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How to choose a seat for your car.

In order to choose a seat for your car you need to ask yourself a couple of questions. How do you use the car? How can you see this use changing in the next few years? Is there more than one driver? How tall are you? How wide?

Answers to these questions will usually determine the seat you end up with. You will be much happier if you answer these questions truthfully to find the best seat suited to your needs rather than if you choose a set based on what your friend has, or what you see in a show car in some magazine. You are the one sitting in the seat everyday, so you have to make the decision. This guide is designed to make your choice a bit easier.

How do you use the car?

If you plan on using the car as a Race car, or a dedicated track car with no street use, then you should look at an FIA approved Fixed Back Race shell. This seat will be an integral part of your safety restraint and will contribute significantly to your overall comfort and stamina on the race track.

If you plan on using the car as a DE car (High Performance Driver Education – or open club track days) then you are probably going to be looking for a seat that is more supportive and has provisions for a more competition oriented restraint.

Just drive your car on the street? Buy the most comfortable seat that you can find. End of story. If you do not use your car on the track, why are you considering a seat designed for track use?

Ask yourself if you can see these uses changing in the next few years.

If you can see your coil-over'ed, rollbar'ed, sticky-tire'd, loud car with a big motor turning into a dedicated track car, you should look ahead with your seat purchase. It's one of the things you need if you go racing, and should be purchased with the ultimate goal of safety in mind.

On the other hand, if you're perfectly happy using your weekend canyon carver to terrorize other drivers on the track, then you should keep that in mind – don't purchase a seat that will make your daily commutes a royal pain.

Family member following you to track events?

If you have a spouse, child, or friend following you to any driving events, you will most likely need to think about seat positions that accommodate more than one person. This involves sliding mechanisms to bring the seat forward and back in relation to the steering wheel and pedal box. You need to keep in mind the fact that these will raise the height of your seat by almost an inch from where it would sit if it were bolted down directly to the floor.

Ok, you've decided what kind of seat you need. Where do we go from here?

Once you decided the style of seat you need, you'll have to make more choices. These will be between shapes, sizes and budgets. The best way to do this is to sit in the seats. Unfortunately you are reading this off of our webpage, so chances are you are nowhere near our store. If you know anyone with the seat you think you want – ask to sit in it! It will answer millions of questions.

But there are many people who don't have access to a seat for many reasons. The first dimension you need to worry about is whether the seat will fit in your car. You can find the most comfortable seat in the world, but if it doesn't fit in the car, you need to look elsewhere (that's not to say people don't change their cars to fit a certain seat – happens all the time). Check basic dimensions side-to-side at the rear of the seat, and at the front between the door and the transmission tunnel or dashboard. Also check the height of the roof. Usually if a seat doesn't fit, it's because of the wings – the part of the seat just behind your shoulders. Usually these will either hit a part of the cage or the door frame/pad.

Once you've determined what will and will not fit in your car, then figure out what fits you. Most people instantly start talking about the size of their butt. Interesting, isn't it? Yes, this is important, because if you can't fit it into the seat comfortably, then you're in for a world of problems. If you are looking at a seat that you will use an aftermarket harness with, you need to look at the height of your shoulders (users of three point factory belts in reclining seats will not need to worry about this). You need to make sure that the height of your shoulders matches the height of the shoulder belt pass-through in the seat. A little bit off in either direction is not the end of the world, but ideally you'd want the pass-through to sit directly behind your shoulders. HANS users will want to pay extra special attention to this, because it will directly affect how well the shoulder belts sit on the HANS yoke. Call us with more questions on that.

But my budget cannot afford those \$1,500 seats

So now you've found a seat that fits your needs, your car, your body, but not your budget. Look at two things when deciding how much to spend. The first is safety. A quality seat can withstand the forces that your body will develop on impact and rebound phases of an accident. If you think about how heavy you are, then multiply it by many (some crashes have seen 150g's) times the force of gravity, and you understand how much force we're talking about. If your seat fails, then you're kind of out of luck. The cost of medical care or worse will quickly trump the extra cash you'd have spent on a really nice pair of seats.

The next thing you need to look at deals with your enjoyment of the vehicle. Driving is much more enjoyable when you are connected to the car and don't have to worry about holding on for dear life around each bend. Your seat is one of the most important interfaces between you and your car.

I have more questions

We have more detailed pictures of the seats we offer on our website. Take a look at them, and try to get a feel for what you might be looking for in a seat. If you have any more questions don't hesitate to give us a ring. We have experience putting a wide variety of seats into different cars, and for many popular applications have done it ourselves!

How you use the car	What you need	Examples	Characteristics
Race Car or Dedicated Track Event car	Fixed Back Shell seat		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIA Approved for competition use • Pass-throughs for sub straps • Non-reclining composite shell construction • Side mount
Dual Duty Street/Track Car	<p>“Mild” Fixed Back Shell seat (Only for use with a rollbar) OR Supportive reclining seat</p>	 <p>OR</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimally restrictive to get in an out of • Provides support that factory seats do not • Allows for aftermarket harness solutions • Using Fixed Back Seat will not allow use of stock 3-point belts.
Street Car	Reclining seat		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More supportive than factory seats • Allows for aftermarket harness solutions • Looks and feels great

More Reading:

<http://www.hmsmotorsport.com/store/seats> has pictures and descriptions of the various seats we sell. We also have brackets and accessories listed.

<http://www.cobraseats.com/> the UK manufacturer's official website. Plenty of good information and a snapshot into what custom seats they offer.

<http://www.recaro-nao.com/> the North American website for this fine German manufacturer.