



Highway Code for Electric Scooter & Wheelchair Users

Information taken from the BHTA Get Wise Leaflet www.bhta.com

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Why should we have a Highway Code for Electric Scooters and Wheelchairs?

The idea comes from watching some of the silly things people do on such vehicles.

Which Highway Code category do wheelchair/scooter drivers come into?

The category of road users in the Highway Code is pedestrians, cyclists, motor cyclists and motorists. As a wheelchair/scooter user you do not really fit any of these categories. You may however partly fit any of them.

Road or Footpath

Some wheelchairs/scooters can only be driven safely on the footpath, except for the crossing roads. Others are designed so that they can be safely driven on the road. To drive safely on the road it is advisable to have a vehicle capable of doing 6/8 miles an hour (Class 3), equipped with headlights, rear lights, flashing indicators and a horn. Even with all this you may not use dual carriageways unless you have an additional flashing beacon light and you are not permitted to use bus lanes or cycle tracks.

Under No circumstances is it permissible for scooters or wheelchairs to be driven on Motorways.

General points to consider before buying your vehicle

Make sure you are able and fit to use it safely

It is usually possible to get advice through your local social services or Occupational Therapy department. If you require an independent Occupational Therapist Assessment (a charge will be made for this) please email: sales@bettermobility.co.uk

You need to be able to:

-  SEE well enough to be safe
-  Adequately control your vehicle and do all the possible manoeuvres, such as reversing, climbing and descending a kerb and turning safely.
-  Cross busy roads. This is not as easy on a scooter/wheelchair as on foot.
-  Know the rules of safety and consideration for yourself and other people.

Insurance

At present there is no overall legal obligation to take out insurance, though some finance companies insist on it. Nevertheless it is a very good idea to make sure you are covered for fire and theft, accidental damage and malicious damage, and THIRD PARTY DAMAGES – just in case.

Comfort and Safety

Make sure the vehicle is the right one for you. Get advice when choosing and watch for things like seat and handle positions and height. It is important you are comfortable and in full control of your vehicle. The reason for choosing 3 or 4 Wheeled vehicles are varied and depend on many factors such as your weight, size and height, weight of chair for lifting and descending kerbs and when turning, as if this is not done carefully the scooter will tip. (Or just go that little bit further and go down a dropped kerb!).

Range



The Manufacturers literature will tell you the range of your vehicle BUT REMEMBER this is a guide only. Generally they tell you the range if driven on the level on a smooth surface and when the batteries are NEW. Few people would want to drive round a smooth car park for 20-25 miles! Rough surfaces, hills, gradients, cold weather, kerbs and carrying a load of shopping will all reduce the distance you can do without charging your batteries. Recharge your batteries according to the Manufacturers instructions.

Do not be too ambitious where distance is concerned.

Consider investing in a mobile phone

Some services providers will provide a special low rate (PAY AS YOU GO) for occasional users who need the phone for emergencies. (I once sat, broken down, in a busy subway, with people passing all round me, for nearly one hour before someone was willing to go and phone the AA for me! Had I had a mobile phone it would have been much easier.)

Speed Limits

On the footpath the limit is 4mph (6.4kph) whatever capacity of your vehicle. On the road it is 8mph (12.6kph). If driving a Class 3 vehicle it must be switched to the 4mph mode when used on footpaths.

Carrying Loads

Do not overload. It may make the vehicle unstable and reduce its range. Place heavy loads inboard –in the middle –not behind the back wheel which can lighten the steering or can cause the front end to lift off the road on a bump, and not at the front which might make the steering heavy.

Watch your brakes

Never try to drive, or even sit on your vehicle while it is in "Free Wheel". The electronic brake will be out of action and the vehicle could run away with you.

Maintenance



Do get your vehicle serviced regularly according to the Manufacturers guide.

Tyres

Keep tyres at the pressure recommended by the Manufacturer. They will last longer and be safer. Replace when they become worn.

Lights

Check bulbs regularly and replace when needed, use your lights frequently, at dusk onwards, on a dull or rainy day.

Sensible guidelines for safety

When using the footpath – just because you are on the footpath or pedestrian precinct does not make you the pedestrian. If you are on a motorised vehicle you are no longer a pedestrian.

Remember pedestrians always have the right of way!
Many people on foot will be kind and helpful to the drivers of a wheelchair/scooter. But not everyone!

In a crowded precinct or market area, or footpath, it is your responsibility to ensure you do not run into anyone or do any harm with your vehicle. While many people will make way for you, you cannot expect **everyone** to do so.

Some will appear to not even realise you are there. They will climb around and even over your vehicle than allow you room to move.

Do not yield to the temptation to ram them!

When climbing or descending kerbs – Always approach at the right angles, with your front wheels straight on to the kerb. In some Powerchairs it is necessary to descend high kerbs backwards. Do not try to climb kerbs or descend kerbs higher than the manufacturer recommends. Move carefully, to avoid traumatic bumps – to yourself or to your vehicle.



Watch out for

- 🚫 **Children** – They may well run in front of you without warning. You may only be moving very slowly but you could still injure a child.
- 🚫 **Elderly People** – They may be unable to quickly move aside to let you pass. **Give way to them.**
- 🚫 **Disabled people on foot** – They too maybe unable to dodge you.
- 🚫 **People with visual problems or impaired hearing** – Give them space and time.
- 🚫 **Other motorised vehicle users** – You may be doing the right things. This does not guarantee they will do likewise.

When you need help

You may need to ask people to open doors for you. I have found that most people are willing to help, if asked politely. Don't struggle to do the impossible, or even the very difficult things when people around who would help if asked.

Driving inside shops and buildings

This is where you have the advantage over car users! Not many supermarkets would welcome a car driving round their store. But most bigger shops even some quite small ones, are accessible to wheelchairs and scooters. Once inside the store it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to drive safely and not to damage the fittings, the stock, or hurt the shoppers or store workers. You may need to ask for help. Again in most cases people are willing if asked properly. Don't risk pulling down a whole display to reach the top shelf.

ASK FOR HELP

Speed in shops and buildings – reduce it!

It is a good idea to set the speed control to a lower level to avoid an accident. Be especially careful if you need to reverse, that your way is clear of shop fittings and people. Three wheeled scooters with their manoeuvrability and lightness of steering are more suited to shopping.



On the Road

Remember you are not driving a car, but a very small and slow vehicle, which is therefore more vulnerable.

If it is possible, use the footpath. It is wise to avoid using the roads, particularly busy ones.

When driving your vehicle on the road

Remember although this is legal for all vehicles it is not always safe or sensible to do so. You are responsible for your own safety and that of other road users. The normal rules of the road apply – but modified.

You must observe the law about:

- 🔗 Driving on the left side of the road – **Never drive against the traffic**
- 🔗 One way street – **Never drive against the traffic.**
- 🔗 Give way where cars would give way (details in the Highway Code)
- 🔗 Obeying traffic lights and all other road signals and instructions
- 🔗 Give way to pedestrians on crossings.

But always remember your vehicle is not a car and is small and vulnerable.

If you need to turn right across traffic, try to get on to the footpath before the turn and then use a safe pedestrian crossing or traffic light crossing control. Only try to turn right if you are completely sure it is safe to do so. Do not rely only on your mirror. It may give a false impression of distance. Always give a clear indication of intention to turn left or right.

Remember - The car you can see when you look behind may appear a long way away, but it is almost certainly moving faster than you are - often deceptively so. It could well be upon you before you complete your manoeuvre. And it may not be able to stop in time.



When passing a parked vehicle – take great care you are not moving into the path of a fast moving vehicle coming behind you, or towards you.

Always signal your intention to pull out.

In the event of a difficult or dangerous situation – **Use your hazard lights** –

Always remember, the scooter is only ever as safe as the individual using it.