

US and Canada Child Safety Seat Law Guide



For informational purposes only. Please consult local authorities for further interpretation and current status. As of January 2020.

Extended Rear-Facing is the Safest!

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends children remain in a rear-facing car safety seat as long as possible, until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their seat. Rear-facing protects the most fragile parts of a young child's body - their head, neck, and backs. Positioning your car seat to face the back of the vehicle gives your child the best possible protection in a crash.

Is your child's harness 'snug as a hug'?

The harness in a child's car seat helps keep the child safe by spreading the forces of a crash over the strongest parts of their body. As such, a harness that's set at the right height and tightened properly to the child's comfort maximizes their safety. Here's a quick checklist:

- a) Unable to pinch a horizontal fold at the child's collarbone.
- b) Chest clip at armpit level.
- c) Visible slack removed.
- d) Snug on hips.

When should you move your child to a booster?

Once your child reaches the maximum weight and height limits of their forward-facing convertible seat, it's time to make the move to a booster seat. Children usually outgrow their seat in height before weight.

Boosters raise the child up in the vehicle seat to allow the seat belt to pass correctly across their chest and their lower hips. Consider using a full back belt positioning booster to better position the seat belt over a child's shoulders. Some high-back boosters also offer additional head protection, like Clek's Oobr model with deep side wings and energy absorbing foam layers built into the headrest.

Boosters are for big kids too!

Keep your big kid in a booster until they fit the adult seat belt without it. Use the 5-Step Test to know when your child fits the seat belt.

The 5-Step Test

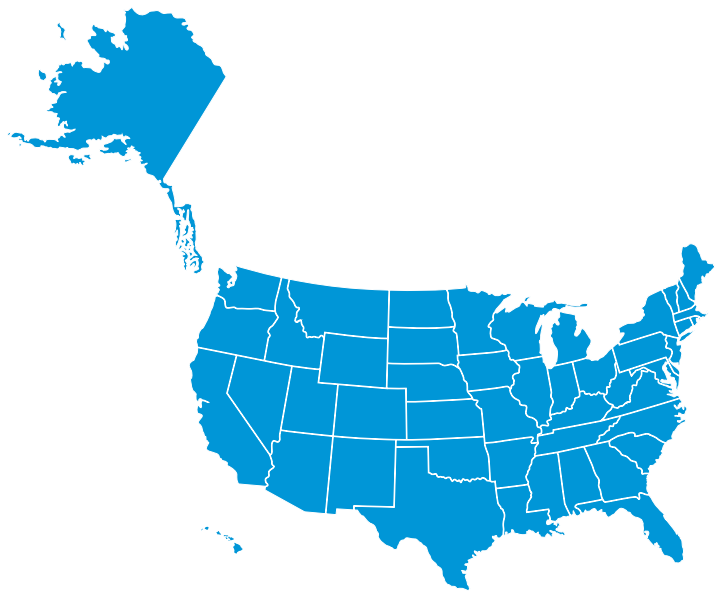
1. Does the child sit all the way back against the vehicle seat?
2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the seat?
3. Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and shoulder?
4. Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs?
5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?

If you answered “no” to any of these questions, your child needs a booster seat to make both the shoulder belt and the lap belt fit right for the best crash protection. Your child will be more comfortable, too!

‘The Kid Zone’ is for children under 12

Are you wondering when your pre-teen can sit in the front seat? Transport Canada and NHTSA both state that children 12 and under are safest in the back seat. This keeps them away from the front airbags, designed to protect adult passengers. Keeping your younger passengers in ‘The Kid Zone’ is the safest place!





U.S. Laws by State

The following list provides the child safety seat laws for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia according to Safe Kids Worldwide and the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety (IIHS). Please note that the laws generally require some older children to ride properly restrained in a booster seat, secured by the motor vehicle's safety belt system. Age coverage and other requirements vary by state.

Please remember that state law does not necessarily represent best practice.

We recommend that you follow the laws of your state as the minimum requirements for restraining your child while traveling. Children should use a booster seat until they weigh between 80 and 100 lb, are about 4 feet 9 inches (57 inches) tall, and can pass the 5-Step Test. For most children, that will be between 8 and 12 years old.

For more detailed information on state child safety seat laws and laws regarding seat belt use for older children, visit the Safe Kids website at: safekids.org/statelaws and/or the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety: www.iihs.org/topics/seat-belts/seat-belt-law-table

Alabama

Alabama law requires that children ride in an appropriate child safety seat until 6 years old. Children who are over 40 lb must use a booster seat until at least 6 years old. Children are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat until they are at least 1 year old or weigh 20 lb. Children under 5 years old who weigh less than 40 lb must use a forward-facing child safety seat.

Alaska

Alaska law requires that children over 4 years old, but less than 8 years old who are either less than 57 inches or who weigh more than 20 lb, but less than 65 lb, be in a booster or another restraint system that meets or exceeds US standards. Children less than 1 year of age or a child 1 year of age or older who weighs less than 20 lb must be properly secured in a rear-facing child safety seat. Children 1 or more years of age but less than 5 years of age and weighing 20 lb or more must be properly secured in a child restraint that meets or exceeds US standards.

Arizona

Arizona law requires that children who are at least 5 years of age and under 8 years of age who are not more than 4 feet, 9 inches be restrained in a child restraint system if a lap/shoulder belt is present in the vehicle. Children under 5 years of age are required to be properly secured in a child restraint system.

Arkansas

Arkansas law requires that children less than 6 years of age who weigh less than 60 lb be properly secured in an appropriate child passenger restraint system that is properly secured to the vehicle and meets federal motor vehicle safety standards.

California

California law requires that children under 8 years of age and less than 4 feet 9 inches in height be in an appropriate child restraint. Children under 2 years of age shall ride in a rear-facing car seat unless the child weighs 40 or more pounds OR is 40 or more inches tall. The child shall be secured in a manner that complies with the height and weight limits specified by the manufacturer of the car seat.

Colorado

Colorado law requires that children under 8 years of age be properly restrained in a child restraint system, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Children less than 1 year old and weighing less than 20 lb are required to be properly restrained in a rear-facing child restraint system in a rear seat of the vehicle. Children over one year of age but less than 4 years of age who weigh less than 40 lb but at least 20 lb shall be properly restrained in a rear-facing or forward-facing child restraint system.

Connecticut

Connecticut law requires that children under 8 years of age who weigh less than 60 lb be restrained in an approved child restraint system. Children under 2 years of age or weighing less than 30 lb are required to use a rear-facing child restraint system. Children 2 to 4 years of age or weighing between 30 and 39 lb are required to use either a rear or forward-facing seat with a five-point harness. Children 5 to 7 years of age or weighing between 40 and 59 lb are required to use a booster seat with seat belt or any of the above listed restraints. A child must meet both the weight and the age minimums before moving to the next stage.

Delaware

Delaware law requires that children under the age of 8 who weigh 65 lb or less be properly secured in a child safety seat or booster seat meeting federal motor vehicle safety standards, and that is appropriate for the child's weight and height.

District of Columbia

District of Columbia law requires that children under 8 years of age be properly seated in an infant, convertible, or booster child safety seat that is installed according to manufacturer's directions. Children under age 3 must be properly secured in a child restraint. Children under age 2 who weigh less than 40 lbs and are less than 40 inches in length must be properly restrained in a rear-facing child restraint.

Florida

Florida law requires that children 5 years old and under use a federally approved child restraint device. Children aged 4 through 5 years may use a booster seat, separate car seat, or an integrated child seat. Children aged through 3 years must use a separate car seat or a vehicle manufacturer's integrated child seat.

Georgia

Georgia law requires that children under 8 years of age who are 4 feet 9 inches in height or less be properly restrained in a child passenger restraining system appropriate for their height and weight that meets federal motor vehicle safety standard 213.

Hawaii

Hawaii law requires that children ages 4 through 7 who are 4 feet 9 inches in height or shorter ride in an appropriate booster or child safety seat. Children under the age of 4 are required to ride in an appropriate child safety seat.

Idaho

Idaho law requires that children 6 years old and under ride in an appropriate child safety restraint that meets the requirements of federal motor vehicle safety standard 213.

Illinois

Illinois law requires that children under the age of 8 years be properly secured in an appropriate child restraint system. Children under the age of 2 who weigh less than 40 lbs and are less than 40 inches tall must be properly secured in a rear-facing child restraint system.

Indiana

Indiana law requires that children less than 8 years old ride in an appropriate child safety seat that is used according to the restraint system manufacturer's instructions.

Iowa

Iowa law requires that children 5 years old and under ride in an appropriate child safety seat. Children under 1 year old and weighing less than 20 lb are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat.

Kansas

Kansas law requires that children 4 years of age but under the age of 8 years and who weigh less than 80 lb or are less than 4 feet 9 inches in height use an appropriate child passenger safety restraining system. Children under 4 years of age are required to be restrained in an appropriate child passenger safety restraining system.

Kentucky

Kentucky law requires that children under the age of 8 who are between 40 and 57 inches tall use a booster seat. Children 40 inches in height or less must be properly secured in a child restraint system that meets federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Louisiana

Louisiana law requires that children at least 4 years of age but younger than 9 years of age who has outgrown the forward-facing height or weight limits of the child restraint system be restrained in a booster seat. Children who are at least two years of age but younger than 4 years of age and who have reached the rear-facing height or weight limits as set by the manufacturer shall be restrained in a forward-facing child restraint system. Children younger than two years of age shall be restrained in a rear-facing child restraint system until the child reaches the height or weight limits set by the manufacturer. When a child fits a seat in more than one mode, the more protective mode must be selected.

Maine

Maine law requires that children less than 8 years of age who weigh at least 55 lb but less than 80 lb and who is less than 47 inches in height use a federally approved belt positioning seat in accordance with the child restraint manufacturer's directions. Children less than 2 years of age in a rear-facing child restraint system unless the child has exceeded the rear-facing weight limit of the seat. Children 2 years of age who weigh less than 55 lb must ride in a child restraint system used according to the manufacturer's directions.

Maryland

Maryland law requires that children under 8 years old ride in an appropriate child restraint, unless they are 4 feet 9 inches or taller.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts law requires that children under the age of 8 and less than 57 inches in height ride in an appropriate child passenger restraint that is properly fastened and secured according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Michigan

Michigan law requires that children less than 8 years of age who are less than 4 feet 9 inches tall use a child restraint system according to the manufacturer's directions. Children less than 4 years of age are required to ride in the back seat if available.

Minnesota

Minnesota law requires that children under the age of 8 and shorter than 4 feet 9 inches use an appropriate child safety seat meeting federal motor vehicle safety standards that is installed according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Mississippi

Mississippi law requires that children at least 4 years of age but less than 7 years of age and either less than 4 feet 9 inches in height or less than 65 lb in weight use a booster seat. Children under the age of 4 are required to use a child passenger restraint meeting applicable federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Missouri

Missouri law requires that children at least 4 years of age but less than 8 years old who also weigh at least 40 lb but less than 80 lb and who are also less than 4 feet 9 inches tall be secured in a child passenger restraint system or booster seat appropriate for the child. Children 8 years old and over or weighing at least 80 lb or at least 4 feet 9 inches tall are required to be secured by a safety belt or buckled in to an appropriate booster seat. Children less than 4 years old, regardless of weight, and who weigh less than 40 lb, regardless of age, are required to be secured in a child passenger restraint system appropriate for the child.

Montana

Montana law requires that children under 6 years of age and weighing less than 60 lb be properly restrained in a child safety restraint that is appropriate for the weight and height of the child.

Nebraska

Nebraska law requires that children less than 8 years old use an appropriate child restraint system that meets FMVSS 213 and is correctly installed in the vehicle. If a rear seat is available and is equipped with a seat belt, it must be used. Children up to 2 years of age must use a rear-facing child restraint system until the child outgrows the manufacturer's maximum allowable height or weight.

Nevada

Nevada law requires that children less than 6 years of age and weighing 60 lb or less be properly secured in an appropriate child safety seat that is properly installed.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire law requires that children less than 7 years of age and less than 57 inches in height to use an appropriate child safety seat.

New Jersey

New Jersey law requires that children under the age of eight years and less than 57 inches in height must be secured in either a forward-facing passenger restraint system which is equipped with a five-point harness that the child is within the height and weight limitation imposed by the manufacturer, or a booster seat in the rear seat. Children under the age of two years and weighing less than 30 lb must be secured rear-facing in a child passenger restraint system equipped with a five-point harness. Children under the age of four years and weighing less than 40 lb must be secured in either a rear-facing child passenger restraint system that the child is within the height and weight limitations imposed by the manufacturer, or in a forward-facing child passenger restraint system equipped with a five-point harness.

New Mexico

New Mexico law requires that children 5 through 6 years of age, regardless of weight, or weighing less than 60 lb, regardless of age, be properly secured in a booster seat or an appropriate child safety seat. Children 1 through 4 years old, regardless of weight, or children less than 40 lb, regardless of age, are required to use an appropriate child safety seat. Children under 1 year old are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat in the rear seat.

New York

New York law requires that children 4 through 7 years of age ride in an appropriate restraint that the child is within the manufacturer's height and weight limits. Children less than 2 years old must use a rear-facing restraint system provided they are within the manufacturer's height and weight limits. Children under age 2 who are over the manufacturer's rear-facing limits may ride forward-facing instead. Children at least age 2 who are less than 4 years old are required to use a forward-facing harness seat until 40 lb at which point they may use an appropriate restraint that the child is within the manufacturer's height and weight limits.

North Carolina

North Carolina law requires that children less than 8 years of age and less than 80 lb be properly secured in a weight-appropriate child passenger restraint system.

North Dakota

North Dakota law requires that children under the age of 7 who are under 57 inches in height or weigh less than 80 lb ride in an appropriate child restraint that is used correctly.

Ohio

Ohio law requires that children less than 8 years old and less than 4 feet 9 inches who weigh 40 lb or more be properly secured on a booster seat that meets federal motor vehicle safety standards. Children less than 4 years old or less than 40 lb are required to be properly secured in a child restraint system that meets federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Oklahoma

Oklahoma law requires children at least 4 years of age but under 8 years of age who are less than 4 feet 9 inches tall to ride in a properly installed child passenger restraint system or child booster seat. A child under 4 years of age must be properly secured in a child passenger restraint system. The child passenger restraint system must be used rear-facing until the child reaches 2 years of age or until the child reaches the weight or height limit of the rear-facing child passenger restraint system.

Oregon

Oregon law requires that children under the age of 8 weighing more than 40 lb and measuring 4 feet 9 inches or shorter to use a booster seat or an appropriate child safety seat. Children weighing 40 lb or less are required to use an appropriate child safety seat. Children under 2 years of age must be properly secured in a rear-facing child safety seat.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania law requires that children 4 years of age but younger than 8 years of age ride in an appropriately fitting child booster seat used according to directions. Children under 4 years of age must use a child passenger restraint system appropriate for their height and weight according to the manufacturer's directions. Children under 2 years of age must use a rear-facing child passenger restraint system until the child outgrows the maximum weight and height limits set by the manufacturer. Restraint systems must meet FMVSS 213 and be used according to the manufacturer instructions.

Rhode Island

Rhode Island law requires that children under the age of 8, less than 57 inches in height, and weighing less than 80 lb must be properly restrained in a rear seating position in a child restraint that meets FMVSS 213. Children under 2 years of age or weighing less than 30 lb must use a rear-facing car seat unless the child exceeds the height or weight limit set by the manufacturer. Children over age 2 or who have outgrown their rear-facing car seat should use a forward-facing car seat with a harness up to the maximum allowed by the child restraint manufacturer.

South Carolina

South Carolina law requires that children at least 4 years of age who have outgrown a forward-facing harness seat be secured in a booster seat in the rear seat until they meet the height and fit requirements for an adult safety belt. Proper fit is defined as lap belt fits across thighs and hips, shoulder belt crosses the center of child's chest, and child is able to sit with back straight against vehicle seat back cushion with knees bent over vehicle's seat edge without slouching. Children under 2 years of age must be properly secured in a rear-facing child restraint system in the rear seat until the child exceeds the height or weight limit allowed by the manufacturer. Children at least 2 years of age or under age 2 who have outgrown their rear-facing child restraint system must be secured in a forward-facing child restraint system with a harness in the rear seat until the child exceeds the height or weight limit allowed by the manufacturer.

South Dakota

South Dakota law requires that children under 5 years old and weighing less than 40 lb use a child safety seat.

Tennessee

Tennessee law requires that children 4 through 8 years old and measuring less than 4 feet 9 inches in height use a booster seat. Children under 1 year old or children weighing 20 lb or less are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat. Children 1 through 3 years old and weighing more than 20 lb are required to use a forward-facing child safety seat. Children 8 years old and under are required to ride in the back seat if available.

Texas

Texas law requires that children under the age of 8 and less than 57 inches use an appropriate child safety seat according to the instructions of the manufacturer of the safety seat system.

Utah

Utah law requires that children under the age of 8 and less than 57 inches in height use an appropriate child safety seat in the manner prescribed by the manufacturer of the device.

Vermont

Vermont law requires that children 1 through 7 years old and weighing more than 20 lb use an appropriate child safety seat. Children under 1 year old (regardless of weight) and children weighing less than 20 lb (regardless of age) are required to use a rear-facing child safety seat.

Virginia

Virginia law requires that children up to age 8 be properly secured in a child restraint device that meets federal motor vehicle safety standards. Children under age 2 must ride rear-facing until the child reaches the minimum weight limit for forward-facing. Children must be properly secured according to manufacturer directions.

Washington

Washington law requires that children less than 4 feet 9 inches in height who are at least 4 years of age and have outgrown the height or weight limits for their harnessed car seat be properly secured in a booster seat. The child may continue to be secured in the booster seat until the vehicle lap and shoulder belt fit the child correctly. A child under the age of 2 must be properly secured rear-facing until the child reaches the height or weight limit of the child restraint system as set by the manufacturer. A child at least age 2 and under the age of 4 or who has outgrown a rear-facing child restraint must be properly secured in a forward-facing restraint system with a harness until the child reaches the height or weight limit of the child restraint system as set by the manufacturer.

West Virginia

West Virginia law requires that children under the age of 8 and less than 4 feet 9 inches in height ride in an appropriate child safety seat.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin law requires that all children under the age of 8 years be properly restrained. Children 4–7 years old, weighing between 40–80 lb and less than 57 inches in height must ride in a booster seat. They may also ride in a forward-facing or rear-facing child safety restraint system. Children 1–3 years old and weighing between 20–40 lb are required to use a forward or rear-facing child safety restraint system in the back seat, if possible. Children less than 1 year old or weighing less than 20 lb are required to use a rear-facing child safety restraint system in the back seat if possible.

Wyoming

Wyoming law requires that children less than 9 years old be properly secured in an appropriate child safety restraint system that is installed in the back seat of the vehicle.

Source: Safe Kids Worldwide (safekids.org/statelaws) and Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (www.iihs.org/topics/seat-belts/seat-belt-law-table).





Canadian Laws by Province/Territory

The following list provides car seat and booster seat laws for each of the 10 provinces and 3 territories, according to the laws of the province or territory. Please note that the laws generally require some older children to ride properly restrained in a booster seat, secured by the motor vehicle's safety belt system. Age coverage and other requirements vary by province and territory.

Please remember that local law does not necessarily represent best practice. We recommend that you follow the laws of your province or territory as the minimum requirements for restraining your child while traveling. Children should use a booster seat until they weigh between 80 and 100 lb, are about 4 feet 9 inches (57 inches) tall, and can pass the 5-Step Test. For most children, that will be between 8 and 12 years old.

For more detailed information on provincial/territorial booster seat laws and laws regarding seat belt use for older children, visit the Child Passenger Association of Canada's web site parent resources section at: cpsac.org/wp/caregiver-resources and select the link for the "Provincial Territorial Law Summary".

Alberta

Children must ride in an appropriate car seat that is correctly used and installed until they are a minimum of 6 years old or over 40 lb (18 kg).

Children who weigh over 40 lb (18 kg) must wear seat belt properly.

British Columbia

Children must ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are a minimum of 20 lb (9 kg) and at least 1 year old. Children who are at least 1 year old, at least 20 lb (9 kg), but less than 40 lb (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat.

Children must ride in a booster seat until they are a minimum of 4 feet 9 inches (145 cm) tall, or a minimum of 9 years old.

Manitoba

Children 8 years old and under who weigh less than 80 lb (36 kg) or who are less than 145 cm tall must be properly secured in a properly installed child restraining device that is suitable for the child's weight and height. A child restraining device includes infant restraint systems, child restraint systems, and booster seats.

New Brunswick

Children 8 years old and under who weigh less than 80 lb (36 kg) or who are less than 145 cm tall must be properly secured in a properly installed child restraining device that is suitable for the child's weight and height. A child restraining device includes infant restraint systems, child restraint systems, and booster seats.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Children 8 years of age and under must be properly secured in a child seat restraint system. Children who weigh less than 20 lb (9 kg) must be secured in a rear-facing car seat. Children who are at least 20 lb (9 kg), but less than 40 lb (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat that is used according to the manufacturer's directions. Children must ride in a booster seat or child car seat until they are a minimum of 4 feet 9 inches (145 cm) and weigh more than 81.4 lb (37 kg).

Northwest Territories

Children must ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are a minimum of 20 lb (9 kg). Children who are at least 20 lb (9 kg), but less than 40 lb (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. No provision after children reach 40 lb (18 kg).

Nova Scotia

Children must ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are a minimum of 22 lb (10 kg) and at least 1 year old. Children who are at least 1 year old, at least 22 lb (10 kg), but less than 40 lb (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. Children must ride in a booster seat until they are a minimum of 4 feet 9 inches (145 cm) tall, or a minimum of 9 years old.

Nunavut

Children must ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are a minimum of 20 lb (9 kg). Children who are at least 20 lb (9 kg) but less than 40 lb (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. No provision after children reach 40 lb (18 kg).

Ontario

Children must ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are a minimum of 20 lb (9 kg). Children who are at least 20 lb (9 kg), but less than 40 lb (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. Children must ride in a booster seat until they are a minimum of 4 feet 9 inches (145 cm) tall, or a minimum of 80 lb (36 kg), or a minimum of 8 years old.

Prince Edward Island

Children must ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are a minimum of 22 lb (10 kg) or a minimum of 1 year old. Children who are at least 22 lb (10 kg), but less than 40 lb (18 kg) must ride in an appropriate car seat. Children 40 lb (18 kg) or more must ride in a booster seat until they are 4 feet 9 inches (145 cm) tall, or a minimum of 10 years old, or until they exceed the manufacturer's weight limit.

Quebec

Children must ride in a car seat or booster seat until they are 4 feet 9 inches (145 cm) tall or reach 9 years of age. The car seat or booster seat must fit the child's height and weight and be securely attached to the vehicle.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan law requires that children under the age of 7 who weigh less than 80 lb (36 kg) and are less than 4 feet 9 inches (145 cm) tall occupy a booster seat that is properly adjusted and securely fastened in the manner recommended by the manufacturer, and that is appropriate for the child's weight and height. Children who weigh 40 lb (18 kg) or less must use a child restraint system or infant restraint system appropriate for the child's weight and height and that is properly adjusted and securely fastened in the manner recommended by the manufacturer and is secured to the motor vehicle in the manner recommended by the manufacturer.

Yukon

Children must rear-face until a minimum of 22 lb (10 kg) and walking unassisted. Children less than 4 feet 9 inches (145 cm) or 100 lb (45 kg) must ride in an appropriate child restraint system or booster seat. Children must be over 48 lb before moving to a booster seat.

Source: Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada* (www.cpsac.org/wp/caregiver-resources). All height and weight measurement conversions are approximates and are provided for convenience purposes only.

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