Car seat buying guide

A practical shopping companion: compare the exact seat, fit and package before you compare the price.



Illustration: an adult reading instructions beside an empty seat. It does not demonstrate installation.

Bring three things: current child measurements, details of every car you use, and the exact model names on your shortlist.

Start with a fitting conversation

RoSPA recommends checking suitability for your child and vehicle and finding a retailer with trained staff who can help you try the seat before buying. Ask to see the manual too. [1]

Use this with our other guides

Choosing a Car Seat explains measurements and group labels. Car Seat Guidelines & Tips provides before-journey reminders. This buying guide focuses on questions, contents and cost.

ASK BEFORE YOU ORDER

Six questions for the retailer

1. Does this exact model fit my child?

Show the fitter your child's current height, weight and date of birth. Ask them to identify the approved limits for the exact model and each mode you expect to use. Do not select from an approximate age or retailer group title alone. [1]

2. Will it fit every car we use?

Give the make, model, year and intended seating position for each vehicle. Check the exact seat and any required base against manufacturer fit information. Ask for a demonstration and try-before-you-buy fitting where possible. [3]

3. What is actually in this offer?

Ask for an itemised contents list and exact model names: seat, base, adaptors and any extras. Confirm whether the price is for a base only, a seat only, a seat-and-base package, or a complete pushchair system. Compare equivalent packages.

4. Can we use it comfortably day to day?

Try lifting and transferring the empty seat if that is how you plan to use it. Ask the fitter to demonstrate the approved adjustments. Check that every regular carer can understand the manual and use the seat correctly. [2]

5. What is the total cost?

Record the seat price, any separately required base and other necessary items, plus delivery or fitting charges. Treat optional accessories separately. Compare the total cost of the same model and contents, not just the advertised headline price.

6. What support and return conditions apply?

Ask whether the retailer offers trained fitting help, how to get the correct manual and who handles faults. Ask about return conditions if the fit is unsuitable, including any relevant packaging or fitting restrictions. Keep their written answer and your receipt. [1]

Do not rush an unresolved fit: a cheaper package is not useful if the seat or base is incompatible. Get the exact fitting questions answered before buying.

COMPARE LIKE FOR LIKE

Your two-seat shortlist

Write the same details for each option. Blank or unknown items are questions to resolve, not a recommendation to choose the other seat.

Compare	Option A	Option B
Exact seat model / version	_____	_____
Retailer and date checked	_____	_____
Seat price	_____	_____
Required base model / price	_____	_____
Other required items / price	_____	_____
Delivery or fitting charges	_____	_____
Total package cost	_____	_____
Child size / mode limits checked	_____	_____
Vehicle and position checked	_____	_____
Trained fitting appointment	_____	_____
Written return conditions checked	_____	_____
Questions still unanswered	_____	_____

Product names can be misleading

Retailer feeds may label a pushchair package as a car-seat bundle, or describe an accessory with the seat name. Verify the contents and the manufacturer model before ordering.

Features are not a fit guarantee

A label such as rotating, ISOFIX, i-Size or all-stage does not replace an exact child-fit and vehicle-fit check. Confirm which base is needed and which modes and limits are approved.

Do not buy on appearance alone

RoSPA advises against buying second-hand seats with an unknown history: damage may be hidden and instructions may be missing. Check the seat's provenance and the manufacturer's replacement guidance. [2]

Sources and further help

1. RoSPA: buying child car seats checklist

2. RoSPA: choosing child car seats

3. RoSPA: seat fitting and compatibility

Checked 2 November 2026. General shopping guidance, not a product recommendation, fitting certificate or statement of retailer return rights. Follow the exact manufacturer instructions. Illustration is AI-generated.