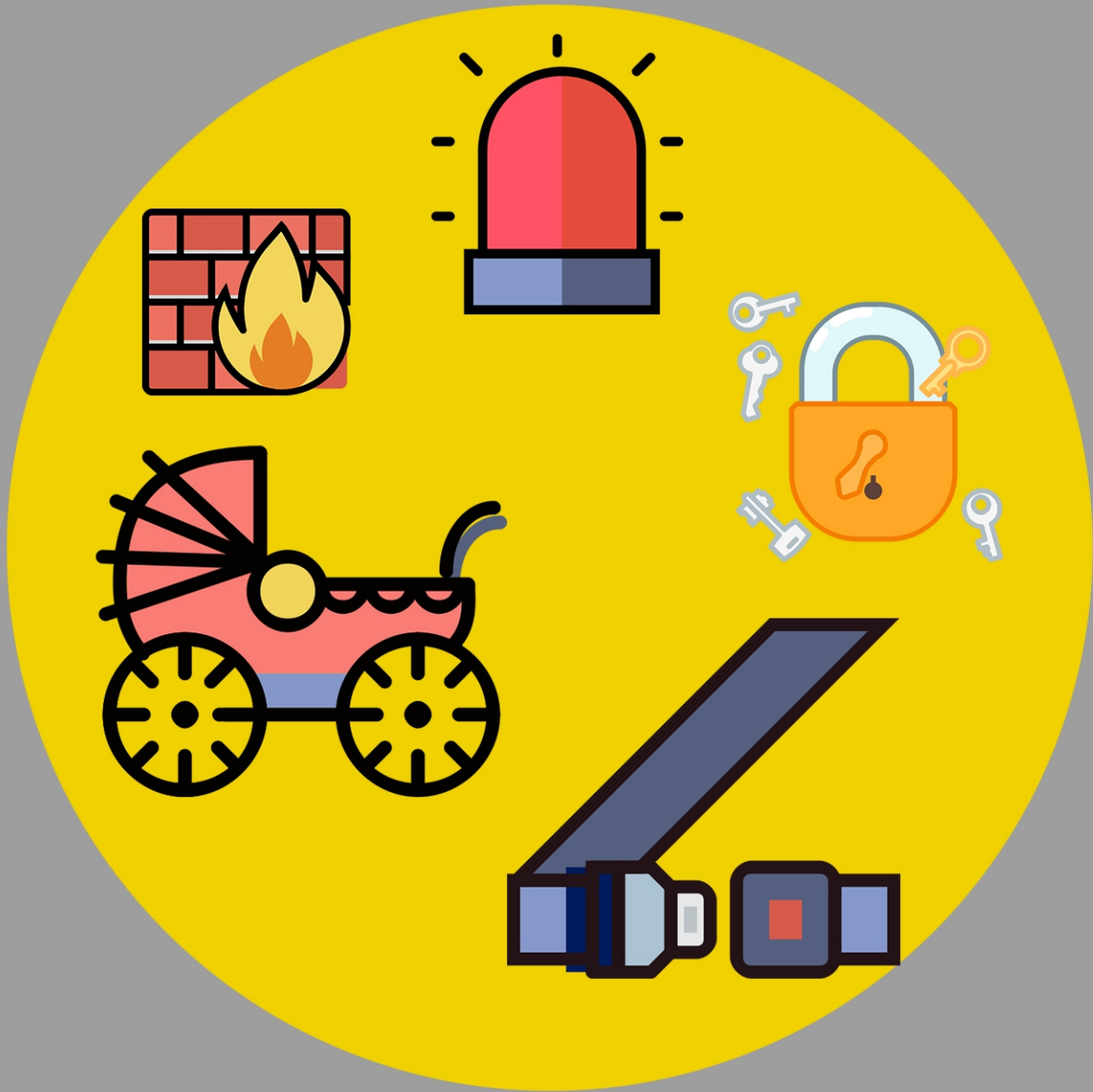


# BEYOND BOOSTER SEATS



**DISCOVER THE ABSOLUTE ESSENTIALS  
WHEN IT COMES TO CHILDREN AND CAR SAFETY**

## Protecting Your Most Precious Cargo



Don't be fooled by people looking to pull at your heartstrings.

I'm not going to lie and tell you that vehicle fatalities are a leading cause of death, despite what you see daily in big city traffic on the streets of Houston, New York City, Chicago, or Los Angeles.

In 2015, 35,092 are estimated to have died in motor vehicle accidents, according to the US Department of Transportation. You can read the report here: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812318>

The CDC reports that about ten times that many people die every year of cancer.

So, the odds of your kid dying in a car may not be super high, unless they are one of the 35,000 fatalities that will happen this year, but looking in their eyes is enough to know that statistics don't matter to a parent.

What matters is protecting their child, regardless of the odds. Despite the stats, the most dangerous place for most of us in our daily lives is getting in a vehicle, and safety in the car should be a top priority.

I worked in the oilfield for 10 years, arguably one of the most dangerous industries in the world today, and do you know where most of our fatalities came from?

## Protecting Your Most Precious Cargo



Willing to take a guess? It wasn't cancer, it wasn't being crushed by a 50,000 pound topdrive. It was motor vehicle accidents.

A statistic that our bosses reminded us about constantly.

Driving is dangerous, but I'm going to show you how to lessen the risk and ensure that should the worst happen, your child has the best chance of walking away from the crash.

I'm going to show you how to set an example that they can pass on when they grow up and give you grandkids.

You are the example. Set the precedent, and do it now. It works. When I was a kid, I received a knock on the head every time

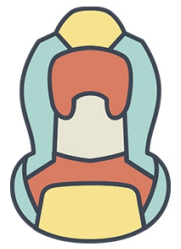
I forgot to buckle up, and I still wear my seatbelt every day as an adult, and I insist that anyone who rides with me wears theirs.

I'm not here to exaggerate statistics. I care about your kids, and I want to help you to keep them safe.

This isn't the usual get a booster seat and forget about it dialogue.

I will discuss seating options, but I'll go further to help you develop a safety mindset, and keep the little ones safe in the car.

## The Booster Seat Dilemma



Since everyone else in the world is talking about car seats as the end-all be-all of child safety in a vehicle, it's necessary to discuss it.

The simple fact is that seat belts and airbags are designed to protect adults, and often adults that fill a certain size and weight requirements.

The problem isn't that motor vehicle companies don't care, but it's nearly impossible to design a safety system that will work for everyone.

All of us carry different sizes and shapes, and children are all the way at the smallest end of the spectrum.

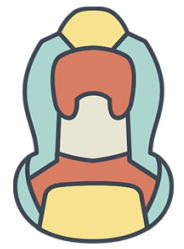
One size fits all is not a solution that's easily applied to vehicle safety.

One thing to consider is car seats, of any variety, are a last-ditch protection for your children.

Crashes aren't good for anyone, but children are especially susceptible to permanent injury, because your vehicle's safety system isn't designed for them.

Even if you have a five-star safety rating, that isn't going to help your kid, because the system wasn't designed with them in mind.

## The Booster Seat Dilemma



Children need their own protection system, and that is provided by you. These seats fall into three general categories.

Infant car seats are the first that come to mind.

They are designed with the youngest children in mind, when they need the most protection.

If your kid is less than 30 pounds and shorter than 32 inches, they need a special rear-facing seat to keep them safe. The reasons are statistics and physics.

Most vehicle collisions bring a car to a sudden halt from speed.

This means that restraints hold you back, and a small child is at the most risk of harm from airbags and seat belts in a crash.

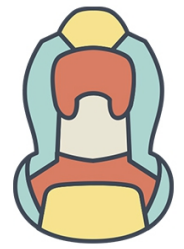
However, if they are strapped into a rear-facing seat, the collision, no matter how hard, will force their back against a large cushion, so the dramatic forces of a vehicle crash are distributed over their entire body.

When mounted in the back seat of a vehicle, they'll also be safe from exploding airbags. Most of all, they are protected on all sides.

Most of these seats even come with sun shields, which protect from flying glass in the event of an accident.



## The Booster Seat Dilemma



Car seats are a necessary first step in keeping infants and small toddlers safe.

When your child outgrows their baby seat, and they grow fast, their body becomes more resilient, but the normal car safety items still pose a significant danger.

When I was a kid, seat belts used to cut at my neck during normal driving, so imagine what would happen in a sixty mile-per-hour collision.

This is the stage where harnesses are the best defense.

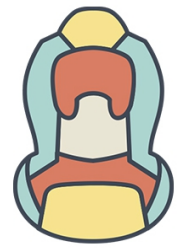
There's literally a million to choose from, and most depend on the weight and size of the child.

Some are reversible, facing or backward compatible.

Some are forward-facing only, but adjustable enough to work with them as they grow into middle school.

You'll have to choose the best option for your scenario, but they all rely on one important safety step: a five-point harness that offers more custom crash protection than a 3-point seatbelt.

## The Booster Seat Dilemma



There's a reason that people who race cars for a living use harnesses. They provide more surface area to cushion the driver in a crash, and they hold a body tightly in place.

They can even replace an airbag. The upshot to the child is that they will be held in place better than a normal seatbelt will allow.

Less movement, less stress on their body, and less chance of injury. Think of it as a racing seat designed specially for their kid (you can also pitch the idea to them that way).

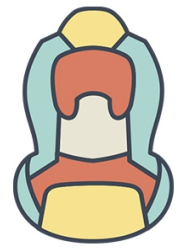
It's still a good idea to keep them in the back seat, away from a forward airbag.

The best part is, as your child grows, they will become familiar with strapping in, developing an important habit, and at the same time, they will save you the hassle of leaning in to buckle them up as they learn to do it their self.

At this point you can concentrate on helping them develop safe habits that will last a lifetime.

When they are ready, usually around 60-80 pounds, a booster seat is all your child will need.

## The Booster Seat Dilemma



The purpose of a booster seat is important, and though a lot of us grew up without them (I had a phone book, remember those?), they do fill an important role.

Remember what I said about vehicle safety devices not being designed for children? Think of a booster seat as an adapter.

It changes a smaller person's location in a vehicle just enough that they can use the built-in safety features of the car correctly.

No seat belts cutting at their neck. The lap belt and shoulder harness fall right where they need to, and they are in the right spot that the airbag becomes a safety feature instead of a dangerous implement.

The best boosters stay put in the vehicle without shifting around on hard turns, and they are adjustable so that you can vary the height as the child grows to the point where they no longer need it.

Finding something adjustable will lessen the worry about buying another booster during the grade school growth spurt.



# The Defensive Driving Approach



Have you ever taken a defensive driving course? Do you speed or roll stop signs?

Is beating the light sometimes more important than safety?

Don't worry, I'm not going to harp on your driving habits, but I want you to consider this. Car seats are a mitigation measure.

They are designed to reduce the severity of a collision. They do NOTHING to stop collisions from happening.

If you really want to protect your child, then the best step is to not have a collision at all, or at least severely lessen the chances.

In my previous career, I took several defensive driving courses, and I realized that these courses are available to everyone, they are affordable, and when internalized will reduce the chances of having an accident in the first place.

Safe driving is a mindset.

And I'm about to hit you with some simple truths that might be a little hard to accept at first.

I can't distill an entire safe defensive driving course in this article, but I can give you the highlights and a couple of tips.

# The Defensive Driving Approach



First off, forget the term "accident." Collisions are a result of negligent driving, on the part of at least one of the involved parties.

I took my first defensive driving course over twelve years ago, and I remember the instructor saying that we have a choice to never have a collision.

But it's a choice you must make every time you get in a vehicle.

Since then, I've never been rear-ended, even though I've been in situations where I should have been. I've never lost control of my vehicle, and I haven't been pulled over.

There are techniques to practice for better driving ability, but at it's core, defensive driving is a mentality. It's a mindset.

The first trick is "be seen, be heard, be safe." People now days resort to using their horn as a communication device to other drivers (usually accompanied by universally recognizable hand signals involving one or two fingers).

The horn isn't designed for this purpose. It's designed to alert other drivers of an impending collision.

People get backed into because the driver of the other vehicle doesn't see them.

## The Defensive Driving Approach



They don't know you are there. A beep of the horn will cause them to stop fast, and re-check the environment.

Be heard, and they will see you. Be seen. Use your headlights all the time.

I don't mean parking lights or daytime running lights.

Try to always have your headlights on. In the rain, lightly colored cars that are gray, black, or white can be lost in the background, but headlights are rarely missed.

It's also against the law in most places to have your windshield wipers running if your headlights are off, though you don't see that is your state's driver's ed book.

They make you more visible, and more visibility is better.

There is a reason that bright yellow and orange cars tend to have fewer accidents. They're harder to miss.

Always have an exit strategy. Instead of cruising along to the music, test yourself.

If that car in front of you came to a sudden stop, or a deer jumped in front of you, what would you do?

## The Defensive Driving Approach



How will you avoid a collision? Threats are everywhere, don't wait until something happens and then react to it, have a plan in place should the worst happen. Is there a shoulder that will allow you to pull out of the way?

If not, should you increase your following distance to give yourself more room to stop?

You should also constantly check your mirrors and know how many cars are around you and where they are.

Check your mirror every time you brake. I've internalized this, and in combination with the last step, it has saved my life.

I was cruising down the interstate one morning, going the speed limit, nobody around.

There was a wide shoulder to my right, and I was being tailgated. I popped over an overpass, and right into grid-lock traffic.

I knew exactly what to do, because I had a plan in place. I applied pressure to my brake, and had enough room to stop.

When I looked up, the vehicle behind me hadn't noticed the traffic yet, and they were coming fast.

## The Defensive Driving Approach



I pulled off to the shoulder quickly, and then reapplied the brake, stopping with enough time that

I was still behind the bumper of the next car. That tailgater skidded to a stop, right alongside my vehicle.

If I hadn't checked my mirror, not only would they have hit me, but they would have shoved my car into the next one, resulting in a pile up, and crushing me between the two.

I had a strategy, and I checked my mirror when I hit the brake, that's all. I've had several friends in this same exact scenario, and it ended differently.

They blamed the other drivers, and who wouldn't? The tail-gaiter was in the wrong.

But wrong or right isn't going to protect your child as well as you can by being prepared and aware at all times.

Some things are more important than being right. Practice. Check the rear-view every time you apply the brake.

Look a little further down the road. Don't focus on the horizon, but every five to ten seconds, you should do a quick scan, from the car in front of you toward the horizon.



## The Defensive Driving Approach



Check for upcoming hazards, stopped vehicles, slower traffic, and anything else that might pose a danger to you and your young one. Adjust your speed and lane position accordingly.

Mindset. Tell yourself, every time you get in your car, that you will arrive at your destination without a collision.

That you will be conscious enough to make up for the negligence of other drivers. That you will see them coming.

Shift your focus from the clock or the day's worries to driving safely.

Any good defensive driving course is going to teach you these techniques, and a bunch of other ones.

The courses involve classroom instruction as well as in-vehicle training and testing, and the best even involve training for aggressive maneuvers on a skid-pad, for those times when being safety conscious just isn't enough.

If you take one of these courses and internalize the information, you will start to realize that you can prevent collisions, even the ones that aren't your fault.

Because fault is irrelevant, protecting your family is all that matters.



## Setting An Example



The young one in the back seat might look like they are out of touch with the rest of the world, but they're paying attention to far more than you think.

While you drive, your kid is picking up on your mannerisms, your attitude, and your techniques.

If you are a speeder, the odds are that your kids will grow up speeding.

Remember, they will be begging for time behind the wheel before you know it, so they can get their own license and their own car.

Sooner or later, they'll be driving themselves to work and school, and much of their attitude about vehicle safety is going to come from the precedent you set.

What are you teaching them every time you get behind the wheel?

Setting a good example starts with seat belts, but you can teach them far more.

When I was very young, say ten or twelve, I was already taking an interest in how to drive a car.

I was taking notes on everything, especially any shortcut that Dad would take to get somewhere faster or easier. I picked up a lot of

habits, both good and bad, long before I ever sat behind the wheel. Your kid is taking notes.

The same way you teach them to buckle up, you can show them little safety shortcuts instead of how to beat a light without getting caught.

Even before they graduate to the front seat, you can have them help you by scanning the side of the road at night, looking for the glowing eyes of a potential animal that might dart in front of the car.

You can tell them every time you need to change lanes, and have them check beside the car from the back seat and give you the all clear, or alert you to someone in your blind spot.

You can point out examples of unsafe driving, but instead of hand signals and swearing, have a discussion with them about how the other drivers could be safer.



## Concluding Thoughts



In this life, we spend a lot of time behind the wheel, but that doesn't mean it has to be wasted time, and it doesn't mean that the most dangerous activity of your day has to be risky.

It doesn't mean that you can't teach your kids something critical about adulthood, dealing with conflict, and staying safe, just because you're driving.

You don't need a television on the headrest to keep them engaged.

Your car doesn't have to be a dangerous place for your child.

By upping your driving skills and taking a defensive driving course, keeping them protected from vehicle safety features with the correct car seat, and involving them in the driving process, you can turn the most dangerous daily activity into one of the most beneficial to their development.

They'll learn whatever you put out, so why not get them ready for safe driving long before it's time for them to apply it?