

Help choosing the right scooter for you.

Components

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Base Plate

The base plate is basically the body of the scooter and is made of steel, aluminium or a composite frame. It supports the feet and batteries. Depending on size, ground clearance and turning circle the base plate determines whether the scooter is for indoor or outdoor use.

The comfort and safety of the user are largely dictated by the design of the base plate. You need to make sure that the user can reach and use the controls while being comfortable. Some designs can be adjusted so as to be extended for longer legs. This extension will also mean a larger turning circle.

You need to try a scooter before buying it in order to determine its stability. Some scooters have modular base plates which allow them to be converted from a three to four wheeled model, or from indoor to outdoor use.

Tiller

The tiller is the control centre for the scooter - steering mechanism and drive controls. As well as the standard options for the tiller there are other control possibilities such as thumb levers, loop handles and joysticks.

Thumb levers are very common and will allow one thumb to go forwards and one to go backwards. They are touch sensitive which means that the pressure you apply will govern your speed. This kind of control requires quite a lot of dexterity.

Some manufacturers will design a tiller and adjust to the user's needs for easier control and extra comfort.

Tiller steering for long periods can be quite tiring - which is why it is important to make sure that the seating position is optimised to give good access to the controls without straining.

Anybody with reduced upper body strength and/or poor balance might consider a powered wheelchair instead.

Wheels

Scooter wheels are usually 6, 8 or 10 inches in diameter. The scooter's ability to overcome obstacles depends on the size of the wheels. They can be all of the same size or larger at the back. Quite often front wheel drive scooters for indoor use will have smaller wheels. The scooter will be more stable and able to climb kerbs more easily.

The number of wheels is an important consideration - four wheeled scooters have more stability than three wheelers for turning and tackling kerbs, but are not as manoeuvrable.

Outdoor scooters tend to be rear wheel drive, which provides more power and better grip on slippery ground. This is because the user's weight is directly above the wheels.

You can have a free-wheel facility which allows the scooter to be pushed manually in case of emergency. However, this is very difficult as the scooter is heavy.

Tyres

- **Pneumatic tyres** can puncture and need regular pressure checks but they are smoother and more comfortable for the user than solid wheels.
- **Solid tyres** do not need maintenance like pneumatic tyres and might also give better manoeuvrability on certain surfaces.
- **Deep tread tyres** give better grip and stability on kerbs, slopes and other difficult terrains.

Seats

The seats are usually moulded plastic or contoured padding, with lift up armrests. It is important to make sure that the scooter seat gives enough support, so that the user is not constantly having to adjust their balance. Also to ensure that the seat is not too narrow, so that it causes discomfort, nor too wide, so that the user does not feel properly secure. The added bulk of coats or jackets must be taken into consideration, if the scooter is for outdoor use.

To improve comfort some seats are height adjustable, to provide a better seating position. There are also designs with a powered, elevating seat to enable the user to reach higher areas. However, with these models, when the user is elevated their feet will not be in contact with any support and so they will not be as stable. This position also increases pressure on the thighs, and therefore should not be used for too long.

It is a good idea to check if the scooter seat can be rotated (90° - 360°) and if so

whether this can be done by the user while sitting on it - this could make it much easier to get on and off.

It is a good idea to have forward and/or backward adjusting seats so that the user can reach the controls easily and comfortably.

Finally on particular models, it is possible to remove the entire seat in order to facilitate transportation.