

One of the most frequently asked questions from parents is whether to use the LATCH system or the seat belt to install a car seat. When used properly neither system is safer than the other. LATCH was designed as an alternative method to make installing car seats easier for parents and care givers.

One thing is certain: do not use both the seat belt and LATCH at the same time to install a car seat.

Whether you use LATCH or the seat belt it is important to always make sure the car seat is installed tightly and the car seat cannot move more than 1" from the right to the left, testing at the belt path location.

## The Importance of LATCH

LATCH stands for Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children

LATCH is simply a way to secure car seats to the vehicle seat using straps and hooks on the car seat that connect to metal anchors specifically designed for car seats that are located in the vehicle.



= The symbol represents the **Lower Anchor**. The Lower Anchors are a pair of "U" shaped metals bars found in the crack of the vehicle seat.



= The symbol represents the **Tether Anchor**. The tether anchor is a metal anchor and can be a bar or a ring shape that is found either behind or under your vehicle seat.

Vehicles manufactured after model year 2003 MUST have:

- lower anchors in at least TWO seating positions and
- tether anchors in at least THREE positions

Therefore, most vehicles have lower anchors and tether anchors in the side seating positions. And the center seating position may have the tether anchor but NO lower anchors.

ALWAYS refer to your car seat owner's manual for LATCH instructions and for weight limits when using the LATCH system.

ALWAYS read your vehicle owner's manual to determine IF your vehicle has tether anchors and to identify WHERE to find the tether anchors in your vehicle. Tether anchors are not always easily found, they may be hidden under a plastic cover, or under a seat, or on the ceiling. Refer to your vehicle owner's manual for the exact location of your vehicle's tether anchors and lower anchors. DO NOT ASSUME you have them or where they are located. Tether anchors are very easily confused with cargo hooks or another part of your vehicle. Mistakenly using the cargo hooks is dangerous because cargo hooks are not designed to hold the weight of a car seat and child in the event of a crash.