



READY TO RIDE

Keeping safe on your mobility scooter



NZ Transport Agency

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NZ Transport Agency

If you have further queries, call our
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This publication is also available on
NZ Transport Agency's website at
www.nzta.govt.nz



A mobility scooter can help you get around safely if you can't drive or choose not to drive. If the local shops, library or church are too far to walk, a scooter could get you there.

If you use a scooter, or you're thinking about getting one in the future, this booklet is for you. It has information on:

- **safely using a scooter**
- **how the law affects scooter users**
- **how to look after your scooter.**

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Is a scooter right for you?

Before you buy a scooter, you should make sure you have the skills to use it safely. Ask yourself these questions.

- Can I judge distances well?
- Do I have good eyesight (with or without glasses)?
- Do I react quickly when something unexpected happens?
- Can I hear well (with or without a hearing aid)?
- Can I look from left to right, and back from right to left, without any problems?
- Am I able to handle a motorised vehicle safely?

It's a good idea to check with your doctor before you buy a scooter. If you've lost your driver licence because of eyesight or hearing problems, you probably shouldn't use a scooter. And if you answered 'no' to any of the questions above, you should definitely check with your doctor first.



Choosing a scooter

Before you buy a scooter, it pays to do some research. Shop around until you find one that suits your needs.

- Check how heavy it is.
- Can you steer it easily?
- Can you comfortably handle the controls?
- Does it have enough power to do the trips you want to use it for?
- Can you get parts for it?
- Where will you get it serviced?



What about the law?

You don't need a licence to use a scooter. And your scooter doesn't need a warrant of fitness or registration.

However, the law says you must do the following things.

- You must ride your scooter in a careful and considerate way.
- You must ride it on the footpath whenever possible.
- If there's no footpath, you must keep close to the side of the road.
- You must travel on the footpath at a speed that is safe for other people.
- You must not ride (or let anyone else ride) in a way that could cause injury to you or others.
- You must not let anyone else stand or sit on your scooter while you're using it.
- If you are involved in a crash, you must stop to see if anyone is hurt. You must help anyone who is hurt. And you must report the crash to the police within 24 hours.

You shouldn't ride your scooter if you could be affected by:

- alcohol
- drugs
- any medication you are taking.

If you're taking any medication, it's important to talk with your doctor or pharmacist about how your driving may be affected. For more information about the effects of medication on driving, visit www.nzta.govt.nz/medication

What does 'riding considerately' mean?

The law says you must ride your scooter in a 'considerate' way. This means that you must watch out for other people using the road or footpath and think about their safety. For example:

- Don't travel faster than other people around you. This is especially important if you're using your scooter in a crowded place. On a busy footpath, people may not be able to get out of your way easily.
- Watch out for children. They might suddenly run out in front of you.
- If you're travelling slowly, keep well to the left so that others can get past.
- Watch out for elderly people, and people who may not be able to see or hear you easily. If you use a horn, try not to startle other pedestrians.
- If you stop to talk to someone, turn off the controls, otherwise your scooter could be accidentally knocked forward, and you could hit someone.

What happens if you break the law?

- You could be fined if you ride your scooter carelessly, inconsiderately or at a dangerous speed. The fine may be higher if you do any of these things more than once.
- If you cause a crash where someone is killed or hurt, you could be charged with 'careless or inconsiderate use of a motor vehicle'. You could face a severe fine or even a prison sentence.

For more information about how the law affects people who use scooters:

- call 0800 822 422
- visit www.nzta.govt.nz
- write to Private Bag 6995, Wellington 6141.



Safety tips

Getting ready to ride

- Plan your route. The law says you must use the footpath if possible. If you have to ride on the road, see page 10 for guidelines.
 - Make sure you can carry things safely. Use a carry bag, and don't carry anything on your lap.
 - Make sure your battery is fully charged.
 - Know who to call if something goes wrong with your scooter while you're out.
-

Handling your scooter

- Don't drive up or down steep slopes.
 - Keep your scooter in gear when on a slope – not in neutral (out of gear).
 - Be extra careful when turning. Slow down when you're turning on sharp corners or slopes.
 - Be careful when you're driving on a rough or uneven surface. Slow down, and try not to drive over holes or cracks in the footpath.
 - If you have to drive over a kerb, approach it head-on, not at an angle.
-

See and be seen

- Your scooter is closer to the ground than a pedestrian or motor vehicle, so it may be hard for drivers to see you. If possible, fit a brightly coloured flag to your scooter. The flag should be at least one and a half metres off the ground.
- Wear brightly coloured clothes to make it easier for drivers to see you.
- If your scooter has indicators, use them to show which way you're going to turn.
- If you need glasses for long-distance vision, you should wear them when you drive your scooter. Sunglasses may help you see more clearly when the sun is low in the sky. You might also need glasses or goggles to keep dirt and dust out of your eyes in strong winds.

- A rear-view mirror helps you to see anything coming up behind you. But you should also check by looking over your shoulder before you change direction.
- Listen and watch for vehicles coming out of driveways. If you're not sure, wait till the way is clear.
- If you use a hearing aid, you should always wear it when riding a scooter.

Cross with care

- Always carefully check the way is clear before crossing the road.
- Try to cross at a pedestrian crossing or at an intersection that has stop or give way signs. If this isn't possible, choose the shortest way to cross the road. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- At an intersection or roundabout, cross the same way a pedestrian would (from footpath to footpath). If the intersection or roundabout is very busy, you could consider taking an easier route.
- Never cross at a place where you can't see traffic coming towards you (such as on a hill, at a bend in the road, or where parked cars block your view).
- Before you start to cross, always check that you'll be able to get back onto the footpath on the other side without having to drive over the kerb.

Distractions

Cellphones, and other hand-held devices such as ipads, can be very distracting. Don't use them unless your scooter has come to a complete stop.

Parking

- Before you get off your scooter, take your hand off the power control and remove the key. Don't forget to take the key with you!
- Make sure you park your scooter in a place where it is out of the way of other people.

Using the road safely

The law says you must ride your scooter on the footpath whenever possible. If there's no footpath, and you have to use the road, here are some guidelines to help keep you safe.

- Always travel on the left-hand side of the road.
- Keep as close to the edge of the road as you can.
- Obey all traffic signs and signals, and give way to pedestrians who are crossing the road.
- Look out for children – they may not have the skills to deal with traffic safely.
- Remember that your scooter is much less powerful than other vehicles on the road. It may also be harder to see.
- Look out for anything in your way, such as drains, holes in the road and parked cars.
- If you're passing a parked car, watch out for any traffic coming up behind you. Don't assume the driver of the parked car has seen you. They could suddenly pull out without indicating, or they could open a door when you're passing.
- If you have indicators, use them. If not, use hand signals.
- If you need to ride on the road regularly, consider getting your scooter fitted with:
 - › indicators
 - › lights
 - › a horn
 - › reversing beepers
 - › warning flags
 - › rear-vision mirrors.



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Transporting your scooter

- City buses can't carry scooters as the scooters are too heavy.
- Some taxi companies can carry scooters. Check before booking the taxi.
- Some trains can carry scooters. It's best to ring ahead and check as there may be limits, such as the size of your scooter, the time of day you can travel with it and the help that station staff can provide.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

When using your scooter:

- be courteous to others
- plan your route
- make sure you can see and be seen
- ride on the footpath when you can.





Looking after your scooter

Batteries

Scooters use different kinds of batteries. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to recharge your scooter's batteries.

If your scooter has a 'wet-type' battery, you'll also need to check the battery acid levels every two weeks.

Tyres

You should check your tyre pressure at your local garage every three months. If your tyres are under-inflated:

- you're more likely to get a puncture
 - your scooter will use more power
 - you won't be able to travel as far on a single battery charge.
-

Servicing your scooter

Your scooter should have a general check-up every six months. Take it to a qualified service technician.

Storing your scooter

- If possible, store your scooter in a garage or another secure place.
- If you're not going to use your scooter for more than a month, make sure the battery is fully charged.
- If you're going away, arrange for someone to recharge the batteries every two weeks.

If there's a problem

You should stop using your scooter if:

- you find that you're getting confused when riding it
- you start to forget where you're going
- you have problems with your vision and find it hard to see things.

If any of these things happen, you should see your doctor before using your scooter again.

If your doctor advises you to stop using your mobility scooter, you could contact:

- your nearest branch of Age Concern
- your local Citizen's Advice Bureau
- your nearest CCS Disability Action office.

They may be able to help you work out other ways of getting around safely.

The NZ Transport Agency's booklet *The road ahead: transport options for seniors* has more information on ways to get around after you give up driving. To get a copy:

- ring 0800 822 422
- email info@nzta.govt.nz
- www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/keeping-moving/The-Road-Ahead-Transport-Options-for-Seniors.pdf
- write to Private Bag 6995, Wellington 6141.







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