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Vehicle manufacturers make strides on LATCH ease of use

ARLINGTON, Va. — Nearly three-quarters of 2019 vehicles have LATCH hardware that rates good or acceptable for ease of use, as automakers continue making improvements that help parents and caregivers properly install child restraints.

The results mark a shift from 2015, when IIHS launched its LATCH ease-of-use ratings. At that time, a majority of new vehicles rated poor or marginal.

Today, 21 vehicles earn the top rating of good+, 33 are rated good, and 88 rate acceptable. Forty-nine vehicles are marginal, and only four earn a poor rating. Among automakers, Toyota and Subaru are standouts for LATCH ease of use, while U.S. automakers lag behind. Installation in pickups remains tricky, compared with other types of vehicles.

A properly installed, age-appropriate child restraint can protect a child much better in a crash than a seat belt alone. LATCH, which stands for Lower Anchors and

Tethers for Children, is intended to make child restraint installation easier. Child restraints installed with LATCH are more likely to be put in correctly than restraints installed using the vehicle seat belt, IIHS research has shown.

But even with LATCH, installation isn't always simple, and errors are common. The Institute's ratings are based on ease-of-use criteria that have been shown to minimize mistakes.

"With child restraints, a good, tight installation is critical but can be difficult to achieve," says Jessica Jermakian, an IIHS senior research engineer. "Thanks to these recent improvements in vehicle LATCH hardware, we expect more children will be riding in correctly installed seats."

In the IIHS ratings system, LATCH hardware is considered good if it meets the following criteria:

- The lower anchors are no more than ¾ inch deep within the seat bight — the place where the seatback meets the bottom seat cushion — or slightly deeper if there is open access around them.
- The lower anchors are easy to maneuver around. This is defined as having a clearance angle greater than 54 degrees.
- The force required to attach a standardized tool representing a child seat connector to the lower anchors is less than 40 pounds.



- Tether anchors are on the vehicle’s rear deck or in the middle of the seatback. They shouldn’t be at the very bottom of the seatback, under the seat, on the ceiling or on the floor.
- The area where the tether anchor is found doesn’t have any other hardware that could be confused for the tether anchor. If other hardware is present, then the tether anchor must have a clear label located within 3 inches of it.

To earn a good rating, two LATCH positions in the second row must meet all five criteria, and a third tether anchor must meet both tether criteria.

The good+ rating is for vehicles that meet the criteria for a good rating and provide additional LATCH-equipped seating positions. For a two-row vehicle, that means having a third good or acceptable LATCH seating position. The third position may use either dedicated anchors or anchors borrowed from other positions. In many vehicles that have lower anchors in the second-row outboard seating positions, LATCH can be used in the center position by “borrowing” one anchor from each side. Some vehicles have one dedicated anchor for the center seat and rely on a borrowed anchor for the other side.

For a three-row vehicle to earn a good+ rating, it must have one additional good or acceptable LATCH position (without borrowing) and tether anchors in all rear seating positions. The additional tether anchors must meet at least one of the two tether anchor criteria. If the vehicle has a second-row center seating position, it must have good or acceptable LATCH there (with or without borrowing).

Of all the manufacturers, Subaru and Toyota are tied for the most good+ ratings. Seven of Subaru’s eight vehicles earn the designation. Of the 26 rated vehicles from Toyota and its luxury Lexus brand, seven earn a good+ rating and another seven earn a good rating. Neither Ford nor General Motors have a single model with a good or good+ rating. In Fiat Chrysler’s lineup, one vehicle — the Jeep Cherokee — has a good+ designation.

No pickups earn a rating higher than acceptable, and 14 out of 20 are rated marginal. The main problem is the tether anchors. Because the rear seat of a pickup is right up against the back wall of the cab, there aren’t many options for where to locate them. In most pickups, the tether must be routed through a loop near the head restraint and then attached to another loop or anchor, typically in an adjacent seating position.

“When we’ve done studies observing people installing child restraints, we’ve seen that the tether anchors in pickups are a real point of confusion,” Jermakian says. “We’re continuing to work with manufacturers to come up with solutions to this issue.”



Pickups like this one (shown with head restraints removed) typically require child seat tethers to be fed through a loop at the top of the vehicle seat (left) and then attached to a loop or anchor above an adjacent seating position. This complexity makes it hard for pickups to earn good LATCH ratings.



2019 LATCH ratings

Listed rating is the highest available for the most popular seat covering within the vehicle class.

Good+

Acura RDX	Lexus UX	Subaru Legacy
Audi Q7	Mazda 6	Subaru Outback
Honda Accord	Subaru Ascent	Toyota Avalon
Honda Insight	Subaru Crosstrek	Toyota Camry
Honda Odyssey	Subaru Forester	Toyota Corolla hatchback
Jeep Cherokee	Subaru Impreza sedan	Toyota Prius
Lexus RX	Subaru Impreza wagon	Toyota RAV4

Good

Audi A4	Hyundai Nexo	Mitsubishi Mirage
Audi A4 Allroad	Lexus ES 350	Nissan Altima
Audi A5 Coupe	Lexus IS	Nissan Kicks
Audi A5 Sportback	Lexus NX	Nissan Maxima
Audi A6	Lexus RC	Nissan Rogue
Audi e-tron	Mazda 3 hatchback	Nissan Sentra
Audi Q5	Mazda 3 sedan	Toyota C-HR
Audi Q8	Mercedes-Benz C-Class	Toyota Highlander
BMW 2 series	Mercedes-Benz E-Class	Toyota Prius Prime
BMW 3 series	Mercedes-Benz GL/GLS-Class	Volkswagen GTI
BMW X5	Mercedes-Benz GLE-Class	Volkswagen Passat

Acceptable

Acura ILX	Cadillac XTS	Dodge Grand Caravan
Acura MDX	Chevrolet Colorado extended cab	Ford Edge
Acura RLX	Chevrolet Equinox	Ford Explorer
Audi A3	Chevrolet Impala	Ford Flex
BMW 5 series	Chevrolet Spark	Ford Taurus
BMW i3	Chevrolet Tahoe	Genesis G90
BMW X1	Chevrolet Trax	GMC Acadia
BMW X2	Chrysler 300	GMC Yukon XL
Buick Encore	Dodge Challenger	Honda Civic coupe
Cadillac XT5	Dodge Durango	Honda Civic hatchback



Acceptable (continued)

Honda Civic sedan	Kia Rio sedan	Nissan Titan crew cab
Honda CR-V	Kia Sedona	Nissan Versa
Honda Fit	Kia Sorento	Ram 1500 extended cab
Honda HR-V	Kia Soul	Subaru WRX
Honda Passport	Kia Sportage	Toyota Corolla sedan
Honda Pilot	Lexus GX 460	Toyota Prius c
Honda Ridgeline crew cab	Lincoln Continental	Toyota Sienna
Hyundai Accent	Lincoln MKZ	Toyota Tundra crew cab
Hyundai Elantra	Lincoln Nautilus	Toyota Yaris hatchback
Hyundai Elantra GT	Mazda CX-3	Volkswagen Golf
Hyundai Ioniq Hybrid	Mazda CX-5	Volkswagen Golf Alltrack
Hyundai Ioniq Plug-in Hybrid	Mazda CX-9	Volkswagen Golf SportWagen
Hyundai Santa Fe	Mercedes-Benz GLC	Volkswagen Jetta
Hyundai Santa Fe XL	Mini Countryman	Volkswagen Tiguan
Hyundai Tucson	Mitsubishi Outlander	Volvo S60
Hyundai Veloster	Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV	Volvo S90
Kia Forte	Mitsubishi Outlander Sport	Volvo XC40
Kia Niro	Nissan Frontier extended cab	Volvo XC60
Kia Niro Plug-In Hybrid	Nissan Pathfinder	Volvo XC90
Kia Optima		

Marginal

Acura TLX	Chevrolet Silverado 1500 extended cab	Genesis G70
Alfa Romeo Giulia	Chevrolet Sonic	Genesis G80
BMW X3	Chevrolet Suburban	GMC Canyon crew cab
Buick Envision	Chevrolet Volt	GMC Sierra 1500 crew cab
Buick LaCrosse	Chrysler Pacifica	GMC Sierra 1500 extended cab
Cadillac CTS	Dodge Charger	Hyundai Kona
Cadillac Escalade ESV	Dodge Journey	Jeep Grand Cherokee
Chevrolet Bolt	Ford Escape	Kia Cadenza
Chevrolet Camaro	Ford F-150 crew cab	Kia Stinger
Chevrolet Colorado crew cab	Ford F-150 extended cab	Lincoln MKC
Chevrolet Cruze	Ford Fusion	Lincoln MKT
Chevrolet Malibu	Ford Mustang	Mini Cooper 2-door
Chevrolet Silverado 1500 crew cab	Ford Ranger crew cab	Nissan Frontier crew cab



Marginal (continued)

Nissan Leaf	Toyota 4Runner	Toyota Tundra extended cab
Nissan Leaf Plus	Toyota Tacoma crew cab	Toyota Yaris sedan
Ram 1500 crew cab	Toyota Tacoma extended cab	Volkswagen Atlas
Toyota 86		

Poor

Ford Fiesta hatchback	Infiniti Q70	Jeep Compass
Ford Fiesta sedan		

For more information, go to iihs.org

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