backrest provides good leg support for the child, and it's easy to move from car to car.

It uses the three-point adult seat belt to secure the seat and child.

It's light, easy to install, and offers adequate front crash protection. Side crash protection is good, helped by the unusual side 'wings' on the seat, which extend downwards to give extra protection for the child's abdomen.

You can adjust the seat's recline to get a snug fit whatever the rake of your rear seats. The high back is good for taller children but, in some cars, it touches the head restraints, which may need removing to allow it to sit flat against the seat-back.

Pros Light and easy to install.

Cons Finish quality is slightly poorer than other models.



which?
EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

Safest carrycot

This is our first Best Buy for carrying a newborn baby that is lying down

77% BRITAX BABY SAFE SLEEPER: GROUP 0 £170

The new Britax Baby Safe Sleeper is a child restraint that is designed to carry babies from new-born up to 10kg, lying down.

It passed the Which? child seat safety tests with flying colours.

Front and side crash protection are both five-star and it's the first 'lie-flat' child restraint to achieve such excellent safety results, making it a worthy Which? Best Buy.

The carry cot sits across the car's rear seat and is secured using the adult seat belt. It's quite complicated to install compared with conventional child seats, but clear instructions and good warning labels reduce the chances of incorrect installation.



It's available from Mothercare and Toys R Us for around £170.

Pros Top protection from front and side crashes.

Cons It's more complicated than a conventional child seat to install.

How we test

Crash test

All seats sold in the UK have passed the EU minimum standard test. We consider this test inadequate. Our tests more accurately reflect real crashes.

The EU standard requires that child car seats pass front-crash tests at about 30mph. We test at 40mph, the speed at which Euro NCAP expects new cars to protect adults using seat belts in a front crash. We think that children using child restraints should have the same protection.

We also include side-impact tests – derived from Euro NCAP safety tests – which aren't part of the EU standards.

We propel a Vauxhall Astra car body down a track, stopping it sharply and filming the effect on the dummy in the seat. The dummies are wired up to record head, neck, chest and pelvic loads, showing what chance a child would have.



Ease of use

We check whether each seat is easy to install and adjust in a range of cars, considering Isofix and seat-belt modes. Again, this is more than the EU standard demands. Surveys show that 60 to 80% of all child car seats are wrongly fitted.

A Which? test score applies only if you've installed the seat correctly. On belted car safety seats, any slack in the seat belt will ruin the protection that they offer.