

Choosing a

child's lifejacket

Types of lifejacket

Children's lifejackets may rely on foam, air and foam, or air only to provide buoyancy. Normally, foam lifejackets provide a notional 100N of buoyancy and are suitable for inshore use. Air only and air/foam lifejackets meet the requirements of a 150N lifejacket and are suitable for offshore use.



Air-only

Air-only

Air only lifejackets tend to be smaller, lighter and more comfortable to wear, but these types of lifejackets do not provide any buoyancy when it is not inflated. These jackets will inflate by means of a gas cylinder. They may be activated automatically if the wearer enters the water or be activated manually, by pulling on a toggle, or be inflated orally. A re-arming kit will be required each time the jacket is activated. Note that most manufacturers recommend that lifejackets are serviced at least once a year.



Air/foam

Air/foam

Air/foam lifejackets meet the requirements of 100N by using inherent buoyancy. An additional inflatable stole that meets the requirements of 150N lifejacket can be inflated for offshore use. These lifejackets are normally fitted with additional retro-reflective tape to increase visibility at night.



Foam

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Foam and air/foam lifejackets are usually bulkier, but they provide inherent buoyancy and may also help to keep the child warm and provide some protection in the case of a fall.

- All lifejackets are intended to support the wearer on their back with their face clear of the water.
- All children's lifejackets are supplied with a whistle and crotch straps. Crotch straps must be worn at all times to prevent the jacket slipping off in the water or during rescue.

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Lifeboats

Air/foam with D-ring

Unlike adults' lifejackets, many children's lifejackets are also available with a built-in safety harness with a D-ring attachment at the rear of the jacket. This is particularly suitable for younger children who can be attached to a suitable adult either onboard, or at the water's edge. For older children on a sailing yacht, the child may be harnessed to the vessel, but children should never be harnessed to a high-speed power vessel as there is a risk of being dragged underwater if overboard.



Fitting

All children's lifejackets state a maximum weight and chest size that must not be exceeded, however it is equally important not to purchase a jacket that is too large as this may result in the child slipping out of the jacket or the jacket may float high in the water leaving the child's mouth and nose submerged.

A good way to tell if a jacket is the right size is to fit and adjust the jacket and then lift the jacket from the top. It should not be possible to lift the jacket more than 2.5cm from the child's shoulders. If it is possible to move the jacket, it is too large.

Size chart

Type of lifejacket	Body weight	Chest
Air-only lifejackets		
Junior 150N	44–110lbs/20–50kg	26–38"/66–86cm
150N air/foam lifejackets		
Seababy	<44lbs/<20kg	20–23"/50–58cm
Seatoddler	<44lbs/<20kg	23–30"/58–76cm
Seachild	44–66lbs/20–30kg	26–30"/66–76cm
BSI Child	44–88lbs/20–40kg	26–33"/65–85cm
100N foam lifejackets		
Baby	<44lbs/<20kg	20–23"/51–58cm
Child	<44lbs/<20kg	23–26"/58–66cm
Child large	44–66lbs/20–30kg	26–30"/66–76cm
Junior	66–88lbs/30–40kg	30–34"/76–86cm
50N foam buoyancy aids		
Child large	44–66lbs/20–30kg	26–30"/66–76cm
Junior	66–88lbs/30–40kg	30–34"/76–86cm

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