



# Keep them belted!

Everyone knows that using car seats is essential with children. But what happens when a child refuses to sit in one, or undoes the belt when you are driving?

Childminder from Kent, Ann Bennett, has developed her own methods of keeping children in their seats during car journeys. 'I think it's the most important thing in the world that parents are able to trust us to keep their children safe – so whatever it takes, we have to do everything to avoid accidents,' says Ann.

Living at the bottom of a valley where the pavements are very narrow, Ann has to use her car a great deal to move children around. So in – car safety is a top priority for her.

## Calm and consistent

Ann admits that it isn't easy when children undo the catches on their car seats – but says you have to be consistent and patient in dealing with this. She gives the example of a three year old boy she cared for, who: 'used to undo his seat belt and throw himself around. I would stop the car at the kerb immediately and say "we are never going to get to the park. I won't drive the car unless you are belted in. So if you don't want to go to the park that is fine – I can go back home for a nice cup of tea.

But if you do want to go to the park then you must have the seat belt on". '

It is very important, Ann says, not to get ruffled –as children will easily pick up on this. 'It can be a bit of a nightmare when you are trying to pick up another child from school, but I always keep a smile on my face. I remind myself that this is my job and I'm getting paid to do it properly. I never let the children feel that they have inconvenienced me – I make it clear that they are the ones who will miss out, not me. Once they



realise they aren't going to get the response they were looking for, they soon stop doing it!

### Fast, effective responses

Charlotte Atkins from Hertfordshire has also found effective ways of managing children who are reluctant to use seat belts. She says: 'I had a case of a child who undid the seat belt – and I stopped the car instantly. I explained how very dangerous this was – using language appropriate for the child's age – and that I could not

continue driving. I said that either we redo the belt and it stays done up – or we go back home and they will never go out again with me. The child has not tried to undo the seat belt since.'

Sometimes older children try to convince Charlotte that they are 'too big' to sit in booster seats. 'I make it very clear to all the children that there is a height they have to reach – which is 135cms – before they are allowed to travel without a booster seat. So whenever a child

tells me they are too tall, I get out the tape measure. Once I've proved my point they usually give in fairly quietly!' Charlotte says.

Illustration from **It's fun to go out but...** published by the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) and illustrated by Fran Jordan.

CAPT publishes a range of easy-read picture books for parents who have difficulties reading detailed text. These highly colourful booklets are also suitable for parents and childminders to share with children. To find out about these – and other resources to use with children and parents, visit the website at [www.capt.org.uk](http://www.capt.org.uk)