

What to say when your older child doesn't want to ride in the back seat.

Under Minnesota law, children need to ride in a car seat or booster seat until at least age 9 or until they've outgrown the booster seat AND they can pass the 5-Step Test. And children under age 13 who pass this test must also ride in the back seat restrained by a lap belt and shoulder belt secured correctly.

That doesn't mean that older children and tweens won't push back when it comes to riding in the back seat. Here are some tips for those difficult conversations. Be aware of the child's concerns or fears. Some kids report the fear of flying out the window or hitting the front dashboard during a sudden stop. Personal stories detailing the benefits of wearing a belt or pitfalls of not wearing a seat belt can be effective in getting a child to buckle up.

1. As an adult who cares about you, it's my job to keep you safe. That includes buckling up every time I get in the car and making sure that you and every other passenger does the same based on what's right for their size and age. For you, right now that means staying buckled up in the back seat.
2. It's the law. In Minnesota, law enforcement can stop and ticket unbelted drivers or passengers. As a driver, I can be ticketed for having unbelted passengers ages 14 and younger in my vehicle.
3. Sitting in the right spot and being buckled in properly will keep you safer in a crash. Most crashes occur in the front of the car and the back seat is farthest from this impact. Statistics show that 39% of children under 14 who die in crashes aren't properly restrained.
4. I know you feel more grown up every day but when it comes to safety in a vehicle, your body hasn't caught up yet. In the front seat, the impact of a crash and the airbags can be very harmful for heads, necks and bodies that are still growing.
5. When we're in the car together, we will all sit in the safest spot for us and buckle up. While I can't control whether others follow the law, I expect you to sit in the back seat and buckle up no matter who you're riding with.
6. I know we're not going far but statistics show most fatal crashes happen within 25 miles from home and at speeds of less than 40 miles per hour.

