

Australian Child Restraint Resource Initiative



ABN: 73 005 070 655

When the family's getting larger or the family car is up for renewal, questions are often asked about what make and model car should be bought to be able to fit all the passengers in.

Although there are a few vehicles that stand out as super friendly for child restraints generally, it doesn't mean that the mix of child restraints that a family owns will fit in or be practical to use.

Dispel the Myths first:

Myth 1. "It will be easier if we move 'Junior' to a Booster."

When needing to use the three rear seat positions: Moving a child to a booster seat is more likely to make the use of all restraints more difficult, **not easier**. Seat belt access for every trip can be very challenging to achieve.

Myth 2. "We can't fit in this car it's too small, we need a bigger one."

A larger vehicle will not necessarily provide you more internal space. There are many large cars that are more difficult to fit multiple restraints compared to small ones.

Myth 3. "We can't buy that car as it has air bags"

Vehicles with 'air bags' can have child restraints fitted to them, although there are some limitations.

IMPORTANT! NB: Rearward facing infant restraints can not be placed where there is forward mounted 'Air Bag'. Side 'Air Curtains' are excluded from this in Australia although it is advisable not to allow unprotected children to sleep with their head against the side of a vehicle thus fitted. Children using a restraint have a level of protection from the air bag.

Points to check when looking at prospective vehicle purchases:

1. **Overall internal width:** Check how much overall width your three restraints need side by side. (Check this both at the arm rest height (of the vehicle) and the top end of the child restraint) height. NB: Some door frame / windows slope inwards sharply, narrowing the overall width. Then measure the internal width of the prospective vehicle across the corresponding heights. (Do this with the doors closed)
2. **Seat contouring:** Many modern cars have seats contoured for two adults. It's more likely that you can fit three restraints across a vehicle seat that is less contoured. **ISOFIX** restraints are **usually less helpful** with effective use of the full seat width.
3. **Seat Belt buckle flexibility:** Many modern vehicles have the seat belt buckles 'permanently trimmed' into the rear seat cushions. I.e: They can not be moved left to right. This means their placement may impact on the restraint use. Look for flexibility with seat belt buckles.
4. **Anchorage locations:** The provision of these requirements is not always conducive to the practical use of your vehicle. EG:
 - i. They may be at the rear of your cargo area letting the restraints tether straps limit your cargo space usage.
 - ii. They may be mounted where they will effect the day to day operation of an access seat or something else equally important to your family.
5. **ISOFIX provision.** Seat belt mounted restraints in 2nd row of a multi row vehicle may disallow the sliding of the seat for rear row access. If a sliding seat can have an **ISOFIX** restraint fitted with the upper tether also attached to the seat, then it **may prove beneficial** to access and placement flexibility issues.
6. **Air Bag provision:** As mentioned above this needs to be taken into account.