

## Recycled Car Seats?

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. recommends against buying used car seats at garage sales or thrift shops. Often these seats are missing parts, damaged, or on recall. There is no way to check them thoroughly without the complete manufacturer's instruction booklet. They may even have invisible damage from a crash.

If a family has been given a seat by a friend or relative, the following checklist may help them decide if they want to use the seat.

1. **Do not use a safety seat that has “expired.”** It is best to use a current model due to revisions in federal safety standards and design improvements that may make it easier to use correctly. Expiration periods listed by manufacturers range from 6 to 10 years; refer to the instruction booklet or check for an expiration date stamped into the plastic of the seat. Depending on climate conditions and how much the seat is used, materials could deteriorate over time.
2. **Identify the safety seat.** The exact model name is needed for items 3-5 on this checklist. Many manufacturers do not put the model name on the seat, so you may need to refer to the Color Pictorial Guide to Safety Seats at [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org).
3. **Get a copy of the manufacturer's instruction booklet.** Be sure to read and follow the instructions carefully. More than 90% of all car seats inspected at voluntary checkups are being used incorrectly. Improper installation can seriously affect the performance of the seat.
4. **Check that all parts are present,** including hardware, straps, shields, and plastic clips. Many of these parts are available from the manufacturer, but the seat must not be used until everything is in place, as shown in the instructions.
5. **Find the individual “birth date” of the seat.** It should be on a computer-printed label (not the tiny date pre-printed in the corner of the label) stuck to the side or back of the seat. Also look for the sticker stating that the seat was made for use in motor vehicles.
6. **Find out if the seat has been recalled** by calling the manufacturer or checking the most current recall list at [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org). If there has been a recall, the broken or defective part must be replaced before use.
7. **Check the seat carefully** for evidence of cracking, twisting, worn harness webbing, or broken buckles. If there is any visible damage, do not use the seat.
8. **Never use a car seat that has been involved in a crash!** Be sure to find out about the history of any recycled safety restraint you are offered by friends or relatives. SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. has a form you can use for this “checkup.”

**When in doubt, don't!** When the safety of your child is at stake, the purchase of a brand new safety seat may be the **real** bargain — especially if you choose one you can use for several years!

<p><b>SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.</b> P.O. Box 553, Altadena, CA 91003    <a href="http://www.carseat.org">www.carseat.org</a> 310/222-6860, 800/745-SAFE (English)    310/222-6862, 800/747-SANO (Spanish)</p>
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