**Mobility Scooters and Powered Wheelchairs**

Scooters come with a number of options in terms of size, power, speed, weight, seat support and so on. It is important to recognise what your needs are, in order to get the right scooter to help you in your circumstances.

There are a number of factors about yourself to consider:

* **Your mobility** – this is your ability to move around. It includes walking, sitting down and standing up (called transferring), and adjusting or moving your body within the scooter.
* **Your tolerance** – this is the length of time you can tolerate doing something, for example standing, walking or sitting.
* **Your balance** – this is your ability to remain steady when standing and when seated.
* **Your posture** – this is the position in which you hold your body.
* **Your body weight** – if you are a large person you will need to look for a scooter that is appropriate and safe for you. Measure and record your weight accurately and check the manufacturer's details.
* **Your sight, perception, memory and cognitive ability** – if you are losing your visual, perceptual, memory or cognitive abilities, it is unlikely that a scooter will be appropriate for you.

Consider how all these factors will be affected by, and will affect, your use of the scooter. There is currently no minimum 'fitness to drive' standard for mobility scooter users. If you have a condition which is deteriorating, you may wish to take account of your possible future needs at this earlier stage.

**Dementia and mobility scooters**

Dementia can affect a person in many ways, including memory, concentration, judgement, vision, planning or problem-solving. It is a progressive disorder and those affected may not have insight into their illness. They may not be able to make a realistic judgement about their ability to use a scooter safely.

Many people in the early stages of dementia can still travel independently on mobility scooters if they are already familiar with using one. They should use familiar routes and carry relevant identity documents with them when alone, should they get lost. Introducing a scooter as a new item to someone who already has dementia should not be considered.

If already using a scooter, it can be difficult to decide when an individual should stop. Some indicators might be:

* becoming less confident or repeatedly confused about the scooter controls;
* repeatedly getting lost;
* forgetting the purpose of the trip;
* becoming less aware of safety precautions.

**Your eyesight**

* Although there are no legal eyesight requirements, it is important that you can see well enough to be able to judge distances, recognise obstacles and hazards, and be able to see pedestrians and other road users. If poor eyesight were taken as a contributory factor in an incident, it could make you liable for a compensation claim. Vision can change with age and it is recommended that you have regular sight tests. You should have a minimum visual acuity of 6/24.
* If you are eligible to be registered as severely sight impaired (blind), you should not drive a mobility vehicle as this would put yourself and others at risk.

#### Your mobility and tolerance

* In order to use a mobility scooter, you will need to be able to walk to where the scooter is stored and transfer into it, then transfer out of it and possibly walk a short distance at your destination, for example the corner shop or local library. You may need to check your destination in advance to see whether they allow scooter access or have suitable and secure storage for it.
* Some scooters have a swivel seat which can make transfers much easier. Others have fold-up armrests which can be raised to provide easier access. On some, the tiller (or steering column) can tilt forward to provide more space into/from which you can transfer. You need to ensure that you can use these features, then re-position them and yourself ready to drive, once seated in the scooter.

#### Your mobility requirements

Consider where you want your mobility scooter to take you:

* Do you want to use the scooter indoors, outdoors or both?
* How far might you want to travel?
* What is your local area like? Are there wide pavements? Will you have to go up and down kerbs?
* Might you need to travel on the road?

The answers to the above questions will guide you in choosing what type of scooter is best for you. Your personal health requirements will guide you in the features you need to look for.

**Mobility Scooters**

The use of mobility scooters has grown significantly. This has led to rising concern over their safe use and how they should be treated in law. They are currently defined and governed by several pieces of older legislation, using the term ‘invalid carriages’. Following a consultation in 2010, the Department of Transport issued some improved guidance for mobility vehicle users which you are strongly advised to read. It is available here:

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/411210/Mobility\_Vehicle\_Users\_guidance.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/411210/Mobility_Vehicle_Users_guidance.pdf)

Officially a mobility scooter may only be driven by a disabled person – a person with an injury, physical disability or medical condition which means they are unable to walk, or have difficulty walking. A non-disabled person may only drive them if they are demonstrating the scooter pre-sale, taking it to/from being mended or serviced, or providing training (Department for Transport 2015, p5).

**Types of mobility scooters**

Mobility scooters (invalid carriages) come in two legal categories, Class 2 and Class 3. The differences in weight and power (and thereby speed) of the two enable them to be used in different environments, but also have different legal requirements for the driver.

**Class 2:**



* are generally smaller, lighter and less powerful;
* can be designed for indoor and/or outdoor use. If for indoor use, they will have limited outdoor use and less distance range;
* some can be dismantled or folded for transporting;
* cannot be used on the road (except where there is no pavement or to cross the road);
* outdoor models have the ability to climb kerbs;
* have a top speed of 4 mile/hour (6.44 km/hour);
* do not need to be registered with the Driver Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA).

#### Boot scooters



* Boot scooters, which would be classified as Class 2, are specifically designed to be compact and easier to fold or dismantle. They can be transported in the boot of a car. Boot scooters differ in weight. You will need to ensure that you, or your carers, can disassemble or fold the scooter, then lift the scooter in and out of the boot and finally reassemble/unfold it at your destination.
* You will need to know the size of your car boot to ensure that your scooter will fit. The Rica website offers a car search facility which will help you to find out the size of your car boot.
* [www.rica.org.uk/content/travelling-scooter](http://www.rica.org.uk/content/travelling-scooter)

**Class 3:**



* are generally bigger, heavier and more powerful;
* are not for indoor use;
* can be used on the road;
* have a longer distance range;
* cannot be dismantled;
* have a number of additional safety requirements to allow road use;
* have a top speed of 4 miles/hour (6.44 km/hour) off the road and 8 miles/hour (12.9 km/hour) on the road;
* must be registered with the DVLA;
* the user must be aged at least 14 years.

Class 3 vehicles are not allowed on motorways, bicycle tracks or bus/cycle lanes, but are legally allowed on dual carriageways.

**Licensing or registering a Class 3 mobility scooter**

You don’t have to pay vehicle tax for any mobility scooter or powered wheelchair, but you do need to register Class 3 mobility scooters.

To register a Class 3 mobility scooter you need to complete form V55/4 for new vehicles, or V55/5 for used vehicles. You can get the forms from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) [online ordering service](https://www.gov.uk/dvlaforms). You can’t license your mobility scooter online or at a Post Office. You will need to send the completed forms and evidence of the vehicle’s age (if available) to: DVLA Swansea, SA99 1BE.

More information is available on the Government website:

[www.gov.uk/mobility-scooters-and-powered-wheelchairs-rules/overview](https://www.gov.uk/mobility-scooters-and-powered-wheelchairs-rules/overview)

**Insurance for your mobility scooter**

You do not have to have insurance for your mobility scooter, but it is highly recommended that you do. Third party insurance will cover you for other people making a claim against you if you are involved in an accident or cause some damage. Other policies will also insure against injuries to yourself and loss or damage of your scooter.

The Motability Scheme provides insurance cover:

[www.motability.co.uk/information-for-customers/scooter-insurance-cover-details/](http://www.motability.co.uk/information-for-customers/scooter-insurance-cover-details/)

The Rica website lists a number of companies offering insurance:

[www.rica.org.uk/content/safety-and-insurance](http://www.rica.org.uk/content/safety-and-insurance)

**Storage**



Your mobility scooter will need to be stored in a secure, dry place, with access to a power source for battery charging. You need to ensure that it is not a trip hazard or a fire hazard (by blocking escape routes) for yourself or anyone else whilst it is stored.

If you need to store your scooter outside, you are advised to get a waterproof cover for it.

If you live in a *communal property, such as council or housing association flats, sheltered housing or a care home, you must seek advice and permission from the landlord/organization in relation to storing and charging your mobility scooter.* There are usually strict rules preventing the storage and charging of mobility scooters in communal areas. They are not usually allowed to be stored in corridors or stair wells to prevent them from being an obstruction or trip hazard.

You may have space for a smaller scooter in your personal flat/room, or there may be an allocated room/ space for storage. In any situation check that it is not a hazard to yourself or any other person.

If you lived in rented communal accommodation, it is likely that you will be required to have an annual PAT (portable appliance test) for your scooter to ensure that the charging equipment is in a fit state to be used.

**Servicing and maintenance of your mobility scooter**

There are a number of things that you can do to maintain your scooter:

* **Keep it dry.** If you store it outside, get a waterproof storage cover for it.
* **Keep it clean.** Wash or wipe off any significant amounts of mud or dirt. Try to avoid driving over really wet, dirty or gritty areas. It is possible to damage the scooter’s motor if dirt or wet gets into the motor’s moving parts.
* **Check the tyres.** If your mobility scooter has pneumatic tyres, ensure these are kept at optimal pressure (check manufacturer's advice). Check the tyres for wear and tear. At some point they may need replacing.
* **Check the lights.** If you have a scooter that can be used on the road, your lights must be in working order.
* **Check the brakes.** If at any time you feel that the strength or speed of the brakes is diminishing, arrange for it to be inspected.

A regular service will ensure that your mobility scooter is safe, both for you and for those around you, especially if you use your scooter on the road. It will also keep it in good working order for longer.

It is advised that you get your mobility scooter serviced every 12 months as a minimum. Check the manufacturer’s instructions. Your supplier will also be able to advise you on this.

**Parking your scooter in public places**

All normal parking restrictions apply to mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs. You must ensure that you do not leave your mobility scooter in a place which would get in the way of other pedestrians, including wheelchair users and people with prams or pushchairs.

**Additional seat cushions**

It is possible to use additional cushions in a mobility scooter, to provide better comfort and pressure care. Ensure the additional cushion fits within the dimensions of the scooter seat without distorting. The additional height of the cushion might cause the armrests to become too low to provide support, although some armrests are height adjustable.

**Useful Organisations**

**British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA)**

The BHTA is the largest trade association for suppliers and manufactures of mobility/homecare products, including adjustable beds. They have a code of practice to which their members sign up.

Contact the BHTA to obtain a list of members in your area.

New Loom House
Suite 4.06
101 Back Church Lane
London E1 1LU
**Tel**: 020 7702 2141
**Fax**: 020 7680 4048
**Email**: bhta@bhta.com (and bhta@bhta.net)
**Website**: [www.bhta.net](http://www.bhta.net/)

**Driving Mobility**

Driving Mobility (formally the Forum of Mobility Centres) is a network of independent organisations covering the United Kingdom, offering information, advice and assessment to people who need to gain or retain independence through mobility.

**Tel**: 0800 559 3636
**Email**: info@drivingmobility.org.uk
**Website**: [www.drivingmobility.org.uk](http://www.drivingmobility.org.uk/)

**Mobility Trust**

Mobility Trust provides powered wheelchairs and scooters for people who have severe disabilities.

Mobility Trust
17b Reading Road
Pangbourne
Berkshire RG8 7LR
**Tel**: 0118 9842588
**Email**: mobility@mobilitytrust.org.uk
**Website**: [www.mobilitytrust.org.uk](http://www.mobilitytrust.org.uk/index.html)

**Motability, the Charity**

As a charity Motability provides charitable grants in certain situations.

Warwick House
Harlow
Essex CM19 5PX
**Tel**: 01279 635999 (8.30am-5.30pm Monday to Friday)
**Website**: [www.motability.org.uk](http://www.motability.org.uk/contact/contact-information)

**Motability Scheme**

The Motability Scheme enables disabled people to get mobile by exchanging their mobility allowance to lease a car, scooter or powered wheelchair.

Customer Services
**Tel**: 0300 456 4566
**Website**: [www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk/contact-and-support/contact-information/)

**Rica**

Rica is a UK research charity providing information for older and disabled people.

G03, The Wenlock
50-52 Wharf Road
London N1 7EU
**Tel**: 020 7427 2460
**Email**: mail@rica.org.uk
**Mobility webpage**: [www.rica.org.uk/content/mobility](http://www.rica.org.uk/content/mobility)
**Choosing a mobility scooter webpage**: [www.rica.org.uk/content/choosing-mobility-scooter](http://www.rica.org.uk/content/choosing-mobility-scooter)

**Shopmobility**

Shopmobility is a service that helps all people who consider themselves to have mobility problems (whether through disability, illness or injury) to continue to get around city and town centres independently. It offers a range of mobility and other equipment for hire.

**Website**: [www.shopmobility.org.uk](http://www.shopmobility.org.uk/)

**Which?**

Which guides - Mobility scooters

[www.which.co.uk/reviews/mobility-scooters/article/how-to-buy-the-best-mobility-scooter/choosing-the-right-mobility-scooter](http://www.which.co.uk/reviews/mobility-scooters/article/how-to-buy-the-best-mobility-scooter/choosing-the-right-mobility-scooter)

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Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency (2016) Assessing fitness to drive – a guide for medical professionals. Swansea: DVLA. 76.

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