

THE ULTIMATE MOBILITY SCOOTER GUIDE



All you need to know about mobility scooters
The law, safety, models, advice and more...

INTRODUCTION

LET'S GET MOVING TOGETHER.

For anyone unsteady on their feet or finding it difficult to walk distances, the right scooter provides a release from the confines of home. Most users love their scooter, describing it as a new found freedom. But with an overwhelming choice on the market, how do you find the right type of vehicle for your specific needs? What's the difference between a Class 2 and a Class 3 vehicle? Are 3, 4 or 5 wheels best? Is previous driving experience needed? Don't worry, help is here. This guide is designed to give you a good understanding of a range of topics, helping you weigh up the practical considerations when you're ready to make a decision.

This guide has been created to take you through the process of purchasing a scooter.

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INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

So you're thinking about getting a mobility scooter? It's a big decision and you're bound to have questions about whether it's right for you. In this section, we will answer your initial queries.

DRIVING LICENCE AND TEST

No type of mobility scooter is legally defined as a motor vehicle so users are not required to take a test or have a driving licence. However, if you choose a scooter that can drive on roads, the Department for Transport recommends you must:

- Be able to read a car's registration plate from a distance of 12.3 metres or 40 feet. This should be checked regularly as you might have to pay compensation if you have an accident and poor eyesight was part of the cause.
- Have an understanding of the Highway Code.

AGE AND HEALTH LIMITATIONS

Scooters that can drive on the road have a lower age restriction of 14 years of age. There is no upper age limit, but you should be in reasonably good health to drive one.

DRIVING EXPERIENCE

All good suppliers will give you plenty of training so do not worry if you have never driven before. If you are new to driving or have never used a mobility scooter before after a short test drive you will be ready to hit the road. But if the thought of road driving is putting you off, you can choose a scooter that is designed for pavements.

UPPER WEIGHT LIMITS

Different types of scooter have different upper weight limits. It's another reason to ensure your supplier offers you a personal needs assessment before you buy as well as a test drive in and around your local area.

CHOOSING A SCOOTER

You've decided you're ready for a mobility vehicle. But which one? Here we explain some of the key differences between the main types to help you make a more informed choice.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF SCOOTER

Manufacturers have developed scooters to meet the needs of everyone from the occasional user for a trip around the supermarket, vehicles for assistance around the home to a more regular user who wants to travel further afield by road. As a general guide there are 3 main categories of vehicle, each of which is available in 3, 4 and 5 wheel formats.

CLASS 2 BOOT SCOOTERS

- Non-road vehicle
- Max speed 4mph
- Can be dismantled or folded to be carried in a car boot



TOP TIP

Always check that your selected boot scooter will fit in your car and that it is not too heavy for the person who is going to assemble it to lift.

- These vehicles are also intended for pavement use only.
- Ideal for trips to the local supermarket or even a stroll around the park, maximum speed of 4mph.
- Often can be transported in most standard family sized cars.
- Most have small motors and batteries and therefore have limited power and range (as low as 4 miles in some cases).
- They generally have smaller wheels too that will restrict their performance on kerbs and rougher terrain.
- They may also have insufficient power for hilly areas and few have suspension or the comfortable seats that many larger scooters have.
- Some newer models buck the trend, offering larger scooter performance but with a docking station and a remote to load and unload

CLASS 2 PAVEMENT SCOOTERS

- Non-road vehicle
- Max speed 4mph
- Bigger and more powerful

• These vehicles are also intended for pavement use only.

• They are generally bigger and heavier which means they can travel further on a single charge and are likely to perform better on steeper hills and kerbs.

• Many vehicles in this category also have suspension and fuller, more comfortable seats.

• These are not legal for use on the road (unless a pavement is not available) and are less suited for indoors or use in restricted spaces.

• They are often heavy and although some are dismantled, they are less suited to being transported in a car boot.



CLASS 3 ROAD SCOOTERS

- Road vehicle
- Max speed 8mph
- Longer lasting batteries



TOP TIP

Never drive your scooter if you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs or medication that may affect your driving ability.

• You can travel up to 8mph on roads and therefore get further, faster.

• Class 3 vehicles generally have larger batteries and a more powerful motor making them much more suitable if you live in a hilly area.

• Generally, they also have bigger wheels making them the most capable kerb climbers.



• They are often more comfortable with improved suspension and seating.

• Vehicles driven at 8mph can only be used on the road and this is not the best option for users with hearing/eyesight or other health problems or for those who have never driven a bike, car, or motorcycle on the road

3, 4 AND 5 WHEEL SCOOTERS

The number of wheels on a scooter can make a huge difference. All mobility scooters fall into one of the following three groups.

3 WHEEL SCOOTERS

- 3 wheelers generally have a very good turning circle making them suited to restricted spaces such as indoors and smaller shops.
- They also offer a good sitting position and posture as your feet have plenty of room to rest either side of the front centre wheel.
- Although 3 wheelers are relatively safe and stable if driven correctly on smooth surfaces, they are not as stable as 4 or 5 wheel scooters and don't leave much margin for error.
- In inexperienced hands or on uneven terrain they are much more likely to tip and cause injury, so they're probably best for very confident scooter riders with a good sense of balance
- Second hand values depreciate fast.

4 WHEEL SCOOTERS

- 4 wheel scooters are much more stable than 3 wheelers and many can climb kerbs of 10cm or more if approached at a 90 degree angle.
- Many have suspension and offer more comfortable seats.
- They can cope with uneven ground, slopes and gradients better than 3 wheelers too.
- Compared to a 3 or 5 wheeler, these vehicles have restricted turning circles making them less suitable for indoor use.
- They tend to have less foot space which can affect posture.
- Smaller models will fold or dismantle for transportation in a car but there will still be some significant lifting involved.
- Second hand values depreciate fast.

5 WHEEL SCOOTERS

- 5 wheel scooters are the most recent innovation and offer a compelling combination of a tight turning circle and good stability.
- A confident drive in both the outdoors and more restricted spaces, they are unique in being able to climb and descend kerbs at any angle safely.
- Their layout also gives users a good level of comfort and control over their posture.
- Class 2 and Class 3 versions are available including a boot scooter that doesn't require lifting or dismantling.
- Second hand values are good



TOP TIP

If possible, avoid kerbs when using a 3 wheel scooter. If you have to use them, always approach kerbs carefully and at an angle of 90 degrees. Avoid large potholes in pavements and turning on gradients and slopes.

MEETING YOUR NEEDS

In deciding which class of scooter and how many wheels would be best for you, consider the following:

- Where you want to use your scooter
- How far you want to be able to go
- How often you want to use it

The most reputable suppliers will ask you to fill out a questionnaire about your health and mobility needs and their advice will be based on the results. Ask for a company representative to visit you at home and make sure you get an assessment and test drive before you commit yourself to anything. When you take the assessment, we recommend that you have a relative or friend with you to help with your decision.

You may be tempted to snap up a bargain from a discount dealer on the internet but it's unlikely you will get the opportunity to test drive the vehicle before you purchase or receive the necessary after sales care and support that you will require.



TOP TIP

Always ask what after sales back up and support you will receive as an owner of a scooter.

TEST DRIVES AND TRAINING

It's important to try out a range of scooters to see what suits you best before you buy.

Never buy a scooter without trying it out first.

If you are new to driving, always insist on getting the training you need to be able to use the scooter safely and responsibly.

It is always advisable to take test drives on the roads and pavements that you will actually use so home demonstrations are recommended.

BUYING A SCOOTER



You've chosen what type of scooter you want, and perhaps even a make and model. You could pay anything from £800 to £8000 so what's the safest, most economical way to go about purchasing your chosen vehicle?

As with many things, you generally get what you pay for. Small scooters bought on the internet can start at just a few hundred pounds but purchasing unseen is not recommended. You won't know the quality of the vehicle, whether it's suitable or comfortable for your needs or whether you are safe to use it. You will most likely have to assemble the scooter when it arrives, and a servicing agreement or recourse to any problem is unlikely to be included. The level of after sales and support is as important as the scooter itself and you should factor this into the price of your scooter.

CONSIDERATIONS

When purchasing, consider exactly what the supplier is including in the price.

- Will they carry out a thorough assessment of your needs?
- Will you get the chance to try the scooter on your roads and pavements?
- Do they provide training as part of the service?
- Do they deliver it free, fully assembled and make any adjustments you may need?
- What happens if you need to return the product?
- What about maintenance and servicing?
- Does the manufacturer offer a long warranty (some of the more robust models have 3 years)?

WHERE TO SHOP

Wherever you buy, it's crucial that you get a professional assessment of your needs and abilities.

Reputable suppliers will offer this and they should cover:

- Any medical history that may affect your ability to use a scooter.
- A full understanding of your current mobility issues.
- An outline of the types of places you will use the scooter.
- A storage and charging point assessment.
- How you will transport your scooter if you need to.
- A thorough maneuvers and awareness driving test in your environment.
- An overview of the payment methods and benefits available to you.

BUYING DIRECT FROM A SCOOTER SPECIALIST

Some types of scooter are only available through this method. A representative will generally visit your home and offer you a test drive on local roads and pavements. Check that they have national coverage and a good trading history, and that your scooter will be serviced regularly and looked after if you have any issues. With more experts on hand to help the customer than a local shop, they may not be the cheapest on the market.

BUYING OVER THE INTERNET

Many scooters will be cheaper online and you'll have plenty to choose from. Crucially, you will not get the opportunity to see and try the product first, or take a safety assessment. They often are delivered flat-packed so you'll likely have to assemble it yourself. Check to see if they support your scooter after purchase. Not all brands sell this way so not all are available. It is recommended that you think seriously before purchasing online.

BUYING FROM A HIGH STREET RETAILER

Larger stores have a good stock of models to try although not all manufacturers sell this way. Some will not travel to your home. If you travel with your scooter, check that they offer aftercare nationally. Prices are generally higher than the Internet.

SECOND HAND SCOOTERS

Buying second hand from a local paper small advert or websites like eBay is a chance to save yourself some money. You may be lucky and pick a bargain. You risk being sold something unsuitable, or worse, dangerous. Unless you are properly assessed and the scooter has a warranty in your name (many are not transferable), we cannot recommend it. If you do decide second hand is for you, then we recommend opting for reconditioned models

RECONDITIONED SCOOTERS

Good suppliers will run checks to vouch for a scooter's roadworthy condition and provide a full history and warranty. They will still assess your needs before they sell you a model. They should also offer the same training and back-up services as if you had bought new. A reconditioned model will never offer the high quality performance of a new vehicle.



TOP TIP

Be wary of companies who will not quote you a ballpark figure for a vehicle over the phone. Prices do vary according to the package you buy, but it is reasonable to expect a rough estimate of the price range before arranging a home visit from a salesman.



LEASING, FINANCE AND WARRANTIES

LEASING SCHEMES

Buying a scooter outright is common but it may not suit everyone. If paying in stages over a period of time would suit you better, there are schemes available. You may be eligible for help towards the cost of your mobility scooter either on the Motability Scheme or with an Easy Payment Plan with a reputable supplier if you receive any of the following:

- The Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance (HRMC DLA)
- The Enhanced Rate of the Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payment (EMC PIP)
- The War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement (WPMS)
- the Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP)

It's best to ask what's available as not all scooters are available on all schemes.

These schemes typically come on a three-year lease and the cost also covers insurance, breakdown cover, servicing and maintenance (including tyre and battery replacements).

FINANCE OPTIONS

Finance is an option for most people (the upper age limit is normally 85) but always check the APR interest rate before you buy. The lender will need to go through your particular situation to ensure you are able to meet the monthly payments.

There are several types of payment plans available ranging from interest free to interest bearing options, through to contract hire schemes. The benefits of these schemes are that they allow you to obtain the right vehicle for your needs, rather than buying a vehicle at full price, which may not be suitable for your day-to-day needs. With these schemes you can pay monthly at a fixed price without any changes. There are even contract hire schemes that cover all ongoing costs such as consumables, servicing, and roadside recovery over a 2 or 3-year period, meaning there will never be any hidden surprises.

WARRANTIES

A longer warranty is a good way to minimise surprise expenditure if things ever go wrong with your scooter. Most offer a year, but some good makes and models offer an impressive 3-year warranty. Always check the small print and see what is included and excluded – especially if you are buying a second hand or reconditioned vehicle – they may not be worth it if there are too many exclusions. At a minimum it should cover any sudden, unforeseen mechanical and electrical failure, cost of parts, call out charges and labour. The only items you should have to pay for are batteries, tyres, fuses and an annual service. Make sure your warranty includes use of a courtesy vehicle if your scooter has to be taken away for repairs.



TOP TIP

Shop around for a 0 percent interest deal.





ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Before you decide on a seller, find out a bit more about them. Check how long they have been established and how many customers they service. And look online to see if the company uses an independent review site for their customers and check the feedback on that site. Once you're happy with the seller's reputation, ask them these important questions.

Can I have a full assessment of my mobility needs?

Reputable suppliers will offer you a comprehensive assessment of your needs. They will ask about your health and any medication you are taking, where you intend to use the vehicle and how often you plan to use it.

Scooter users should have reasonably strong upper body muscles and be capable of getting on and off unaided.

Is a test drive and training offered?

You should be able to take a full road test before you buy taking place where you wish to use your scooter most. Clear instructions on handling the vehicle should be included. This service should be free and provided by the company delivery team.

Do they offer after sales care?

A reputable company should offer warranties, maintenance, breakdown and recovery cover, as well as telephone technical support. They should have a network of their own engineers they can call out at short notice and offer you a courtesy scooter if your scooter has to be taken away for repairs.

Do they offer easy payment plans?

Some companies offer easy payment plans which may suit you but check the details and enquire about interest free deals.

What type of scooters are available?

The ideal supplier should offer you a range of models based on your needs, your suitability and your environment. Be clear about where and how you want to use your scooter and be clear whether a 3, 4 or 5 wheel format, Class 2 or 3 model will be best for your needs.

What are the scooter's capabilities?

Think about how far you would need to go in one trip. The mileage range on some boot scooters can be less than a few miles and even lower in hilly or rough terrain. Also consider the wheel size if you need to climb kerbs.

Can the scooter be transported?

Check what size car boot the scooter will fit in and whether it needs to be dismantled and lifted in. Ask what the heaviest component is and always ensure that either you, a partner or carer can lift the component parts with ease. If not, ask about scooters that can drive themselves into the boot of your car by remote control.

Will the scooter require much maintenance?

Check with your supplier as models vary but in general maintenance is minimal. You should have your vehicle serviced at least once a year to keep it safe and in good working condition.

What is the delivery time?

A good supplier will be able to supply your scooter at home within seven days of signing your purchase contract.

Will the scooter arrive ready assembled?

Your scooter should be fully assembled, adjusted where it needs to be and ready to use as part of the delivery process.

DRIVING A SCOOTER

It's important that you have a clear understanding of where you'll be able to take your vehicle and the rules of the road for scooter drivers.

Where can I take my mobility scooter?

Class 2 vehicles with a maximum speed of 4mph should only be used on pavements.

Class 3 vehicles with an upper speed limit of 8mph can be used on the road as well as the pavement but pavement use is limited to 4 mph.





In shops and buildings

Most large department stores and public buildings will be happy for you to use your scooter on the premises but always reduce your speed when inside. Shopping centres are an ideal place to ride a scooter with flat, wide spaces, where you have room to use your scooter safely. Smaller shops may have aisles that are too narrow to negotiate and you may have to leave larger vehicles outside, especially if it has a restricted turning circle. If you do so, always remove the key to make the vehicle immobile. You are strongly advised to have at least a third party insurance policy to protect you against theft, fire and accidental damage.

On public transport

As mobility scooters are becoming more common, public transport is adapting, especially for those using wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs or mobility scooters. Your scooter should be kept in good condition at all times (tyres inflated correctly, batteries charged and not overloaded) as transport operators have the right to refuse users and their scooters if they feel they are not in a safe condition.

On trains

Some train companies have carriages that are able to carry scooters but this service varies regionally. If you want to take your scooter on a train you should contact the company you wish to travel with before you book. Also check that the stations and platforms at either end of your journey are accessible.

On buses

Many bus companies now run a scooter permit scheme where you can take your scooter on a bus provided you meet the following criteria:

- Your scooter is a class 2 type and meets their size limits.
- The bus company has assessed your safe use of the scooter on the bus.

Air travel

Scooters can be taken on planes as luggage as long as airlines are notified well in advance. Some airlines will charge a small handling fee, check at time of booking.



TOP TIP

If you haven't used public transport in the past, don't be put off as many companies offer scooter users a familiarization visit. Just contact them well in advance.

DRIVING TOP TIPS



Parking your scooter in public spaces

All normal parking restrictions apply to mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs. Your vehicle shouldn't be left on a footpath or pedestrian area if it is in the way of other pedestrians, including wheelchair users and people with prams or pushchairs.

Kerbs

Ascending and descending kerbs are perfectly safe if you follow the rules. If you intend to go up or down a kerb, always approach the kerb at right angles with your wheels straight onto the kerb. (5 wheel scooters are the exception and are able to approach kerbs at angles as well as at 90 degrees) Don't attempt to negotiate kerbs higher than the manufacturer recommends. This varies from model to model.

Check your load

Overloading your vehicle may make it unstable if you exceed the manufacturer's maximum carrying capacity (this applies to shopping baskets too).

Pedestrians

Never forget that pedestrians have right of way. It's your responsibility to make sure you don't run into anyone. Not everyone will be aware of your presence or be able to get out of your way, so be prepared to stop suddenly.

Speeding limits

Whatever the capacity of your vehicle, on footpaths and pedestrian areas the maximum speed is always 4mph. On roads, it is 8mph but all vehicles capable of this speed must be limited to 4mph when anywhere other than the road.

Drive on the left

It may sound obvious, but scooter users should follow the rules of the road when on the road and pedestrian rules everywhere else.

Named drivers

Another person may be able to drive your scooter. If the person in question has a mobility problem, providing they can drive the scooter safely and competently and it is suitable for their particular needs. You must make sure that your insurance policy covers both of you as named drivers.

The Highway Code

You should read and understand all elements of the highway code as you would expect any other road user to do. You must stop at traffic lights, give way where cars would give way and give way to pedestrians at crossings.

Emergencies

In the rare event of an emergency, only use your hazard lights in dangerous situations and consider purchasing a recovery service. Carry a mobile phone if you have one so you can call for assistance if required.



TOP TIPS

Don't wear dark colours at night. Class 3 drivers should wear fluorescent clothing during the day and reflective strips at night. This will help others see you in daylight or poor visibility.

...AND OUR MOST IMPORTANT TIP?

ENJOY YOUR FREEDOM!





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