

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q1. How are child restraints rated for their ease of use?

A. A child restraint is assessed under each mode (rear-facing, forward-facing, and booster) of proper use and is awarded both an individual category rating and an overall rating.

For each mode, child restraints are individually assessed on the following four categories:

- Evaluation of Labels: Examines the content and clarity of the labeling attached to the child restraint.
- Evaluation of Instructions: Examines the content and clarity of the instruction manual for the restraint.
- Securing the Child: Examines the ease of using features that pertain to securing a child correctly in the restraint.
- Vehicle Installation Features: Examines the ease of using features that pertain to installing the child restraint in a vehicle.

Q2. Is a seat that receives the highest rating safer than a seat that receives the lowest rating?

A. No. A child restraint is most effective if correctly installed in a vehicle and if the child is correctly secured in the restraint. The ratings represent each child restraint's individual category rating as well as its overall rating for ease of use, not safety.

Consumers can generally assume the following about a restraint when examining its individual category ratings:

- ★★★★★ = Excellent features on this child restraint for this category.
- ★★★★ = Above average features on this child restraint for this category.
- ★★★ = Average features on this child restraint for this category.
- ★★ = Below average features on this child restraint for this category.
- ★ = Poor features on this child restraint for this category.
- N/A = This child restraint does not contain any features that require a rating in this category.

Though each category rating should be examined individually, consumers can generally assume the following about a restraint's ease of use when comparing overall star ratings:

- ★★★★★ = Extremely clear, concise, graphic labeling and instruction manual. Very convenient and simple to use features for securing the child. Excellent features for securing this restraint to the vehicle.
- ★★★★ = Above average labeling and instruction manual. Simple features for securing the child to the restraint and the restraint to the vehicle.
- ★★★ = Average labeling and instruction manual. Average features for securing the child in the restraint and the restraint to the vehicle.
- ★★ = Below average labeling and instruction manual. Below average features for securing the child in the restraint and the restraint to the vehicle.
- ★ = Confusing, unclear, text-heavy labeling and instruction manual. May find features for securing the child to the restraint and the restraint to the vehicle difficult to use.

Q3. How should consumers interpret NHTSA's Child Restraint Ease-of-Use Ratings?

- A. Consumers can use this program to help them evaluate the categories that are most important to them and select a child restraint that meets their needs. For example, consumers who will be installing their child restraints in multiple vehicles on a regular basis may want a child restraint with the highest rating in the "Vehicle Installation Features" category. Conversely, consumers who are more familiar with child restraints or who rarely remove them from their vehicle may not find this category rating as important.

Q4. I want to know what child restraint fits into my car – can NHTSA's program provide this information?

- A. Because of the various combinations of child restraints and their fit in all vehicles, the costs, and the timeliness associated with providing that kind of "fit" information to consumers, NHTSA has decided against such a program at this time. Because some vehicle manufacturers have done this for their respective vehicles, consumers can contact their vehicle manufacturer (not the dealer) to see if the manufacturer has this kind of information available. Many retailers that sell child restraints will also allow consumers to install the child restraint in their vehicle before buying.

Finally, along with NHTSA's **Ease-of-Use** Ratings and other child passenger safety programs, consumers can seek installation assistance from one of the thousands of child seat inspection stations across the country.

Q5. Does NHTSA rate the safety of child restraints?

- A. Not presently, though all child restraints sold in this country are required to comply with the dynamic testing requirements of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 213, Child Restraint Systems.

On May 23, 2005, NHTSA released a Notice of Final Decision on its pilot testing program (comprised of simulated crash situations as well as New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) tests) designed to determine how well child restraints and vehicles protect children. Based on an analysis of the data, the agency determined that a rating program based on simulated crashes would not provide practicable, readily understandable, or meaningful information to consumers. Similar results were obtained when the restraints were subject to NCAP testing.

Q6. Where can I find out additional information about the Ease-of-Use Ratings program?

- A. For additional information regarding NHTSA's **Ease-of-Use** program, please visit www.nhtsa.gov or call 888-327-4236.



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