

## Nils Bohlin Inventor of a Better Seat Belt

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Nils Bohlin engineered made the three-point seatbelt and it saved a lot of lives in crashes. Before 1959 only the two-point seatbelts were available in automobiles. The only people that were regularly buckled up were the race car drivers.

The two-point seatbelt was strapped across the body and placed on the abdomen. In high-speed crashes there were serious injuries, and in 1958, the Volvo Car corporation hired Bohlin, who had designed seatbelts for the Saab Fighter airplanes in the 1950's.

Sadly, a relative of the Volvo CEO, Gunnar Engellau, had died in a car crash. The accident helped motivate the company to increase its safety measures. Bohlin had worked on the elaborate four-point harness in airplanes and knew the system would be not suitable for an automobile. In designing the new seatbelt, he concentrated on providing a more effective method of protecting people against the impact of swift deceleration when a car crashed. In a year, Bohlin made the three-point seatbelt and introduced it in the Volvo cars in 1959.

The new seatbelts secured both the upper body and lower body. Its straps joined at the hip level and buckled into, what Bohlin calls, an "immovable anchorage point" below the hip. Bohlin called the three-point seatbelt The Immovable Anchorage Point because the seatbelt could hold the body safely in the event of a car crash.

According to Bohlin, as quoted by the New York Times, in his 2002 obituary, it was a matter of finding a solution that was simple, effective, and could be put on using just one hand. In the interest of safety, Volvo made the three-point seatbelt design available to other car manufacturers for free.

Since 1959, engineers have worked to enhancing the three-point seatbelt but the basic design remains Bohlin's. At the time of Bohlin's death in September 2002, Volvo estimated that the seatbelt saved over a million lives in four decades since it was introduced. In the United States only, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, seatbelts save more than 11,000 lives a year.

Seatbelts have changed the country and the world. Saving lives is important; as a child I am glad Nils Bohlin has made it possible for me to have a safer future when I am able to drive.

### References:

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