When can my child ride in the front seat?

The child restraint law says, “The driver of a vehicle transporting a child who is under 13 years old shall transport the child in the back seat positions in the vehicle where it is practical to do so.”

What does this mean?
What many parents/caregivers hear is: All children must ride in the back seat until the child is 13. The words “where practical” are often misunderstood/overlooked.

When is it acceptable for a child to ride in the front seat, keeping in mind the words “where practical”?

- A pickup truck with no back seat.
- A pickup truck with side facing jump seats (as these are not permitted for use with any child restraint).
- Any passenger vehicle where all rear seating positions are in use by other children and a child must, by default, ride in the front seat.
- Many two seat sports cars. Always read the owner’s manual as some sport cars never permit a child under twelve to ride in the front seat.
- When a child rides in a booster seat (which must be used with a lap and shoulder belt) and the vehicle has lap-only belts in all rear seating positions.

When is it NEVER permitted for a child less than 13 years of age to ride in the front seat?

- A rear facing child restraint (infant or convertible) is placed where there is a frontal air bag unless an air bag on/off switch disables the air bag and there is permission in the vehicle manual to place a rear facing child seat in that location.
- As a matter of privilege. For example: child sits up front to better visit with parent; as a reward for some action; or, because they called “shotgun!”

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