

# Booster Seat Lesson Plan

For grades 1-3



# Booster Seat Lesson Plan

**Purpose:** The purpose of this booster seat workshop is to engage students in thought and discussion about child passenger safety to increase the number of children using a booster seat through education.

**Time required:** 20 minutes

**Target age:** Grades 1-3

**Leader:** An adult who is knowledgeable about the key messages of booster seat use. You may also choose to invite a police officer, paramedic or nurse who can help deliver the lesson. Police officers and health professionals can positively influence children's behavior.

## Equipment and supplies:

- 1 growth chart to be posted on the wall with 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) marked prominently  
Alternatively, you could cut a flat stick or pool noodle to 145 cm
- 1 high-back booster seat
- 1 backless booster seat
- Booster seat certificates for each child (check with the teacher how many are required)
- A class list with the correct spelling of each child's name (supplied by the teacher)
- Optional: other child safety link print resources such as the postcard or the booster seat fact sheet.
- You could include other small items such as a pencil, a colouring page, a magnet or stickers.



A girl is measured to determine if she should continue to use a booster seat.

## **Preparation:**

- Review the key points
- If you have a co-facilitator, provide him or her with a lesson plan in advance and discuss how you will divide up the lesson between you.
- Have the children sit either at their desks or on a mat in front of you.
- Speak at a volume that all of the students can hear and use clear language that is appropriate for the age level. Let the teacher help you to get the students ready to listen.
- Be prepared to limit questions and stories by saying, “Okay, I will take two more questions” and point to the children who already have their hands up but have not had an opportunity to speak yet. Be aware of the time. The presentation should be brief and interesting so that students do not get bored.

## **Lesson Outline:**

- Welcome and introductions - 2 minutes
- Overview of booster seats, their purpose and who uses them - 6 minutes
- Measurement of children and distribution of certificates - 6 minutes
- Questions and answers - 5 minutes
- Wrap up and thank you for listening - 1 minute

### **Welcome and introductions**

Introduce yourself and the police officer/paramedic/nurse if one is co-facilitating with you.

### **Overview of booster seats, their purpose and who uses them**

Start by asking the students some questions. Let the children respond, and ensure that different children are allowed a chance to contribute.

- “What do you know about being safe in the car?”
- “Who knows what this is? What is it for? Who needs a booster seat?”

Explain that booster seats help keep them safe if the driver (mom, dad, grandparent) ever had to slam on the brakes quickly or if their car was in a crash. Explain in children’s terms the types of injuries that you could get if you were not wearing a seat belt or were wearing a seat belt without a booster. I.e. “If you were not wearing a seatbelt you could bounce around and get hurt. You might bang your head on the hard parts inside the car. If you were wearing a seat belt but it did not fit you properly, the lap belt could squish your belly and hurt you inside.” The police officer or health professional could add some relevant information about the law or about what they see in their work when children are injured in car crashes.

Ask questions about how the children ride in the car.

- “Do you use a booster seat when you go in a car?”

- “Has anyone has ever noticed the straps that sit on your shoulders touching your face or neck?” Ask the children to feel their shoulders while you demonstrate on yourself. “That is a sign that you might be safer in a booster seat. The booster seat will raise you up and keep the shoulder belt between your neck and the end of your shoulder.” Also explain that it is not safe to put the shoulder belt under their arm or behind their back. It would be better to be in a booster seat because it will make the shoulder belt sit properly on the strong bones in their shoulder.
- “A booster seat will place the lap belt low on your strong hipbones and away from your belly” Ask the children to feel their hipbones while you demonstrate on yourself.
- “How tall do you think you need to be before you can use the adult seat belt without a booster seat?” Answer: 145 cm or 4 feet 9 inches.

### **Measurement of children and distribution of certificates**

Invite the children up one by one to be measured. Have the teacher or your co-facilitator write the child’s name and height on a certificate. If the child is under 145 cm, let him or her know that they would be safer using a booster seat in the car. If the student says that he or she does not currently use a booster seat, gently let him or her know that it is something to consider doing to stay safe.

Facilitators have reported that some children may feel self-conscious about their height – especially in the older grades. To be considerate of this, you may wish to measure each student individually in the hallway or on a separate room.

If there are some children who are 145 cm tall or close to it, discuss the tips for knowing if they are ready for a seatbelt without a booster seat.

- You are at least 145 cm tall.
- When you sit up straight in the car, your back is flat against the seat and you are not slouching.
- Your knees bend comfortably over the edge of the seat and you are not slouching to do so.
- The lap belt is low and snug on your hipbones and the shoulder belt is not touching your neck or your face.

### **Questions and answers**

Ask: “What are some other good things about using a booster seat?” You may get answers such as “I can see out the window better”. Acknowledge each student’s response.

Ask “Does anyone have any questions about booster seats?” Be prepared to take three-to-five questions, and be aware that some children like to tell their story rather than ask a question. Thank each child for the question or story and then wrap up by saying you will take two more questions. Point out the two individuals from whom you will take questions.

### **Wrap up and thank you for listening**

“Okay, thank you for paying such close attention. I hope you will think about using a booster seat when you are in the car if you are under 145 cm tall. It will keep you safer, protect you from getting hurt and it is the law. If you have any questions after today, or if your parents have questions after you bring home this booster seat certificate, I have left some information with your teacher and there is a phone number on the certificate that your parents can call.” Say goodbye to the class and make your exit.

## Alternative Suggestion

Instead of a teacher or another adult leading the workshop, teachers could use the lesson as a science experiment in which students measure each other (or younger students for older grades), record the heights and then calculate the percentage of students of students who are under the height of 145 cm at each age (i.e., 7, 8, 9). They can then plot it on a graph.

## Answers to students' most common questions:

· **Q: Why don't we use booster seats or seat belts on the school bus?**

· **A:** A school bus has other safety features like tall padded seats to help protect you in a crash.

· **Q: The booster seat isn't even attached to the car, so how will it keep me safe during a crash?**

· **A:** The booster seat is different from a car seat. Its job is to position the adult seat belt so that it fits you correctly. It is the seat belt that holds you and the booster seat back.

· **Q: What about short adults? My aunty Sue is really short and she doesn't use a booster seat - why should I?**

· **A:** Short adults have fully developed hip bones, which help hold the lap belt in its proper position. Children's hip bones are not finished growing yet, so the booster seat has little arms which keep the lap belt low in place of the hipbones. Adults' legs and bottoms are thicker so their body sits higher than a child's body. A booster seat raises children up to be more like an adult in the car.

· **Q: When can I sit in the front seat?**

· **A:** The safest thing to do is to wait until you are at least 13 years old. The back seat is a safer place to be because if your car is hit in the front (which is what happens in most car crashes), everyone in the back seat is further away from the crash and less likely to be hurt. Also, airbags pop out with a lot of force and can hurt you.

· **Q: Why do I have a booster seat with a high back on it, and my friend has a small booster with no back?**

· **A:** Both kinds of boosters are safe to use. We always want to have something protecting our head and neck. So, if your car has a tall headrest, and your ears are not poking up over the top of it, you could use a backless booster. If the back seat that you are riding in has no headrests or they are lower than the tops of your ears, you would be safer using a high-backed booster seat.

· **Q: Is it okay to just use a seat belt for really short trips?**

· **A:** No one knows when a crash might happen. You need a booster seat on every ride to keep you safe.

The purpose of the booster seat workshop is to engage students in thought and discussion about child passenger restraint safety. Here are the important points of discussion when conducting your workshop:

**MAIN MESSAGES:**

- **“It is the law to use a booster seat”**

Having a police officer reiterate this point is helpful so the children realize the importance of this law.

<b>Booster Seat Laws in the Maritimes</b>	
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	Minimum of 18 kg (40 pounds) before a child can move to a booster seat. The child must use the booster seat until he or she meets ONE of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 years old OR 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches)</li> </ul>
<b>New Brunswick</b>	Minimum of 18 kg (40 pounds) before a child can move to a booster seat. The child must use the booster seat until he or she meets ONE of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 years old OR 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) OR 36 kg (80 pounds)</li> </ul>
<b>PEI</b>	Minimum of 18 kg (40 pounds) before a child can move to a booster seat. The child must use the booster seat until he or she meets ONE of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 years old OR 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches)</li> </ul>
<b>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</b>	Minimum of 18 kg (40 pounds) before a child can move to a booster seat. The child must use the booster seat until he or she meets the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 years old OR 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) AND 37 kg (81.5 pounds)</li> </ul>

- **“In a vehicle, you are the most safe riding in a booster seat with the seat belt instead of a seat belt alone if you are under 145 cm (4’9”) tall.”**

Use a measuring stick, pool noodle or a growth chart so children can see exactly how tall they have to be in order to be safe riding with just a seat belt.

- **“Seat belts fit your body and keep you safe when riding in a booster seat.”**

Explain that when children are shorter than 145 cm or 4 feet 9 inches, the lap belt of the seat belt crosses their belly instead of their strong hip bones, which can cause a serious injury and hurt a lot more during a crash. Also, the shoulder belt will not cross their chest properly and could cause them to be thrown from the car during a crash. Use your own body to demonstrate where the seat belt should and should not be fitting them.

- **“Riding in a booster seat is smart”**

Keep the session interactive and try to emphasize with all of the children that using a booster seat is the smart and safe thing to do if you are less than 4’9”.



## How a booster seat works: a photo story



This child looks like he fits the seat belt without a booster seat – but his knees do not bend over the seat and he starts to get uncomfortable.



He slouches to get comfortable with his knees over the edge of the seat. What happened to the seat belt? Now the lap belt is up over his belly and the shoulder belt is rubbing his neck.



The belt was uncomfortable and the child moved it under his arm. Is this safe? What could happen?



A booster seat is more comfortable and it keeps the belt in the right places to keep him safe!