

## How Does the NHTSA Ease of Use Program Work?

Through the Ease of Use program, NHTSA aims to provide valuable information to the public as well as encourage manufacturers to improve child car seat design. The program awards star ratings based on features tested by NHTSA, including the following (taken from [the NHTSA parent information brochure](#)):

- How simple is it to secure your child in the seat?
- Does the car seat have features that make it less complicated to install in the car?
- Are the instructions understandable and easy to find?
- Are the labels clear and simple to understand on the packaging and on the seat itself?

Child car seats receive an overall score of one to five stars in four different categories related to ease of use, with one star being the most difficult to use and five stars being the easiest to use. Categories include:

- 1) Evaluation of Labels – 7 areas scored, on a scale of 1 to 3
- 2) Evaluation of Instructions – 8 areas scored, on a scale of 1 to 3
- 3) Securing the Child – 10 areas scored, on a scale of 1 to 3
- 4) Installation in Vehicle – 6 areas scored, on a scale of 1 to 3

When considering weighted averages of all the categories together, star ratings are determined:

- 5 stars (Excellent) – 2.6 or more
- 4 stars (Above Average) – 2.3 to 2.6
- 3 stars (Average) – 2 to 2.3
- 2 stars (Below Average) – 1.7 to 2
- 1 star (Poor) – less than 1.7

NHTSA emphasizes that all car seats rated are certified to meet Federal Safety Standards and strict crash performance requirements and that this system only rates how easy certain features are to use. The organization also emphasizes that the best car seat is one that fits your child properly, fits in your vehicle correctly and is used every time your child rides in a vehicle.