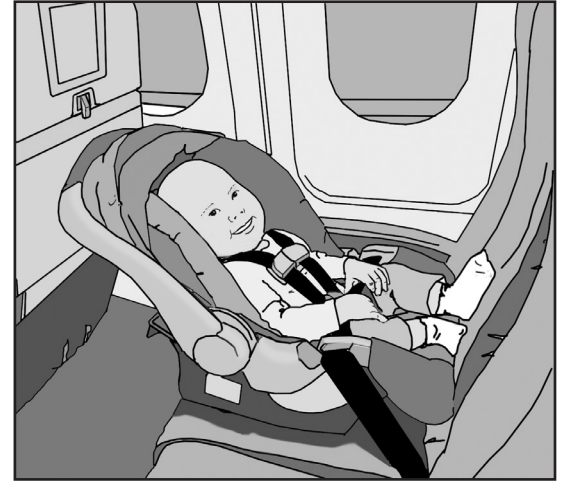


# Safer Airplane Travel With Babies and Young Children

Child  
Safety  
Facts  
2025

## Why is it important to use car seats on airplanes?

- For safety, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics urge parents to buckle up all children in flight.
- A child riding on your lap could be torn from your arms in a crash or in rough air! Rough air (turbulence) is common and can happen without warning. It can cause serious injuries to unbuckled children.
- Many crashes in large or small planes are survivable. Buckling up helps you and your child avoid injury so you both can escape. (How to escape with a child is explained on page 2).
- A car seat can also protect children from noncrash injuries on airplanes. Children on planes are sometimes injured in falls or by objects falling on them. Some are burned by spilled food or beverages. Being away from the aisle and in a car seat makes these injuries less likely.
- If you use a car seat on board, it will be ready to use at the end of the flight. A car seat that is checked could be lost or damaged.



*You and your baby deserve the best possible protection! The FAA recommends that all passengers fly buckled up at all times.*

## Which child safety devices can be used?

Children who use a car seat in a car are also safer riding in one while on an airplane. The airplane lap belt provides some protection for children over age 2, but the following options are much safer:

- **Rear-facing and forward-facing car seats with harnesses:** Use one that fits your child's size and age, just as you do in a car. Most car seat makers approve their products for use in aircraft, so look for a label that states this.
- **FAA-approved devices:** Children 22–44 pounds may use a CARES harness. Special CARES and Convoid Carrot 3 are options for larger passengers with special needs. (See *Resources*, page 2.)
- **Foreign car seats:** If a family is traveling from overseas, their child's car seat may be used if it meets the standards of a foreign government or the United Nations. (Check labels on the car seat.)

## Which child safety devices cannot be used?

- **Booster seats or vests for use in cars.** Airplanes lack the lap-shoulder belts and tether anchors needed for using boosters and/or vests, so these devices may not be used on airplanes. Gate check a child's booster or vest, and be sure the child wears the airplane's lap belt during the flight.
- **Do not use a "belly belt"**—a device that straps a child to an adult's lap. These are not allowed during take-off and landing, even if they claim to meet FAA standards. Also, they do not protect well in a crash.

## Before you fly

- **Buy a ticket for your infant or child.** Ask the airline about discounts for young children.
- The FAA requires airlines to allow children who have a paid seat to ride in a car seat or aircraft-only device. If you did not purchase a seat for baby, ask if the airline will allow you to use your car seat in an empty seat.
- Make sure your child's safety device is one that is allowed on airplanes (see left).
- Not all flight staff know FAA recommendations regarding small children, so take the FAA brochure along. (See *Resources*, page 2.)
- Select airplane seating ahead of time. Car seats should be used in window seats or the center of a row that is between two aisles. They are never allowed in an exit row. On some planes, they are also not allowed in the row behind or in front of an exit row. Consider a bulkhead row if extra space is needed, but check to see if inflatable seat belts are present there. Many car seats cannot be installed using inflatable belts.

**Turbulence Happens!**  
**Make sure everyone in your family  
is buckled up while on an airplane.**



## On the plane, use safety devices correctly!

- Follow the car seat instructions. Some say to ask the flight crew for a seat belt extender to use when installing the car seat on an airplane.
- Tighten the airplane lap belt to secure the car seat. (Follow the car seat instructions for safely storing LATCH straps. These aren't used on aircraft.)
- Tips for installing a forward-facing car seat:
  - Recline the aircraft seatback to make it easier to put the belt through the car seat belt path. Return the seatback to upright *after* tightening the belt.
  - When buckling, flip the belt over so the buckle flap is *toward the airplane seatback*. This often makes the belt easier to unbuckle later.
- Keep your child buckled up during flight, including take-off and landing.

## Flying with children under 2 years old

- Children under 2 are much safer riding in a car seat than on your lap. Also helpful: You will have the car seat for use after the flight and can be sure it is not handled roughly. Check instructions: Often, a car seat with a stay-in-car base may or must be installed without the base when on an airplane.
- Although it does not recommend doing so, the FAA allows children under age 2 to fly seated on a parent's lap. If you do not purchase a ticket for your child under age 2, ask the airline if it will allow you to use an empty seat for your car seat. It helps to fly during times when planes are less likely to be full. Bring the car seat to the gate in case there is an empty seat for your child.

## Hints for easier travel with children in car seats

- For the best fit in aircraft seats, use a car seat that is less than 16 inches wide. If possible, raise the airplane seat's armrest(s) for more space.
- When there are two adults, have only one board early to install the car seat. It is better to bring the child onboard after the car seat is installed and closer to take-off.
- Bring a pacifier or a bottle filled with water for baby. For a child, bring a beverage with a straw. Sucking helps prevent ear pain during take-off and landing.
- Bring diapers, wipes, snacks, small picture books, and quiet, lightweight toys.
- Consider car seats with special travel features (see *Resources*). Many car seats attach to strollers, and two models become strollers outside a vehicle. Some companies have products for wheeling or carrying car seats.
- If you must make flight connections, talk to the airline ahead of time to set up help to get your children, car seats, and carry-ons to the next flight.

## How to escape with a small child in an emergency

The FAA has done escape tests with child-size dummies. It found that the safest, easiest, and fastest ways to escape are:

- **Window exit:** If escaping through a window, hand your child to another person outside before climbing out yourself.
- **Emergency slide:** Hug your child to your chest with both arms (see picture, right). For infants, put one hand behind the baby's head. Jump onto the slide—don't sit at the top first. That could make you lose your grip on your child, or people behind you could push you and make you fall.

## Resources

**Federal Aviation Administration:** Tips for parents, 866-TELL-FAA (835-5322), [https://www.faa.gov/travelers/fly\\_children](https://www.faa.gov/travelers/fly_children)

**American Academy of Pediatrics:** [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org) (search "aircraft")

**SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.:** [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org)  
Helpline: 800-745-SAFE (7233)

**Transportation Security Admin. (TSA):** <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures/traveling-children>

**CARES:** (FAA-approved harnesses for aircraft only): [www.kidsflysafe.com](http://www.kidsflysafe.com)

**Etac:** Convoid Carrot 3 Car Seat can be used on aircraft if paired with separately ordered fixing strap; [www.etac.com](http://www.etac.com)

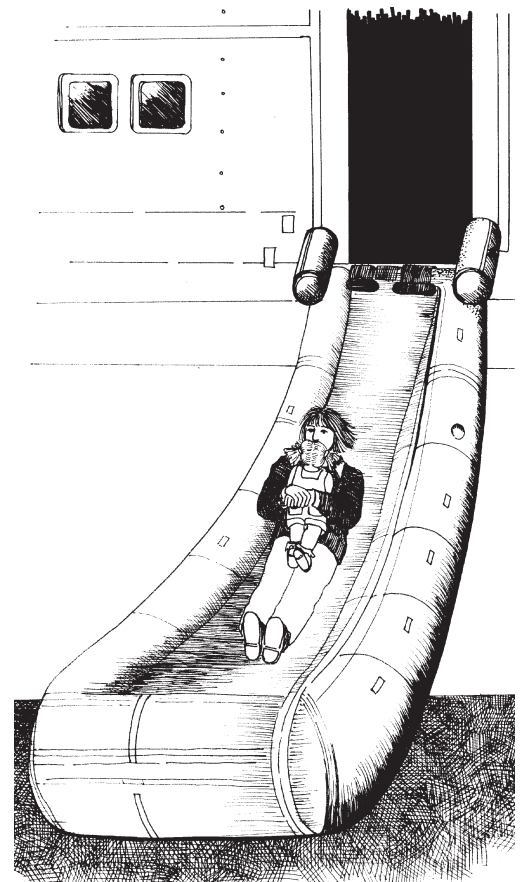
**Car seats that become a stroller:**

[www.simpleparenting.co](http://www.simpleparenting.co) (Doona)

[www.evenflo.com](http://www.evenflo.com) (Shyft Dualride)

**Foldable, lightweight travel car seat:**

[www.WAYB.com](http://www.WAYB.com) (Pico)



**Emergency escape with a small child:**  
Hold your child against your body, then jump out of the exit door onto the slide.