

# A Guide to Scooters



# A Guide to Selecting a Scooter

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Assistive technology (AT) is a piece of equipment, device or system that provides people with practical solutions to everyday life activities. You can search our National Equipment Database [www.askned.com.au](http://www.askned.com.au) to view a range of products online.

If you can walk around your home environment, but have difficulty with walking longer distances, you may find a scooter useful. It is essential to undergo a thorough assessment to ensure you have the cognitive ability and necessary skills to operate a scooter safely.

Driving a scooter requires attention, coordination, and decision-making, which can place significant cognitive load on you. Without proper assessment, the risk of accidents and injuries increases, especially for individuals with conditions that affect scooter operation.

## Factors to consider

- Physical abilities including vision, hearing, thinking skills, balance, hand function and coordination.
- Cognitive abilities such as attention, decision-making and problem solving.
- Environment in which the scooter will be used, including transport needs.

## Types of scooters

### Three Wheeled

With two rear wheels and one central front wheel, these scooters offer a smaller turning circle and greater manoeuvrability in tight spaces. They often feature extended foot platforms for extra legroom and may be easier to steer for users with reduced upper arm strength. However, they are less stable, especially on uneven surfaces.

### Four Wheeled

These provide greater stability, making them ideal for outdoor use and uneven terrain. They have a wider turning radius and are less manoeuvrable.

### Small Portable Scooters

These scooters can be dismantled or folded for easy transport, including in a car boot or on a plane. Some parts may be heavy and difficult to lift. They typically have smaller, non-swivelling seats, which may not suit larger users.

Designed for flat surfaces like shopping centres, they are less stable on uneven ground.

### Medium to Large Scooters

These scooters are stable and ideal for outdoor use over long distances, with larger batteries and wheels for smoother rides on uneven terrain. They feature padded, comfortable seats with options like swivel seats, armrests, and headrests. They also support larger users due to higher load capacities.



## Features of scooters

### Seat and Backrest

- Most seats will be contoured and padded for comfort.
- Some have height, forward and backward adjustment.
- Seat will usually swivel 180 or 360 degrees for ease of transfers. The lever for adjustment can usually be placed on your preferred side.
- Armrests fold up to assist in transfers.

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## Ignition

- Some scooters can be turned on/off with a button, but security should be considered.
- Scooters have either a standard key or a jack plug. When removed, the scooter cannot be driven.
- To push the scooter, use the free-wheeling lever to disengage the brakes.

## Controls

- Most scooters have hand operated levers to control speed and direction. The levers are positioned on the central tiller which can be adjusted in position so that you can reach them comfortably.
- A lever operated by either your fingertips or thumbs will usually control the scooter's acceleration. This can be a single lever for forward and backwards (allowing operation with one hand), or a lever on both the right and left.
- A speed dial or touch button control allows the scooter speed to be altered to suit the environment and your skill level.

## Safety Features

- Most larger scooters include indicators, headlights and horns, anti-tip wheels, low battery lights, automatic speed reduction in reverse, reverse beepers and self-checking electronics.

## Options and Accessories

- Optional features: seat lever on preferred side, long-range batteries, high-backed seats, and electric seat rise.
- Accessories include canopy covers, rear view mirrors, oxygen carriers, shopping baskets, walking frame and stick holders, and safety flags.

## Considerations

### User and carer needs

Consider how long you will be seated in the scooter and how often you will use it. If you will be using every day or will be seated for long periods you will need to be comfortable. Trial whether you/carers can dismantle and lift the scooter in/out of the car. Features like a swivelling, locking seat or removable/flip-back armrests can make getting in and out of the scooter easier.

### Environment

Consider the distances to be travelled and the types of environments the scooter will be used in. Will it be suitable for shopping and local community use? Also, check if it meets local public transport requirements.

### Transport options

Some small scooters can be folded or dismantled for car transport but consider the weight of parts and available boot space. A scooter lift, trailer, or ramp may be needed, and it's important to consult with an Allied Health Professional and Vehicle Modification Agent for advice.

### Maintenance and support

Consider the warranty, servicing needs, and future repairs within your budget. Is local support available for maintenance and repairs?

### Professional Advice

It is recommended to seek professional advice to assess if a scooter is right for you. Occupational Therapists can offer assessments, trials, prescriptions, setup, and ongoing training.

# A Guide to Scooter Safety

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You will need good eyesight, hearing, strength, and balance to safely manoeuvre a scooter, as well as the ability to problem solve and make quick decisions. If you are unsure, see a GP or Occupational Therapist for advice.

## Scooter Safety Tips

### Plan ahead

Avoid busy areas and traffic times if you can.

### Choose the right speed

Scooters are allowed to travel up to 10 km per hour, ensure you adjust your speed to suit the environment.

### Getting around

Travel ramps and inclines straight on, not at an angle. Slow down when turning to avoid tipping. Keep feet on footpads.

### Use a safety flag

Alert other vehicles to your scooter's presence.

### Keys

Always turn off and remove the key before getting on or off to prevent accidental movement.

### Always check tyre pressures

Ensure tyres are properly inflated for stability and efficiency. Recommended pressure is marked on the tyres.

### Weight

Avoid overloading the basket, as it can affect steering and cause tipping. Distribute weight evenly.

### Seat

Ensure your seat is locked in place before driving. Lower seats offer better stability.

### Look and listen

- Use the horn when needed
- Install rear view mirrors
- Watch the path ahead for uneven surfaces and obstructions

- Be extra cautious in rough or crowded areas
- Understand your scooter's capabilities, including stopping distances on wet surfaces. Plan for battery life and endurance

### Storage and maintenance

- Store your scooter in a secure, covered area.
- Recharge the battery in a well-ventilated space and avoid undercharging.

### Scooter electronics

Avoid using the scooter in rain to protect the electronics. Keep food and drinks away from the control box and electrical parts and wipe off any moisture immediately if it gets wet.



# Scooters - Frequently Asked Questions

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## Do I need a license to drive a scooter?

Not in WA, however, refer to your state's transport authority for local rules. In WA scooter users are considered pedestrians and must not exceed 10 km/h. Travel on the footpath, when possible, give way to traffic, and use pedestrian crossings or traffic lights. Some states may require scooter registration with local authorities.

## Does my scooter need to be insured?

No, insurance is not required if the scooter's speed is limited to 10 km/h. However, it's recommended to inform your insurance company to clarify coverage for loss, theft, or damage, both at home and in public.

## Can I use my scooter on public transport?

Some scooters can be used on buses, trains and taxis that have disability access.

## WA guidelines (refer to your state's transport authority):

- The maximum space for a scooter on accessible transport is 800mm x 1300mm.
- For safety, the combined weight of the scooter and user must not exceed 300kg to use a boarding ramp.
- In a car or accessible taxi, you must sit in an appropriate seat with a seatbelt, while your scooter can be carried in the boot or cargo area.

## Can I take my scooter into shops or accessible toilets?

It is expected that scooter users will be able to walk short distances if required and can independently transfer on and off the scooter.

- Small shops may not have space for a scooter, so you may need to leave it outside.
- Accessible toilets are not designed for the size of a scooter. They are only accessible for wheelchairs.
- Lifts may not have adequate turning space, requiring scooters to reverse in/out.

## Can I drive my scooter at night time?

Lights should be fitted to use a scooter at night time, including:

- A white light at the front.
- A red light at the rear (red reflectors at the rear are also a good idea).
- Wearing bright or light-coloured clothing will help improve your visibility.

Find out more about a wide range of helpful products and devices on NED, our National Equipment Database at [askned.com.au](http://askned.com.au). Need help with NED? Call our helpline on 1300 885 886.

Our experienced health professionals can also assist in providing strategies and advice on finding and using the right product for you.

Call us on 9381 0600 or complete an appointment request form via our website at [www.indigo.org.au](http://www.indigo.org.au)

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