

# TWO MEN AND A BABY

TWO EXPECTANT FATHERS FACE THE ULTIMATE ON-ROAD TRIAL

STARRING...

**ALVIN  
ROBINSON**

BABY DUE IN  
THREE WEEKS

**TIM  
MORROW**

BABY DUE IN THREE  
MONTHS

AND  
**BABY  
DEXTER**  
(ASLEEP)







**“We’ve tried out car seats in store but doing it with a real baby is different”**

When researching the baby kit, pushchairs and car seats come out as top toys for the boys. Fathers-to-be love to compare braking systems, suspension and handling as though babies and pushchairs have more to do with Formula One than formula milk. And as for the car seat, making sure it doesn't clash with his treasured upholstery can be the number-one selling point.

But for all the technical checking that goes into choosing these two most vital pieces of kit, do dads ever really check that they know how to use them? Or will they be struggling with the car seat in the hospital car park on the day they bring their new baby home?

To find out, we set two fathers-to-be their toughest challenge yet. First we borrowed baby Dexter (with mum on hand for cuddles), then asked the dads to take him out of his pushchair, strap him safely and securely into his car seat, fold the pushchair and put it in the boot. Simple. Or was it?

Before we even start, the dads circle Dexter's kit – a travel system with the car seat still fixed in it – with apprehension, like two lions faced with an unknown predator.

Then, for several minutes, they try to remove the car seat. The handle is flipped to and fro, the apron clipped on and off, the pushchair turned this way and that... But still they are stumped. Until Tim spots a rather large red handle at the back of the car seat, with PULL HERE written across it in huge capital letters. 'Ah!' they both say, somewhat sheepishly.



## TIM

With a sister 15 years younger, Tim spent his teenage years getting hands-on baby experience. But he still eyes baby Dexter nervously. 'It's a long time since my sister was little,' he says. 'And even though my wife Katherine and I have tried car seats in store, doing it with a real baby is different.'

Despite the anxiety, Tim lifts Dexter out of the pushchair as if he'd spent his life cradling babies. However, as Tim tries to put him in the car seat, Dexter's bottom lip wobbles – and Tim looks none too happy either, fumbling with the clip. But he holds his nerve, and Dexter is finally strapped in.

### CAR-SEAT CAPERS

With a full-blown yell threatening, getting the car seat in the car is nerve-rocking. First Tim places the car seat behind the driver's seat – until it's pointed out that this will stop him moving his seat back, and he'll end up driving with his knees around his ears.

Tim swaps sides, but gets the seat belt in a muddle. Where does it go? Across the seat, around the back? Tim has to ask for a demo. Then, with grim determination, he clicks in the seat belt, and gets the straps in the right place. Dexter is in safe and sound.

### PACKING UP

Relieved the final stage is baby-free, Tim looks quizzically at the twisting device on the pushchair handle. He turns it this way and that, but nothing happens. Then the pushchair suddenly folds in a gentle swoon – although it is not properly fastened shut.

As Tim lifts the pushchair up to the boot it slowly unfolds. For several moments Tim and pushchair grapple, until it's finally stowed. But he looks at the boot in horror. The pushchair takes up most of the space. 'We've been told the pushchairs we like will fit in our boot, but I want to check,' he says. 'I hadn't planned on changing my car!'

So – if overall size hasn't been a deciding factor when pushchair shopping – what has? 'Big, cool, off-roader wheels,' he admits with a rueful smile.

### THE STATS...

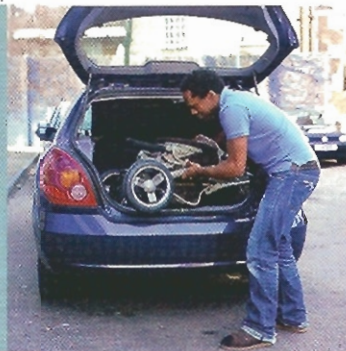
TIME  
TAKEN:  
**7.08**  
MINUTES

CAR SEAT  
ABILITY:  
**5/10**

PUSHCHAIR  
ABILITY:  
**7/10**



**“I’ve never even pushed a pushchair before! It’s all new”**



**DON'T FORGET**  
 YOU NEED TO KNOW THE  
 PUSHCHAIR YOU BUY WILL  
 FIT THE BOOT OF YOUR CAR.  
 THE PUSHCHAIR FINDER AT  
 WWW.MOTHERCARE.COM  
 WILL HELP YOU MAKE THE  
 RIGHT CHOICE

**ALVIN**

Next is Alvin. With three weeks until his baby's due date, will he prove to be prepared?

He and his wife Anastasia have bought the car seat and pushchair – ‘A Bugaboo,’ he says proudly. But Alvin admits his baby-experience is nil. ‘I’ve never even pushed a pushchair before! It’s all new.’ So maybe it’s time to learn...

**BATTLE STATIONS**

Alvin's first task is to get Dexter out of the pushchair and in to the car seat. And the problems start almost immediately. As Alvin moves him towards the car seat, Dexter arches his back furiously. You can see him thinking, ‘I am NOT going in this thing again!’ So Alvin has to call on all his soothing skills, plus a little tummy tickling, to get Dexter to bend graciously and submit to being strapped in. It's a head-to-head battle, and takes a long time, but at last Alvin succeeds – then has to pause for several moments to get his breath back.

Next step is getting the seat

into the car. Dexter eyes Alvin warily – he's not impressed. Struggling to get the belt round the seat, Alvin catches it on all the edges and has to yank it free. Luckily, just before Dexter lets out an enormous yell, he's clicked in. And Alvin starts to breathe again. His relief, though, is short-lived. The seat belt is too loose, so Alvin has to spend even more time pulling it tight to make sure Dexter is safe. Heading off down the road like that could be dangerous.

**PUSHCHAIR PANACHE**

But with the car seat sorted, Alvin is in his element. Maybe his pushchair-buying research has paid off. With a twist and a flick, the pushchair is folded and securely closed, then slipped neatly into the boot. And he's not perturbed about the amount of room it takes up. ‘Our Bugaboo's really neat,’ he grins. ‘I've tried it in our car and it leaves loads of room.’ So he did do his homework after all.

**FIT TO TRAVEL**

Finding the right car seat isn't as easy as you think, because not all seats fit all cars – and you don't want to discover you've bought the wrong one on the day your baby arrives.

Lots of people get it wrong – 80% of seats are incompatible with the car or fitted incorrectly. So follow the car seat rules:

**BUYING**

- ☑ Car seats must conform to UN regulation ECE R44.03.
- ☑ Ensure your baby is in the weight range the seat is made for. Buy the next size up as soon as his weight is over the limit.
- ☑ Mothercare stores have experts who can advise on the right car seat for your car.

**USING**

- ☑ Follow the manufacturer's instructions when fitting the seat, and keep them handy.
- ☑ Practise, practise, practise – before your baby arrives.
- ☑ Ensure the seat belt is routed correctly round the seat.
- ☑ Push your weight into fixed child seats as you tighten the seat belt to ensure there's no slack and the seat is secure.
- ☑ The seat-belt buckle should be straight when locked and

never rest on the car seat frame, as it may snap open.

- ☑ Your child seat should rest firmly on the main seat with little or no movement.
- ☑ Check you can't get more than two fingers between the harness straps and your child's chest: tight enough but comfy.
- ☑ The harness buckle should lie on baby's pelvis, not tummy.
- ☑ Watch out for unsecured objects – in an accident, a tissue box flying off the back shelf has the impact of a house brick.

**MAINTAINING**

- ☑ Regularly check fixed seats to ensure they haven't worked loose – pull on the harness to check.
- ☑ Replace seats or harnesses showing wear and tear, or in the event of a car accident.

**NEVER...**

- ☑ ...use a car seat on any seat fitted with a front air bag.
- ☑ ...modify a child seat, its fitting, the harness or buckle to make it fit your car.
- ☑ ...take your baby in a car without a car seat – even for short journeys or occasional lifts.

**THE STATS...**

TIME TAKEN: <b>8.12</b> MINUTES	CAR SEAT ABILITY: <b>4/10</b>	PUSHCHAIR ABILITY: <b>9/10</b>
---------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

For advice about choosing and using the right car seat, log on to [www.mothercare.com](http://www.mothercare.com)