

Things to consider when choosing a Mobility Scooter

It is important that before buying a mobility scooter (new or used) you are happy that it meets all of your requirements as it is a big financial commitment. I have produced below a simple guide of the main types of mobility scooters available and the pro's and cons to consider. You need reasonable upper body strength and balance to manage a scooter, otherwise a powered wheelchair might be more suitable.

What size do I need?

Mobility scooters are generally classed either by power, range and size.

You have the "boot" type scooters, which are small 4mph scooters that generally come apart into four or five pieces for easy storage and transportation. They have a limited range and can give a firm ride (due to their solid tyres) and have a lower weight limit for riders. Perfect for shopping centres and smooth paths.

Some of these scooters fold up themselves via a switch or remote control, so that it's ready to be transported in one piece. However, these can be heavy so you need to ensure that you have the physical strength to lift these into your car.

Then there are "mid" size scooters. These can be either 4mph or 8mph and generally have larger wheels, giving better ground clearance. Some have independent suspension, bigger, more comfortable seats and a greater range. Some are able to be dismantled for storage and transport, but each individual part can be heavy so you need to check that you are capable of lifting these individual parts. Some may also have full front and rear lights and indicators for safety.

Finally, there are the "large" 8mph range of mobility scooters. With the largest wheels and tyres of all, capable of handling most types of terrain (grass, gravel, pavements and roads) and better for the larger rider due to higher weight carrying capacity. Many of these are Class 3 and can be used on the road. These seats are, as a rule, height adjustable and allow forward /backward adjustment so that the rider can reach the controls easily and comfortably. Again, these typically have full front and rear suspension and will have full front and rear lights and indicators for safety.

How many wheels?

Three wheelers are good for manoeuvrability, have a much smaller turning circle, but are not as stable as a four-wheel scooter. Four wheeled scooters give you better stability with better weight distribution. The larger the scooter, the better the stability and ground clearance. There are some five wheeled mobility scooters available, which are in essence a

three-wheeler with 2 front stabiliser wheels and these offer a combination of benefits of both.

There are a number of larger, faster mobility "trike style" three-wheelers coming into the market. However, whilst these are well constructed and relatively good value for money in my opinion, you need to consider that at the moment, parts for these are not easily available and you may have to rely on support from the manufacturer. This is fine whilst under warranty, but once your warranty has expired, repairs can often be expensive and delays can be experienced.

What else do I need to consider?

Tiller

The tiller is steering mechanism and drive controls. Most allow adjustment to enable the best driving position to be achieved.

Tyres

Pneumatic tyres can puncture and need regular pressure checks but they are smoother and more comfortable for the user than solid wheels. Puncture proofing solution can be injected,

reducing the chances of punctures (which is a service I have provided for a few years now, with great success).

Solid tyres do not need maintenance like pneumatic tyres and might also give better manoeuvrability on certain surfaces. Depending on the brand, these can give a firm ride (the brand I use gets good feedback)

Batteries

As the size of the scooter increases, as will the battery size and therefore running costs. Batteries for the smaller "boot" scooters can be supplied and fitted from £75 with batteries for the "large" scooters, from £290 supplied and fitted (or even more). This is something that needs to be considered as batteries usually last 12-15 months and aside from repairs, is the main cost in running a mobility scooter.

Hopefully the above overview will help you decide what type of mobility scooter is right for you. If you have any specific questions about any of the features, please contact me and I will try to help. I usually have a range of mobility scooters in my workshop so, if you are unsure as to what size is best for you, I am more than happy for you to visit me (by arrangement) to try out the various sizes to help make your decision.

Regards

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