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RoSPA's Guide to Mobility Scooters



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Transport

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Introduction

Mobility scooters are a great way of getting around and maintaining independence when you have health conditions that affect your ability to walk. The scooters are easy to control, cheap to run and keep, and can be life-changing for those who need them – it is no wonder that there are hundreds of thousands of users in the UK alone.

However, when you are new to the world of mobility scooters, choosing the correct model for your lifestyle and needs can be a challenge. When you then start thinking about safety and legal considerations, you can easily find yourself bombarded with information from many different sources. RoSPA has produced this comprehensive guide in order to provide clear and succinct advice for mobility scooter users and those thinking of getting one. The guide covers a range of useful topics including the different types of scooter, how to choose the best model for you, safety guidance, and legal requirements.

Choosing a mobility scooter

Mobility scooters fall into two classes based on their legal specifications: class 2 or class 3. Class 2 scooters can reach a maximum speed of 4mph and can only be used on pavements and footpaths (or on the road when there is no pavement available). The key features of class 2 mobility scooters are as follows:

- They tend to be quite small and light, especially when compared to a class 3 scooter.
- Depending on the model, they can be used indoors, outdoors or both.
- They do not need to be registered with the DVLA.
- As these scooters are generally lightweight, they tend to have smaller batteries than class 3 scooters, making them unsuitable for long-range trips.
- Some models have lights, and these should be chosen if the scooter will be used at night.

Class 3 scooters are more powerful, have a maximum speed of 8mph and can be used on roads as well as on pavements/footpaths. Their key features are as follows:

- When they are being used on the pavement, they are allowed to travel at speeds of up to 4mph (like class 2 scooters). When they are being used on the road, they are allowed to travel at speeds of up to 8mph. The mobility scooter will have a switch to allow you to change between these settings.
- They must be registered with the DVLA with a V55/4 (for new scooters) or a V55/5 (for used scooters) form, both of which can be ordered [here](#).
- They are usually heavier and larger than class 2 scooters, meaning they can handle more difficult terrain. They also have a larger battery that has a greater capacity, meaning they can be used for longer journeys.
- As they can be used on the road, they must conform to particular standards. For example, they must all be equipped with indicators, front and rear lights, working brakes, rear view mirror and a horn.

You do not have to pay road tax for class 2 or class 3 mobility scooters.



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RoSPA has put together some handy questions to think about when purchasing a mobility scooter, to ensure that the model you choose is well suited to you, your lifestyle and your needs:

Question	Points to consider	Class 2	Class 3
Do you want to use the scooter on the road?	Class 2 scooters can only be used on the road when there is no pavement.		✓
Do you want to take the scooter on your local bus?	Smaller models can be taken aboard some public transport vehicles. It is important to check that you can take your scooter on both your outward and inward journey.	✓	
Will you be able to use the scooter?	Before buying the mobility scooter, it is important to test it out to ensure that you have the strength and control required to use it.		
Will you be driving the scooter at night or when there is poor visibility?	Choose a scooter with lights – some class 2 models may not have these equipped.		✓
Are you worried about getting a puncture and getting stranded?	Choose a scooter with solid tyres (this type of tyre is less prone to punctures than pneumatic tyres).	✓	✓
Do you want to put the scooter in your car or other vehicle?	Some smaller scooters can be broken apart or collapsed to fit in the boot (make sure you are able to pick up all of the parts if you are going to be doing this yourself).	✓	
Will you be using the scooter for long journeys and hilly terrain?	You will need a heavy duty battery. These tend to be found on class 3 scooters – make sure to find out maximum distance it can travel in one charge.		✓
Do you need a ride which is as bump free as possible, due to back problems etc?	Consider a scooter with suspension, as this makes bumps feel smoother.	✓	✓
Do you want a scooter that doesn't need to be registered with the DVLA?	Class 2 scooters do not need to be registered (no mobility scooters need to be taxed).	✓	
Do you have mobility issues which make getting on and off the scooter difficult?	Some scooters have swivel seats or fold up armrests. Before purchasing a scooter, make sure you are comfortable getting on and off it.	✓	✓
Do you want to buy a scooter with a warranty?	If buying a second hand scooter, check if there is a warranty included and what it covers.		
Do you regularly take medication that makes you drowsy?	Mobility scooters should not be used when taking medications that cause drowsiness. Always consult your doctor if you are not sure.		
Can you get the battery replaced when required?	Depending on level of use, mobility scooters will need a new battery every 1-3 years.		
Will you keep the scooter adequately serviced and maintained?	Cost will vary according to the class and model – servicing and maintenance are recommended every 12 months.		
Is training provided with the scooter, or is there any local training available?	See & Scoot is a free and easily accessible resource that can be found here: https://bit.ly/33JD1bC . It is a 20-minute hazard perception training video for new and existing mobility scooter users.		
Will you get insurance and breakdown cover?	It is not a legal requirement to have insurance as it is with cars. However, having both insurance and breakdown cover provides both peace of mind and assistance in difficult situations.		



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Always remember to seek professional advice when purchasing a mobility scooter, e.g. from a local occupational therapist or scooter dealer. Some suppliers will help you to assess your needs and choose the correct scooter for you, adjusting it to your specific requirements.

Using and looking after your mobility scooter

Mobility scooters are easy to use and economical to keep. RoSPA has put together the following information about owning and using a mobility scooter (please note that it is essential to follow any manufacturer's advice about the safe storage and use of your scooter).

Batteries & charge

It is important to look after your mobility scooter battery – always follow the manufacturer's recommendations regarding how often it should be charged and the capacity it should be kept at. If you are going on a long or unfamiliar journey, ensure that the battery is fully charged. The range of the battery can depend on several factors, including the surfaces you are travelling on, the weight being carried on the scooter, tyre pressure, lighting, and the weather (mobility scooter batteries are known to not perform as well in cold weather). Check the maximum range of your scooter battery before using it for the first time.

A battery should last between 12 to 36 months depending upon use and how it is looked after.



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Keeping your mobility scooter roadworthy

As well as keeping your battery in tip top condition, it is important to look after the rest of your mobility scooter. Maintenance and servicing is recommended every 12 months and it is important that you get your scooter thoroughly checked according to the manufacturer's guidelines. Advice about looking after your specific model of scooter will be available from your scooter supplier. Be wary of buying a second hand scooter as it may not come with any instructions or information from the manufacturer.

The Department for Transport recommends that your mobility scooter has a thorough safety check once a year. This includes checking that your tyres are at the correct pressure, that your lights are clean and working correctly, and that your mirrors are clean and not obstructed.

Out and about

When going out on your mobility scooter, particularly if you are going on a long or unfamiliar journey, route planning is important because the shortest route is not always the best route – it is always possible that you could end up facing impossible to navigate terrain such as steep hills and obstructions. Mobility scooters are not particularly stable when tackling kerbs, so it is a good idea to use dropped kerbs to avoid tipping. It is always best to stick to the pavement, but if you need to use the road it is best to plan a route that avoids major roundabouts, busy roads and rush-hour traffic.

Give yourself plenty of time for your journey, especially if you are going to be using public transport - getting on and off your train or bus may require some extra time. If riding on the road, do not feel pressured to stay on it. If it becomes too busy or you do not feel safe, switch to the 4mph speed mode and travel on the pavement.

Safety guidance

Every year, people are injured when using a mobility scooter. You can reduce your risk by following a few simple precautions:

- Certain medications can cause drowsiness. Check with your doctor if you suspect your medication will affect your ability to ride your scooter.
- There is no law stating a minimum eyesight requirement in order to drive a mobility scooter, but it is important that you can read a car's registration number from a distance of 20 metres. If you require glasses or contact lenses to achieve this, they must always be worn whilst you are driving the scooter.
- You should not use your scooter if you have been drinking.
- Do not carry very heavy luggage and do not hang anything off the handlebars – this is dangerous and will make the scooter unstable and difficult to control. Check the manufacturer's advice for the load limits of your scooter model.
- Always give yourself plenty of time to brake, and slow down when approaching corners. This is especially important on slippery or gravelled surfaces.
- Approach kerbs at right-angles and do not attempt to go up kerbs that are too large for the type and size of your scooter's wheels (check the manufacturer's information for guidance on this).
- Only you should get on your scooter – do not carry anyone else with you/on your lap, and do not lead a pet; even if they are well behaved they can still be a serious hazard.



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- If you are going to be driving a mobility scooter for the first time, or if it is a long time since you have used one, it is strongly recommended that you seek some training. This is especially important if you are intending to use a class 3 scooter on the road.
- If there is a lap belt fitted to the scooter, always use it.
- Always turn the scooter off before you get off it – if you leave it on, it is possible that you or your clothing/luggage could knock one of the controls and cause a serious collision.
- When parking, follow normal parking rules and ensure that you are not causing an obstruction. The scooter must not be left where it is likely to get in the way of pedestrians, wheelchairs or prams.
- If there is no pavement available, causing you to travel on the road, always travel facing the direction of traffic so you do not confuse other road users.



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On the road (class 3 mobility scooters only)

- Always try to avoid using busy roads – you will be driving a vehicle that is much smaller and more vulnerable than the majority of other vehicles around you.
- Follow the rules of the road. Mobility scooters must not be used on motorways, bus lanes, cycle lanes, and cycle paths marked “cycle only”. It is not recommended to use a mobility scooter on a dual carriageway but it is legal as long as the scooter is fitted with a flashing orange beacon.
- It is important to be as visible as possible when driving a mobility scooter on the road, especially when it is dark. It is recommended that scooter users wear reflective clothing, such as a Hi-Viz vest. You must use your headlights and rear lights when it is dark and whenever visibility is reduced.
- Always indicate to warn other road users of your intention to change lane or direction.
- Look out for car doors opening when you are passing parked cars.
- Give yourself lots of time to carry out your actions – other vehicles on the road will be moving much faster than you and will likely approach you much faster than you think.
- Instead of turning right on the road, it may be safer to enter the pavement and use a pedestrian crossing.

Pedestrians

It is also important to be aware of the safety of others when using a mobility scooter – you should always be aware of pedestrians. In crowded areas, you will need to drive more slowly than 4mph on the pavement, in order to give people time to move out of the way and to give you the chance to weave around them if you need to. It is also important to thoroughly check your surroundings before moving off or changing direction. Be aware of the amount of space your scooter takes up so you do not damage anything or harm anyone.

The laws surrounding mobility scooters

Who can drive a mobility scooter?

There are restrictions on who can drive a mobility scooter – you can only use one if you:

- have trouble walking because of an injury, physical disability or medical condition,
- are demonstrating the mobility scooter before selling it,
- are training a mobility scooter user, or
- are taking the scooter to or from a place where it will undergo maintenance or repairs.

In order to drive a class 3 mobility scooter, the law states that you must be 14 or over. There is no specific law regarding the age at which you can use a class 2 scooter.

Mobility scooters are not classed as motor vehicles, meaning that in order to drive one, you are not required to take a test or obtain a licence.



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Class 3 scooter requirements

By law, a class 3 scooter must have the following features:

- a maximum unladen weight of 150kg
- a maximum width of 0.85 metres
- a device to limit its speed to 4mph
- a maximum speed of 8mph
- an efficient braking system
- front and rear lights and reflectors
- direction indicators to operate as a hazard warning signal
- an audible horn
- a rear view mirror
- an orange flashing light if it is used on a dual carriageway

Useful information

The Department for Transport have published a mobility scooters user guide that contains a wealth of useful information. It can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/2XbSs0c>

The rules in the Highway Code relating to mobility scooters can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2NKCZ45>





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