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Britax Frontier: keeping my son safe & happy

My oldest (now 4 1/2) was four months old when he outgrew the weight and height restrictions on our Peg Perego infant seat. A big boy, we knew he was going to be tall. I shopped around and ended up with a [Britax Marathon](#) for him. It would go to 65 pounds and 49 inches, one of the biggest seats on the market at the time. I did the same for our second son when he transitioned as well.



What I didn't foresee was that my kids would have opinions about the matter. At 4.5, most of Nate's friend's sit in booster seats. And although he's well within the "safe" range of the seat, he's feeling cramped. He's been asking to move to a "booster" for over a year now. Our response has pretty much been "tough cookies, you're staying put," as safety comes first and I wanted him in what I perceived to be the safest seat for him.

But we've recently all been pleased with a new solution to his complaints - the new [Britax Frontier](#). It falls in the "harness-2-booster" category, meaning it can double as a "traditional car seat" and then switches into a booster when needed.

Here's why it's worked for us - it's bigger, so my tall child isn't as cramped, yet I'm still able to convince him to use the 5-point-harness. This is something I wouldn't be able to do in other traditional car seats. In the end, that was the selling point for me - the fact that I can keep him safer for longer while still keeping him comfortable and happy.

For those of you shopping around, are some of the bullets and features from [Britax's website](#):

- True Side Impact Protection (distributes crash forces, shields from vehicle intrusion, contains the head and body, and minimizes side-to-side head movement)
- Highest Five-Point Harness Seat Capacity allows children to remain harnesses up to 80 pounds or in booster mode up to approximately 100 pounds
- Quick-Adjust Headrest and Harness re-positions head support and harness height effortlessly without having to rethread the straps
- Tangle-Free, Five-Point Harness with eight harness heights and three buckle positions
- Premium Push-Button LATCH Connectors for a quick, simple and tight installation
- Patented Versa-Tether anchors top of seat to minimize movement in a crash
- Retractable Cup Holders for convenient drink and snack storage

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As it's a brand new seat, I wasn't able to find any good deals online. But you can get free shipping for it when you buy it [on Amazon, it's currently \\$279.99.](#)

Lastly, in conjunction with this review, Mommies with Style asked a few safety/car-seat related questions of pediatrician Dr. Laura Jana, a leading national expert on child safety and development. Dr. Jana has been a certified child passenger safety (CPS) technician for more than seven years.

How & when do you know your child is ready to make the transition from the car seat to the booster?

Dr. Jana: FOR THE PARENT WHO WANTS TO KEEP THEIR CHILD AS SAFELY RESTRAINED AS POSSIBLE IN THE CAR, THE QUESTION REALLY SHOULD BE "WHEN DO I HAVE TO MOVE THEM OUT OF THEIR CAR SEAT (5-PT RESTRAINT) AND INTO A BOOSTER?" FORTUNATELY, THERE ARE NOW SEATS ON THE MARKET THAT ARE DESIGNED AND APPROVED FOR USE WITH A 5-PT HARNESS ALL THE WAY UP TO 80 POUNDS. REALLY, PARENTS NEED TO JUST PAY ATTENTION TO THE HEIGHT AND WEIGHT LIMITS OF THEIR CHILD'S 5-PT RESTRAINT SEAT TO DETERMINE WHEN THEIR CHILD NEEDS TO MOVE UP. OTHERWISE, THEY ARE SAFEST STAYING PUT IN THEIR 5-PT.

The standard for turning a baby's car seat around is 20 pounds or 12 months - whichever comes later. A lot of Moms wait until their child is 2 or older, as it's said to be safer to keep them rear-facing as long as possible. What is your take on this?

Dr. Jana: AGAIN - FROM A SAFETY STANDPOINT I AM CONVINCED THAT THE QUESTION SHOULD BE "WHEN DO I HAVE TO TURN MY CHILD FACE FORWARD?" (NOT "WHEN CAN I?") WHICH MEANS THAT THE MOMS WHO ARE WAITING LONGER ARE RIGHT ON THE MARK. ACTUALLY, THE STANDARD RECOMMENDATION USED TO BE 1 YEAR AND 20 POUNDS, BUT HAS NOW CHANGED SO THAT IS CONSIDERED THE BARE MINIMUM, AND IS NOW TO KEEP A CHILD REAR-FACING AS LONG AS POSSIBLE WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE SEAT. ONCE AGAIN, CAR SEATS ARE NOW AVAILABLE WITH HIGHER REAR-FACING HEIGHT AND WEIGHT LIMITS (WHICH PARENTS SHOULD ALWAYS FOLLOW) WHICH ALLOW FOR LONGER USE REAR-FACING.

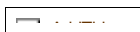
What is the biggest mistake parents make when it comes to car seat safety with their children? And how can they avoid making this mistake?

Dr. Jana: NOT EASY TO PINPOINT JUST ONE - BIG PICTURE WOULD BE NOT UNDERSTANDING HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO HAVE A SEAT THAT FITS YOUR CHILD, CAN BE (AND IS) SECURELY INSTALLED IN THE CAR AND THAT YOUR CHILD SITS IN EACH AND EVERY TIME THEY GET IN THE CAR. OTHERS THAT TOP THE LIST INCLUDE LOOSE HARNESS STRAPS (THIS INCLUDES WEARING BIG FLUFFY JACKETS THAT MAKE IT SO THE STRAPS DON'T FIT AS SNUGLY), CAR SEATS THAT AREN'T SECURELY LOCKED IN PLACE IN THE VEHICLE (EITHER BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T GET INSTALLED SECURELY IN THE FIRST PLACE, OR BECAUSE PARENTS FORGET/DON'T KNOW TO LOCK THE SEAT BELT IN PLACE) AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST - GRADUATING KIDS TOO SOON TO FORWARD FACING AND THEN AGAIN OUT OF CAR SEATS TO BOOSTERS AND VEHICLE BELTS ALONE. . ALSO LIKE TO ADD HERE THAT PARENTS OFTEN FORGET TO KEEP CURRENT ON NEW DEVELOPMENTS/CHANGES IN THIS FIELD, WHICH IS CONSTANTLY IMPROVING SAFETY FOR CHILDREN.....DON'T FORGET TO READ INSTRUCTION MANUALS, VISIT WEBSITES OF THE MANUFACTURERS FOR TIPS & VIDEOS (CAN SEE BRITAXUSA.COM SAFETY CENTER FOR GOOD EXAMPLE), AND LOOKING FOR NEWER/SAFER FEATURES AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE - NOT ONLY HIGHER WEIGHT LIMIT SEATS, FOR EXAMPLE, BUT ALSO SIDE IMPACT CRASH PROTECTION, ETC.

What about the 5-point-harness versus the booster - when is safe to make this transition?

Dr. Jana: AS MENTIONED ABOVE - BEST TO WAIT UNTIL CHILD IS NO LONGER ABLE TO FIT IN THE HEIGHT AND WEIGHT LIMITS OF THE 5 PT SEAT, BUT REALLY BEST TO WAIT UNTIL AT LEAST 40 POUNDS, AND IMPORTANT TO FACTOR IN BEHAVIOR AS WELL (AS A 40 POUND 3 YEAR OLD MAY NOT STAY APPROPRIATELY POSITIONED BEHIND THE SHOULDER BELT NEARLY AS WELL AS THEY WOULD BEHIND A 5PT RESTRAINT).

Posted by Whitney on July 23, 2008 02:24 PM | [Permalink](#)



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