

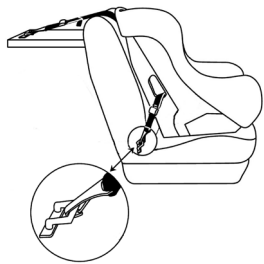
A Tether is Always Better!

Tethering your child's forward-facing car seat

What is a top tether?

A top tether (tether strap) connects the top of a **forward-facing** child safety seat (car seat) to the car. Forward-facing car seats sold today in the U.S. and Canada come with a tether. Tethers also are used with safety vests and seats with harnesses for children over 40 pounds. Most boosters and rear-facing car seats do not use tethers.

The tether attaches to a tether anchor in the car. At least three anchors are installed in most cars starting with the 2000 model year. Most older cars also have places to add anchors.



A. Car seat installed with LATCH, including a top tether

A tether is also part of the system called LATCH (**L**ower **A**nchors and **T**ethers for **C**hildren). LATCH connects a car seat to the car without using a seat belt (**A**). Almost all cars and car seats made since September 2002 (2003 models) have LATCH. Many 2001-2002 models also have LATCH. (See your car manual.)

A tether adds extra protection

In a severe crash, a tether holds the top of a forward-facing car seat back (see pictures **B** and **C** at right). This helps prevent serious head and neck injuries. A booster seat does not need a tether, because the lap-shoulder belt holds the child if a crash happens.

When should I tether a forward-facing car seat?

ALWAYS! If the car seat has a tether and the car has a tether anchor, use it. If the forward-facing car seat does not have a tether or the car does not have an anchor, find out if one can be ordered.

If a tether cannot be used, the vehicle seat belt can hold a car seat well. (Check the car seat instructions and the car manual.) Make sure the seat belt holds the car seat tightly in place.

Can I use a tether for a rear-facing car seat?

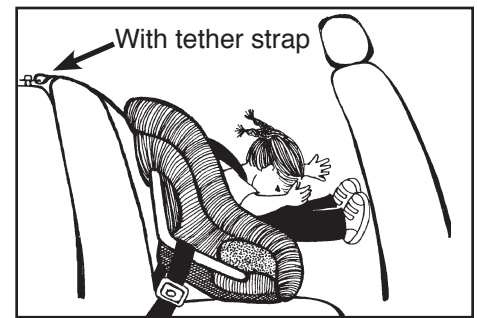
A few products have a tether that can be used for rear-facing use. These can help keep the car seat more firmly installed. Use a tether for a car seat facing the rear **only** if the instructions tell you it is okay. **ALWAYS** follow the car seat instructions.

Getting a tether strap for a car seat

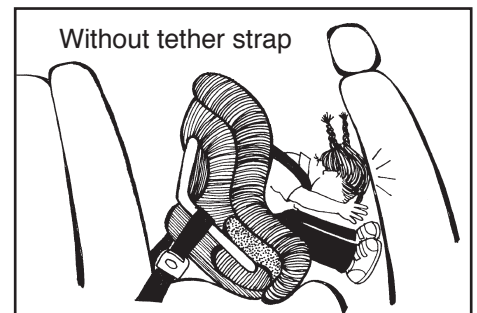
If your child's forward-facing car seat did not come with a tether, call the car seat maker for a kit. Some older car seats cannot be tethered. If a tether strap kit is not made for your child's seat, **do not try to make your own tether.**

Old car seats may have many safety problems. Try to get a newer seat that has a tether and other modern safety features.

Make
Every Ride
A Safe Ride



B. In a severe crash, the seat belt, tether, and harness work together to keep the child's head out of danger.

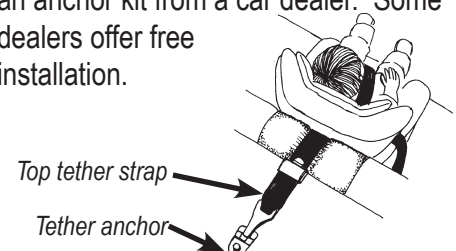


C. In a severe crash, without a tether, the child's head could hit something. She could be seriously injured.

A tether has two parts:

1) On car seats: a strap with a hook and adjuster (see picture below). A tether comes with newer forward-facing car seats. For many older seats, you can order a kit from the manufacturer.

2) In cars: an anchor—a metal piece with a hole for the tether hook, installed at the factory in newer cars. Anchors that are under covers or are hidden will be marked with a symbol (see page 2). For an older car, order an anchor kit from a car dealer. Some dealers offer free installation.



Does my vehicle have tether anchors?

Most 2000 and newer cars have three tether anchors. Almost all 2001 and newer cars, trucks, vans, and SUVs have anchors. Read about tethers in the car owner's manual. (Look under Top Tether or Child Restraints.) Look for the symbol shown at right.



Tether anchor symbol in cars shows where anchors are installed.

Common places to find a tether anchor

- **Sedan:** in the shelf (filler panel) behind the back seat (D).
- **Station wagon or hatchback:** in the cargo area (E), on the back of the seat, or above or below the rear door.
- **Van or SUV:** on the back or bottom of the seat or in the floor of the cargo area. Rarely, a seat belt in the row behind may be used as an anchor.
- **Pickup truck:** usually behind the seat back on the back wall of the cab.

All anchors do not look the same, so check the owner's manual. They may be bars, brackets, rings, or webbing loops. Many anchors are under plastic covers, marked with the tether anchor symbol. **BEWARE!** Some cargo tie-down rings look like tether anchors, but are NOT strong enough. Do not use a cargo tie-down ring unless the car manual says that it can be used as a tether anchor.

Installing a tether anchor kit in an older car

Anchor kits are available for most older cars from car dealers. Follow the instructions in your owner's manual or in the anchor kit. Most cars have at least two places for anchors. Some makers offer free installation (see right).

The parts department may not know about tether anchors. They usually can find information in service manuals and dealers' parts catalogs.

If a tether anchor kit is not available for an older car, you may be able to install a generic anchor kit from the car seat manufacturer. Special, heavy-duty hardware is provided for car seats for children with special needs (see below). Dealerships do not offer installation help in such cases. For more help, contact a certified child passenger safety technician at a car seat inspection station (see Resources).

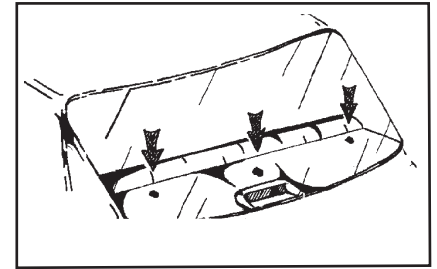
Tether use on car seats for heavier children

Some car seats have harnesses with a higher upper weight limit than the typical car seat. These high-weight harness seats can be used up to 50, 65, or 80 pounds. There are many reasons to use this kind of a seat, such as:

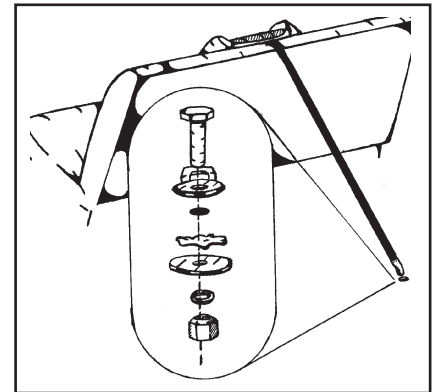
- a child who is over 40 pounds, but too active to sit in a booster.
- only lap belts in the back seat, making booster seat use impossible.

Tether use is recommended for all forward-facing car seats. Seats made to provide special support for heavier children with medical needs REQUIRE tether use. However, some car owner's manuals say tether anchors can only be used with children up to 40 or 48 pounds. Others say to follow child seat weight limits.

In general, it is best to follow manufacturers' instructions. However, using a tether above the car manual's stated weight limit has safety benefits that caregivers may want to consider. Some special needs car seats can be installed with two tether anchors (see instructions). If not, a heavy-duty tether anchor must be installed. (To learn more, go to the *LATCH Manual* or www.saferidenews.com.)



D. Tether anchor locations behind the rear seat of a sedan



E. Installing a tether anchor kit in a station wagon cargo area

Who can help me install a tether anchor?

Call your car dealership, body shop, or local mechanic. Most Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, Saab, and Toyota dealers will put in a tether anchor for free. Not all service people know about installing tethers. Refer them to service manuals or to the *LATCH Manual* (see below). For Toyota program, see SBS USA website below.

Resources

Car Seat Questions:

National Auto Safety Hotline:
 888-327-4236, 800-424-9153 (tty) or
www.safercar.gov

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. (SBS USA)
 Helpline: 800-745-7233, 800-747-7266
 (Spanish) or www.carseat.org
 Includes Toyota retrofit program details.

To find a Car Seat Inspection Station:

866-732-8243 or www.seatcheck.org

LATCH Manual: *Using Lower Anchors and Tethers for Child Restraints*, Safe Ride News Publications; installation manual with vehicle anchor part numbers. To order, call 800-422-4121 or www.saferidenews.com