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## Carrying Children in Buses, Minibuses, Coaches and Taxis

Travelling by bus, minibus or coach is safer than travelling by car. Mile for mile, these vehicles have fewer accidents than cars. But it is still important to make sure that your children wear seat belts if they are available.

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### Buses

Buses used for public services generally do not have seat belts because their construction will not allow seat belts to be installed with adequate safety. And they are designed to carry standing passengers.

There are some simple steps you can take to reduce the risk of being hurt while using a bus.

Don't try to get on or off a bus until it has come to a complete standstill, and find a seat as quickly as possible. Be aware that the driver may start moving before you have sat down.

Always make sure that your child stays seated throughout the journey. If possible, let him or her sit by the window while you take the aisle seat. Ensure that your bags or luggage do not obstruct the aisle or exits.

Be particularly careful when getting off the bus. When you want to get off, press the stop button to alert the driver, but try not to stand up until the bus has stopped. Make sure the bus has completely stopped before stepping off. Double check that no part of your child's clothing is caught in the vehicle's doors.

Hold your child's hand on the pavement to make sure they do not dash out in front of the bus.

Make sure your child is able to behave safely before you let them travel by public bus on their own.



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# Child Car Seats

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## Coaches and Minibuses

Coaches and minibuses carrying groups of children on organised trips, including school trips, must provide children with either a lap-belt or a three-point belt on a forward-facing seat.

All coaches and minibuses manufactured or first used on or after 1 October 2001 (whether they carry adult or child passengers) must by law be fitted with either three-point seat belts or lap belts on forward or rearward-facing seats.

However, seat belts are no use if they are not worn, so ensure that your child knows that he or she must wear their seat belt at all times, whether you are travelling with them or whether they are travelling on a school trip, for instance.

Seat belts are designed for adults, and the safest option would be for children to use a child seat that is suitable for their weight, when travelling by coach or minibus. Unfortunately, this is rarely possible because it is not practical for the Operator to carry a range of different child seats on their vehicles.

If you are travelling with a baby, keep the baby in a rearward facing baby seat and use the seat belt to secure it, if possible.

If an older child is travelling on an organised trip, ask the organisers about child seats in advance, although it is unlikely that they will be able to provide them. It may be possible to use your normal one if it can be fitted to a coach seat. However some coaches have lap belts and some have lap and diagonal belts, so check whether your child seat is compatible with the type of seat belt fitted on the vehicle. Discuss this with other parents so your child will not be the only one using a child seat.

In most cases, it is likely that the children will have to use the normal seat belt. Although not ideal, this is still far safer than not using any restraint. To maximise the protection provided by the seat belt:

- the belt should be worn as tight as possible
- the lap belt should go over the pelvic region, not the stomach
- the diagonal strap should rest over the child's shoulder, not their neck.

Three-point seat belts (lap and diagonal) provide greater protection than lap belts. However, lap belts are far better than no belt at all.

Do not be tempted to put a seat belt around yourself and a child on your lap; in an impact, your weight would crush the child.



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## Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles

Taxis and Private Hire vehicles are fitted with seat belts, and all passengers, including children, should use them.

Child seats can be used in taxis and private hire vehicles in the same way as in cars. Some drivers or companies have child seats available, so you could enquire at the time of booking. Or take your own seat with you. This may be awkward, but you wouldn't carry your child unsecured in your own car.

If you are travelling with a baby, keep the baby in a rearward facing baby seat and use the seat belt to secure it. If a child seat cannot be provided for older children, the best option is to ensure the child wears the normal seat belt (this may not be practical for children under 3 years old), adjusted as best as possible for them:

- the belt should be worn as tight as possible
- the lap belt should go over the pelvic region (from hip-bone to hip-bone), not the stomach
- the diagonal strap should rest over the child's shoulder, not their neck.

If the seat belts in your taxi or private hire vehicle cannot be used (because the buckle is hidden under the seat, for example) ask the driver to fix the problem. If it cannot be done, do not use the vehicle. Book another one.

Modern purpose-built taxis (hackney carriages) have an integral booster cushion in the centre rear seat that can be used for older children (in the 22 - 36 kgs/48 - 79 lbs weight range). For more information, ask the taxi operator when booking the taxi and contact this website: [www.london-taxis.com](http://www.london-taxis.com).

If you come across an old vehicle that does not have seat belts being used as a private hire vehicle, do not use it. Book another one.