

# CHOOSING YOUR WHEELCHAIR

HELP FROM THE

# MOBILITY EXPERTS

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This guide covers everything there is to know about wheelchairs, and choosing the correct chair can become a little overwhelming.

However, the friendly WOW! Mobility & Rehab team can assist you with making these decisions more manageable.

Visit us instore 4/160 Brisbane Rd, Booval or call (07) 3282 5200

**WOW!**  
**MOBILITY**  
Your local mobility experts

# CHOOSING YOUR WHEELCHAIR WITH HELP FROM THE MOBILITY EXPERTS

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This guide covers everything there is to know about wheelchairs, and choosing the correct chair can become a little overwhelming. However, the friendly WOW! Mobility & Rehab team can assist you with making these decisions more manageable with just a phone call at 3282 5200 or email us at [admin@wowmobility.com.au](mailto:admin@wowmobility.com.au)



## KNOW YOUR SPECIFICATIONS

You must know your specs when purchasing a wheelchair. This way, you can ensure you have value for money and are satisfied with your purchase.



## AT HOME

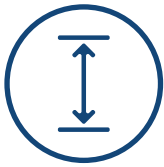
You must look where your chair needs to go and measure doorways and rises in your floor levels. Measuring the door width is crucial in picking the correct wheelchair, as depending on the age of your house, not all door widths are equal. Once you have the width of the narrowest doorway you need to go through, you can measure the width of the chair you purchase, knowing you will not restrict yourself.



## WEIGHT

What is your weight - this is important to ensure that you get a wheelchair that will last. People who buy a chair that isn't equipped for their weight can put too much stress on the structure and purchase another chair sooner rather than getting the expected life out of the wheelchair. Consider the baggage you will be adding to the chair and add a couple of kilos.





## HEIGHT

Measuring between the floor to the back of your knees helps to determine how high you will need the chair to ensure you can comfortably get out without putting too much strain on your arms (if the seat is too low) or risking a fall (if the seat is too high). Sometimes a purpose-designed cushion can help raise the height of the chair if you are tall.



## SEAT

Know your seat size - we recommend that you find a seat with arms that you are comfortable in at home and measure the sitting area and between the arms.

When it comes to wheelchair seat sizes, measurements are in inches - however, the friendly team at WOW! can assist with converting this measurement if you are unsure of the conversion. Ensuring you have this measurement from home helps to guarantee you get the right size. So often, people sit in a wheelchair thinking that it is comfortable for the short time they are trialling it in the store, only to find that sitting for extended periods becomes uncomfortable. So find your favourite chair you sit on the most and measure it up before picking the seat size.



## TILT-IN-SPACE

This type of chair is best for those with poor postural or head control. They help to facilitate feeding and respiratory function, reduce pressure beneath the pelvis and improve visual alignment by holding the head upright.

**These types of wheelchairs are often speciality chairs. The team at WOW! can liaise with your allied health professional to meet your specifications.**



## SELF PROPELLED OR TRANSIT

A self-propelled wheelchair has big rear wheels and enables users to push themselves around using their arms and hands on the push ring. A larger wheel diameter will likely roll further with each push, sometimes making it easier for the person pushing the chair and better for traction on uneven ground. However, the downside is that when it comes to manoeuvrability, where the larger wheel can make it challenging to navigate very tight spaces.

The transit wheelchair has smaller wheels and requires someone else to move the chair for the user.



## TYRES

Pneumatic tyres require maintenance, and you will need to inflate the tyres, which can be problematic for some users who can't access the air or the valves. Some wheelchairs come standard with solid tyres.

If you use your chair only sometimes, it is best to talk to the WOW! Team about getting solid tyres fitted, so you won't be caught with a flat when you go to pull it out of storage to use it. However, pneumatic tyres are helpful if you travel over rough surfaces as they can offer shock absorption and a more comfortable ride. Solid tyres are great for those using the chair at home, shopping centres, or hospitals (flat surfaces).

WOW! Mobility & Rehab recommends that if you are purchasing a wheelchair with pneumatic tyres, you consider buying a backup tube to have on hand should you wake up with a flat tyre.



## WEIGHT OF THE CHAIR

It would be best if you considered who is lifting the chair in and out of the car. If a carer belongs to an organisation, they may have a safe lifting weight limit, so it may be best to contact them for this information. You should also consider this if it is a personal carer.



## TRANSPORTING THE CHAIR

If you need to travel with your chair, it is crucial to consider the space you have to place the wheelchair, such as the boot or back seat area. Self propelled wheelchairs allow the removal of the rear wheels for more accessible storage and reduce the footprint.



## ARMRESTS

Armrests can help balance and contain the user in the wheelchair when reaching or when picking things up from the floor. They can also provide protection and support for the wrists and elbows.

You can purchase a wheelchair with removable armrests and sides; this is convenient when transferring a person smoothly from the chair into a bed or car. If armrests are not needed for support or function, a wheelchair user may choose to omit armrests. If they are not going to be used and are not required, there is no reason to add additional weight to the chair, so choose a chair in which the armrests are removable.

Armrests can also be height adjustable. The armrest height should be tall enough to provide adequate support through the user's elbows and forearms without forcing the shoulders into elevation.

The size of the armrest needs to be considered; the smaller length allows users to pull up closer to a desk or table, whereas a full-length arm pad provides more support.

Accessories can be attached to the armrests, such as a tray or add-on devices, such as communication or positioning accessories, and armrest gutters are available for some models. In addition, gel pads can be attached to certain wheelchair armrests to assist in further safety and distribute pressure to help avoid pressure-related problems.



## FOOTRESTS/FOOTPLATES

Footrests provide a sturdy platform to rest the feet while in use and help maintain a supported seating position.

Footrests can be removable and are usually adjustable to the length required for comfort. In addition, footplates can come with straps to help prevent the feet from slipping.

Knowing whether you need to use an elevating leg rest with your chair can be significant. This leg rest allows the positioning of the leg at different angles and offers more support for those that need it. Unfortunately, this type of attachment is not necessarily a universal fit, and some brands of wheelchairs do not provide this as an option.

For those needing a stump support, it is vital to know the length required, such as below the knee or above the knee, to get the most comfort. Usually cushioned, the pad provides a surface for the stump to rest. Most are height and length adjustable but will depend on the wheelchair purchased as to the options available.

Accessories are available for footrests, including footplate protectors made of gel and foam to offer skin protection that fits easily over the existing footplates already on the wheelchair.



## BRAKES

Wheelchair brakes are critical outdoors, on inclines, vehicles, lift platforms, and during transfers into and out of the wheelchair. They should hold the chair without slipping. Wheelchair occupants should be able to operate the brakes when physically able easily.

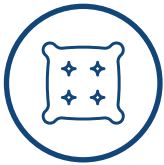
Some wheelchairs are equipped with additional attendant-operated brake levers; these can be used to lock the brakes or used to slow the wheelchair whilst in motion down steep inclines.



## ANTI-TIPPERS

Anti-Tippers are a form of wheelchair stabiliser that prevent the chair from flipping over backwards under certain circumstances. Some have adjustable height, which changes how far back they allow the wheelchair to tip.

Most wheelchairs come with tip assistance integrated into the frame, which assists the person pushing the chair in lifting the front to tackle kerbs or steps.



## CUSHIONS

If you need extended time in your wheelchair, a user should consider a cushion to assist with pressure care. Various materials are used for wheelchair cushions, including gel, memory foam, or even air. There is a cushion to fit every need.



## ACCESSORIES

Many accessories can help users customise their wheelchairs to suit their needs better. However, it is always best to check whether these are compatible with or available for the chair you purchase.

**WHEELCHAIR TRAY** - provides a surface for various activities, including eating, drinking, reading or writing. A tray can minimise the need to transfer the user to another chair.

**BELTS** - a safety belt helps maintain someone's safety when being pushed in a wheelchair. A pelvic lap belt helps maintain the correct sitting position in the wheelchair and provides specific postural support in combination with other harnesses.

**IV POLE** - this support pole, for intravenous use, slides onto a wheelchair frame. Ideal for users who frequently visit the hospital for injection treatments.

**OXYGEN BOTTLE CARRIERS** - are made from various materials and in different sizes for those who require oxygen while using a wheelchair.

Some bags can be easily attached to the back of the chair using straps or metal cage structures that clamp onto the frame of the wheelchair.

**TRANSFER BOARD** - also known as sliding boards or sally boards, are flat boards made of wood or plastic. The board acts as a bridge to allow individuals to move from one seated surface to another, such as from a wheelchair to a bed. Transferring in this fashion enables the user to proceed with small gradual movements versus one significant motion.



## RAMPS

WOW! Mobility & Rehab can supply a range of portable, semi-permanent, permanent, custom-designed wheelchair access ramps.

Portable ramps can be adapted to various situations and can fold, making the unit transportable and convenient to store. These ramps are great for either someone who is only in a wheelchair temporarily while recovering and not needing something permanent or for taking in a car to those not-so-accessible places when travelling.

Threshold ramps are another option. Usually made of recycled tyres, they are durable, long-lasting, and suitable for various uses. In addition, the ramps can be custom-made for the home and built to specific gradients depending on the height required to traverse.



## MAINTENANCE

Looking after your wheelchair is important. The team at WOW! can help with regular service or assist you if your chair needs repairing. The team at WOW! Mobility & Rehab suggest you put together a fix-it kit comprising a tube (should you have pneumatic tyres) or a spare tyre (should you have solids) and the tools that come with your chair, including the manual.





## TRAVELLING WITH YOUR WHEELCHAIR ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

If you plan on regularly using public transport and travelling with your wheelchair, you should consider the recommended specifications.

Regarding wheelchair-accessible taxis, there are specific requirements, and it is best to check with the taxi operator. The space for wheelchairs and mobility scooters in maxi taxis is usually 130cm by 80cm, with a door height of 140cm. As a guide, the maximum width of the mobility aid is suggested to be 75cm, the maximum height 130cm and the top combined weight of the mobility aid and operator 300kg.

In Queensland, priority seating for train travellers using a wheelchair or mobility aid is just inside the train's doors. Some Queensland Rail stations have slightly higher or lower platforms than the train entry. If you need a portable ramp or help to board or disembark, wait at the assisted boarding point. Assisted boarding points are indicated on the platform by a white wheelchair on a blue background and by a mat with a raised, tactile surface.

Most buses on the Translink network have low floors or ramp systems. Stations along busways (roads dedicated to buses) have lifts, ramps and pathways.

If travelling by plane, you should book your flights in advance as some airlines limit how many wheelchairs they will allow on a flight. Each airline has different rulings, so you may need to speak directly to them to clarify before booking the ticket.

**After reading this, we hope that you have a better understanding of how to choose the correct wheelchair for your situation and to give the user greater mobility. Of course, the WOW! Mobility & Rehab team are highly trained and can offer you any assistance you may require.**





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