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# Sit Back-It's Elementary:

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## A Traffic Safety Program to Save Young Lives

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### Show and Tell Talking Points

#### SEAT BELT DEMONSTRATION:

##### What does a seat belt do?

- Holds a person in place in a crash or during a quick stop, keeping them from banging around the car or worse, being thrown out of the car onto a busy road.
- Makes it easier for your body to come to a stop. You keep moving for a second after the car has stopped. Seat belts spread out the force of the stop and put it on your strongest body parts, shoulders and hips, making it less likely you will be seriously hurt.

##### What is it made out of?

- Seat belts and car seat straps are made from thick, sturdy fabric webbing that's held in place with plastic/metal fittings and a buckle.
- Car safety engineers are always looking to improve the quality of seat belts to keep you as safe as possible.

##### Do you need to wear both parts of the seat belt? *(More in Crash Dynamics)*

- The shoulder belt and the lap belt work together to keep you safe in a crash.
- If available, you should always wear both.

##### Is there a wrong way to wear a seat belt?

- There are many seatbelt misuses.
- It's very important to be both the right size for a belt and to wear it correctly.

#### AIR BAG DEMONSTRATION:

What does an airbag do? An airbag inflates quickly – in less than a second – to provide a cushion that slows you down, slows down crash forces and protects you.

Where are airbags in cars? Usually airbags are in front of both the driver and passenger seats. Many cars are also equipped with side airbags.

How does it work? When a car is in a collision at a certain speed, a sensor tells the airbag to inflate. A chemical reaction then occurs, which causes the bag to pop out quickly. After the bag has inflated, it starts to immediately deflate so the person in the car can move again.

Does it work without a seat belt? Not well enough! Only seat belts protect against rear-end collisions, side swipes and impacts that happen after the airbag has inflated.

Are airbags safe for kids? No. Airbags are meant to protect larger people. Anyone who is sitting too close to an airbag or is unbuckled is not safe because of an airbag. Children ages 12 and under should always ride in the back seat.

### **TYPES OF SEATS AND SEAT BELT FITTING:**

Intro for any class: There are car restraints for children of all ages, from newborn babies to high school graduates. Since there are no babies or toddlers here, we'll skip right to the forward facing car seat.

### **FORWARD FACING CAR SEATS<sup>1</sup>:**

Most of you have probably spent time in one of these seats at some point. You probably remember the buckle at your belly and the clip at your chest. These seats are for younger kids, but safety experts are learning more and more how much safer they are for growing kids.

- Usual Age Range: depends on height and weight.
- What It Is: a car seat that uses a harness (clip) to hold a child in place and top tether strap that's attached to your car to stop forward movement during a crash.
- Why It's Best: these seats provide extra protection for the head, neck and torso. Good for younger, wiggly kids to keep them in place. These seats are designed to accommodate a child's size – seat belts do not fit children. The harness spreads the crash forces over a larger area of the body and keeps them in proper position.
- When to Stop Using It: when a child reaches the top height or weight for the seat. What those limits are depends on the seat you have.
- Forward facing seats should always be used in the back seat unless no back seat is available and a parent disables the passenger airbag. If the airbag cannot be disabled, look in the car seat instructions. Car seat manufacturers may provide instruction that, if a child must be seated in the front seat with an active passenger side airbag, the vehicle seat should be moved back as far as possible to increase the distance between the child and the airbag. Be sure to tightly install the car seat and secure the child with a snug harness.

### **BOOSTER SEATS<sup>2</sup>:**

The booster seat is a very necessary and under-valued piece of safety equipment. Not nearly all the children who need boosters use them. Lots of children don't want to use boosters because they think they are "baby seats." That's not the case! Not using a booster seat when you should is kind of like riding around with only half a seat belt. You have the half that keeps you in place, but not the half that keeps your body safe from the force of a stop.

Would you ride on a roller coaster without a safety bar?

- Usual Age Range: depends on height and weight.

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<sup>1</sup> Picture of child in forward-facing car seat

<sup>2</sup> Picture of child in booster seat

- What It Is: an extra seat that raises and positions a child so that an adult seat belt fits properly.
- Why It's Best: A booster keeps the parts of belt where they need to be over the strong parts of the body and prevents the seat belt from causing injury.
- When to Stop Using It: when a child can fit properly in an adult seat belt (see checklist)
- Booster seats should always be used in the back seat unless no back seat is available and a parent disables the passenger airbag.

#### **SEAT BELTS<sup>3</sup>:**

At some point, everyone is old enough to fit safely and comfortably into an adult seat belt. There's no exact age, weight or height needed to make the switch to a seat belt, just the ability to answer yes to the following questions:

- Are you big enough to sit up straight without slouching?
- Can you keep your back against the seat?
- Are you able to keep your knees bent (without forcing it) over the edge of the seat?
- Are you able to keep your feet flat on the floor of the car?

When getting comfortable with a seat belt, it's also important to make sure the fit is right. Please check the following to ensure safety:

- The lap belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs; not the stomach; and
- The shoulder belt should lie snugly across the shoulder and chest, and not cross the neck or face; and
- Never put the shoulder belts under the arm or behind the back. It could cause severe injuries in a crash.

#### **ACTIVITIES:**

##### **Seat Belt Demo:**

Ask for a student volunteer at the seat belt portion of the show and tell. Demonstrate proper seat belt fit (proper size checklist and fitting checklist) with the volunteer.

##### **Seat Belt Misuse:**

Utilize[ | NHTSA photos | link to photos] or [ | powerpoint presentation | link to resource on web] to have students guess proper or improper seat belt use.

##### **Crash Test Dummies:**

Ask students to place crash test dummy cutouts in a "car" (four or five chairs to simulate a vehicle) by age. See if they match up the correct car seat types with dummies

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<sup>3</sup> Picture of child in seat belt