



**Motability**

The leading car scheme for disabled people



Your guide to  
**Wheelchair  
Accessible  
Vehicles**

If you've got a spare 15 minutes and would like a little extra help on where to start, why not watch 'A steer in the right direction', our DVD that looks at the ins and outs of choosing a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle?

This short film, presented by Lara Masters, follows three customers on their journey to find the right WAV to lease through Motability. Each of the families takes two WAVs out on the road to help them discover the right solution for them. Along the way we also look at the important things you should think about when choosing a WAV, such as wheelchair access, space for the wheelchair user, passenger and luggage, ride experience and, of course, the importance of a test drive.

**Watch and enjoy!**

# Contents

Hello, and welcome to **Motability**! This guide introduces you to the world of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) and includes useful advice on looking at WAVs, taking test drives and even placing an order.

On the left of this page you'll also find a copy of 'A steer in the right direction', our DVD that looks at the ins and outs of choosing a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle.

To look at our current WAV prices, visit **[motability.co.uk](https://www.motability.co.uk)**

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# What is a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle?

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles, or WAVs as we call them, are vehicles that have been converted so that wheelchair users can travel while remaining in their wheelchair, either as a passenger or driver. The size, shape and design of the WAV will vary depending on the original vehicle used for the conversion and the specialist company that has converted the vehicle, but all WAVs have easy access and safe travelling for the wheelchair user in common.

## Is a WAV right for me?

Looking for a new car can be exciting, and when it comes to choosing a WAV there's plenty to think about. If you are no longer able to transfer from your wheelchair to a standard car seat, or if your carer is no longer able to lift you, a WAV could make travelling a lot easier. However, you'll need to weigh up the benefits and difficulties when selecting a WAV or adapted car over a standard car as a WAV may not be the right choice for everyone.

A WAV is just one of many options available to you on the Motability Scheme. So, if you are able to transfer out of your wheelchair without too much trouble or discomfort, and you can stow your wheelchair, you may be better off with a standard car fitted with adaptations. Adaptations such as a person hoist or swivel seat could help with improving your access to a car. There are also a wide range of adaptations available to help you store your wheelchair or scooter.

For more information visit our website at [motability.co.uk](https://www.motability.co.uk) where you can see film clips of how some of the more popular adaptations work, download our dedicated adaptations guide and find contact details for adaptation installers in your area.

## How do I get a WAV through Motability?

Anybody who receives the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance, or the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement, and has at least 12 months of the award remaining can lease a car or WAV through Motability, you simply exchange your allowance for the vehicle of your choice. You can lease a WAV through two different routes; either a brand new WAV of your choice, or by selecting a Nearly New WAV that we have in stock - both options include the worry-free package and all you need to do is select the one best suited to you and your needs.

Leasing a WAV through Motability will mean that we take all of your Higher Rate Mobility allowance for the duration of the lease, including any increases. In addition, WAVs will require an Advance Payment to cover the cost of the lease. This is the non-refundable amount payable up front to your WAV converter in addition to your weekly mobility allowance. The Advance Payment amount varies across the range of WAVs. For the latest pricing check online at [motability.co.uk](https://www.motability.co.uk).

## Two ways to lease a WAV

Motability offers both new and Nearly New WAVs all of which come with our worry-free lease package that has been designed to take care of all the costs and hassle included in running a vehicle, and includes:

- Insurance, servicing and maintenance
- Full RAC breakdown assistance
- Annual car tax
- Tyre and windscreen replacement
- You can nominate up to two drivers, and pay a little extra for a third.



## What's the difference?

	<b>New WAV</b>	<b>Nearly New WAV</b>
<b>Lease length</b>	5 years	3 years
<b>Mileage allowance</b>	100,000	60,000
<b>Vehicle Age</b>	brand new	less than two and a half years old
<b>Delivery Times</b>	on average 12-16 weeks	a few weeks or less
<b>Advance Payment</b>	depends on the WAV	depends on the WAV but can be significantly less than the equivalent new WAV

Some customers prefer our Nearly New WAVs due to the shorter lease length and the quicker delivery times. However, availability will vary across each Motability WAV converter, and as a result there may not be the right solution available for your personal needs.

To help you decide whether a Nearly New WAV might be right for you, here's a few things to think about:

#### A Nearly New WAV is right for you if:

- There is one available that suits your needs; make sure the WAV you choose is suitable for all of your needs and lifestyle.
- You need to get a WAV quickly; if it's in stock your converter will be able to get your Nearly New WAV to you usually within a few weeks.
- You need a WAV but would like a lower Advance Payment; as long it meets your needs, a Nearly New WAV offers the most affordable option.
- You'd like a shorter lease length; a Nearly New WAV gives you the option to change your WAV after three years rather than five.

#### But remember:

- Availability is limited on Nearly New WAVs and not all brand new WAVs that you can lease through Motability will be offered via our Nearly New lease option. It's always worth checking with a WAV converter to see what vehicles we have available.
- There will be limited choice on your WAV's specifications; colour choice and other optional extras will be restricted.
- We cannot guarantee stock; there is a limited amount of stock available, so speak to a WAV converter for details.
- Vehicle condition; in order for us to offer guaranteed quality all Nearly New WAVs will be carefully checked by a Motability supplier. Each Nearly New WAV is quality checked and prepared for you, but as they are not brand new, you should expect some wear consistent with its age.



#### Did you know?

You can browse the complete range of new WAVs available to lease from Motability by using our online Car Search at **motability.co.uk**.

If you're interested in our Nearly New WAV option, then you'll need to contact the converters directly for costs and availability. You can find example pricing on our website **motability.co.uk**.

If you'd like to know more about Motability and how our leasing package works or current prices, then please either visit our website or call us on **0800 093 1000**.



# Where do I start?

We want you to make an informed decision on which WAV you choose, as it will be an important part of your mobility for several years to come. We're here to help you every step of the way.

This guide will take you through some of the more important things to think about when choosing a WAV, offering advice and tips to help you make the right choice. At the front of this guide you'll also find a copy of 'A steer in the right direction', our DVD presented by Lara Masters. This short film follows three customers through their journey to find the right WAV for their needs. It helps explain some of the important parts of the selection process, including taking test drives and considering conversion features that you could benefit from.

This guide focuses only on WAVs where the wheelchair user is a passenger in the vehicle.

There are some specialist conversions which are designed to allow the wheelchair user to drive.

These often require additional driving adaptations to suit individual needs and require more specific advice. You can find out more about these vehicles by visiting our website [motability.co.uk](https://www.motability.co.uk) or by calling our Customer Services team on **0845 456 4566**.

## **What kind of WAV would be best for my needs?**

When it comes to choosing a WAV, there are many features available that can help to improve your motoring experience. Some may come as part of the conversion; others may be optional extras that you will need to pay for. Around half of Motability WAV customers tell us they could have avoided problems if they'd spent more time researching when selecting their WAV, so it's well worth looking around, even if you already think you know what you want.







When you start looking for a WAV, it may help to draw up a checklist of things that are important to you – take a look at our list on page 10 for ideas. It helps you to stay focused on what you really need and is useful when comparing potential WAVs.

Depending on your needs, WAV Advance Payments can vary; although cost is always important, you need to make sure that the WAV you're selecting meets you and your family's needs for the full length of your lease.

### Size matters

WAVs come in a range of shapes and sizes, so there's bound to be one to fit your needs. To help you start, we've classified our WAVs as **small**, **medium** or **large**. The key factors when thinking about what size WAV you need are:

- The size and weight of your wheelchair
- Your seated height in your wheelchair
- The number of people you regularly travel with
- The amount of luggage or equipment that you need to take with you on your journeys.



I just like to feel a bit more independent.

Margaret, London



### Small

These WAVs normally have a ramp, rather than a lift, to allow access to the vehicle. Most small WAVs can have at least one rear seat and can accommodate up to four people including a wheelchair passenger. They usually have a lowered floor, giving you more headroom inside the vehicle and reducing the angle of the ramp, making it easier to get in and out.



### Medium

If you have a larger wheelchair or regularly travel with four or more passengers or have equipment that you need to keep with you, a medium sized WAV might suit your needs. While most medium WAVs have a ramp, some are available with an electric lift instead. Medium WAVs seat between five and seven people including a wheelchair passenger.



### Large

If you will be regularly travelling with many passengers and require a number of extra seats, or if you have a large or heavy wheelchair, or a lot of other equipment that you need to keep with you, then a large WAV is probably right for you. These WAVs are usually fitted with a lift to aid entry into the vehicle, and can be fitted with additional seats for your passengers.



## Ready to start?

If you think a WAV might be right for you, this checklist will help you consider the areas of your lifestyle that will affect which one you choose. The guide also highlights some of the main features of WAVs, and some ways in which they can differ, and suggests some things to think about to make sure you find a WAV that meets your needs. Our DVD will help to bring this to life, but it is essential to then speak to a converter and have a demonstration once you have an idea what is suitable.

### Size and space

- How big is your wheelchair (the maximum width, length, and weight)? Are you likely to need a new one within the next five years? If the wheelchair user is growing or their condition is likely to change will they need a larger chair?
- What's your height when you're sat in your wheelchair?
- How many people will you regularly be travelling with? Is this number likely to increase over the course of your lease?
- What luggage or equipment will you need to regularly transport in the WAV? Is it especially large or heavy?

### Your travel habits

- Where will you be regularly travelling in your WAV? Are there a lot of speed bumps or areas with height restrictions?
- How often will you need to use the WAV? Would your driver benefit from automatic transmission to help make motoring easier?
- What sort of activities will it be used for, e.g. days out, popping to the shops, the school run? Will there be sufficient space to get in and out of the WAV easily?
- Where do you normally park? Are there height restrictions? Will there be enough room behind the WAV to access the vehicle via a ramp or a lift?
- Do you have a weekly fuel budget or allowance for the cost associated with running a vehicle?
- Do you mainly make local journeys, or will you be taking your WAV on longer journeys? Diesel is not always the most economical or best option; speak to your converter about the types of journeys you take.
- Do you need to park beside a kerb?
- Do you regularly travel with just the driver? Would sitting behind the driver be a problem for you?



## Getting in and out

All WAVs are fitted with either a ramp or a lift, and access will either be from the back or the side of the vehicle, depending on the conversion.

### Ramps

Ramps are the most common way of accessing a WAV. The ramp is usually manually operated, with the carer physically unfolding the ramp from the back of the vehicle but it can be automatic, where the ramp folds and unfolds at the touch of a button – however these will cost extra. Some manual ramps are spring-loaded to raise or lower them with more ease. It's also important to consider, and test, the angle and length of the ramp as they're not all the same and some may make it more difficult to push the wheelchair passenger into the vehicle.

Consider whether your carer will physically be able to operate the ramp and push you into the WAV, now and throughout the course of your lease.

### Lifts

Some larger WAVs can be fitted with a lift which can be a help if your carer has trouble pushing your wheelchair up a ramp into the WAV.

However, WAVs fitted with a lift are generally more expensive than those fitted with ramps, so your Advance Payment may be higher. Lifts also require an annual service, but this cost will be covered by your Motability lease.



### Things to think about

- If your carer finds pushing your wheelchair up the ramp difficult, an electric winch may help. This is a motorised cable that attaches to the wheelchair to help the carer by pulling the wheelchair into the vehicle. Ask your converter for more information if you think this will be useful.
- Think about where you normally park – is there enough space for a ramp, or a lift, and room for the wheelchair user to manoeuvre to allow easy access to the WAV?
- Most ramps and lifts are fitted at the rear of the WAV, but there are a few WAVs which have access from the side of the vehicle – which would work best for you when out and about?

## Conversion features

### Lowered floors

Most WAVs will have had their floor specially lowered to allow enough headroom for the wheelchair user. A lowered floor also means that the ramp will either be shorter or the angle less steep, allowing easier access.

### Things to think about

- As the floor has been lowered, you will need to make sure the WAV allows for enough ground clearance in the places you usually drive, and the driver will need to drive more carefully over roads with speed bumps.
- When the converter lowers the floor of a WAV, the fuel tank may need to be modified or replaced, reducing its size or changing its shape. This can mean your WAV will need to be refuelled more regularly and the fuel gauge may be less accurate. Ask your converter if this applies to the WAV that you are looking at.
- Some WAVs can also be fitted with lowering suspension, which means that the rear of a vehicle can be lowered to allow for easier access. This feature is operated at the touch of a button to help reduce the angle of the ramp, but will cost extra.

# Travelling inside a WAV

## Seating arrangements and comfort

Travelling in a wheelchair in a WAV will feel different to a standard car seat. Most people get used to this in time, but you may find this difficult at first.

Most WAVs position the wheelchair passenger behind the front seats or towards the back of the vehicle. However, there are some WAVs where the wheelchair passenger sits beside the driver, but these will cost more.

### Things to think about

- Depending on the seating arrangement, the wheelchair passenger may have difficulty seeing out of the windows or hearing other passengers near the front of the car. If you have a seating preference, speak to a WAV converter and they will be able to advise you. Make sure you check this when you have a demonstration.
- Consider whether a partner or carer will need to get to the wheelchair user during journeys – does the seating layout allow for this?
- The size of WAV you need may depend on how many passengers you regularly travel with. When making the vehicle accessible for wheelchair users, the converter usually has to remove some of the standard seats. Some vehicles have rear seats designed to fold out of the way to make room for the wheelchair, or you may be able to request a seat as an optional extra. If you require an extra seat, ask about its size – sometimes they can be quite small and might not be suitable for adults on long journeys or for fixing baby or child seats to.
- Air conditioning comes as standard on all of our WAVs, but if the wheelchair user is sensitive to temperature you may benefit from additional heating and air conditioning, especially in the back of larger vehicles, to make sure the wheelchair passenger travels as comfortably as possible.

## Safety

Most WAVs have four restraint belts that attach to the front and rear of the wheelchair to keep it in position inside the vehicle. The front restraints are adjustable and are usually self locking, similar to a seatbelt, which can easily be attached to the wheelchair to lock it in place, minimising movement when the WAV is travelling. There are different mechanisms for attaching the restraints to the wheelchair, some of which a carer might find easier to operate than others. Speak to your converter about the different systems available. Make sure everyone who will be helping you use the system tests this out during your demonstration. As well as the restraint system there will be a three-point seatbelt for the wheelchair passenger to use.

### Things to think about

- If your carer has limited mobility or dexterity in their hands you can ask your converter which restraining system might be most suitable for your WAV. An automatic tie down system might help, but may cost more than a belt system and isn't always suitable. Your converter can explain all the options available to you.





## Space

The space you have inside a WAV is vitally important – not just for all the passengers, but also to accommodate the things you will be travelling with regularly, such as luggage or mobility aids.

### Things to think about

- The wheelchair will need to fit into the vehicle without any tight, difficult manoeuvres that might damage it or the interior of the WAV.
- It is strongly recommended to have a head restraint fitted to your wheelchair when travelling in a WAV. They are easy to use and won't damage the chair.
- Most WAVs can accommodate a small or medium size wheelchair. Larger wheelchairs or scooters may be too large or too heavy for smaller vehicles.
- If you think that you may need to change your wheelchair during your lease, consider how this might affect your choice of WAV.
- Consider how much space you will need for any luggage or equipment. Some vehicles have useful lockers and shelves for small things, bear in mind that loose luggage can be dangerous if the driver has to break suddenly. Car accessory shops sell accessories that can hold luggage in place and roof top boxes are another option for carrying luggage.

# Getting the most out of a test drive

Once you've thought about your lifestyle needs and requirements and have an idea of the type of WAV that might be suitable, we recommend speaking to more than one WAV converter. They'll be happy to discuss your needs and considerations with you, and will be able to recommend a potential solution.

The best way to know for sure if a WAV is going to be right for you is to get out and about in it. Contact the converters of the WAVs you think might be suitable and book a home demonstration – there's no cost involved, and no obligation to order. You can find a complete list of all of our WAV converters on the Motability website. Most of our converters operate nationally, so you'll be able to test drive a WAV no matter where you live.

Our WAV converters are used to talking through your needs on the phone to build up a picture of the type of WAV which might be suitable for you. This will help them to understand what your needs are and enable them to bring an appropriate WAV to demonstrate and for you to test drive.

Here are our top ten things to consider when test driving a WAV. Don't forget to bring your checklist along for the ride too!

## 1. Try more than one

By thinking about your needs in advance of talking to the converters, they'll be able to offer you a much better idea of which WAVs might be suitable for you to test drive. However, even if you think you've found the perfect WAV for your needs on paper, it could be a very different story when you try it out, so we'd definitely recommend trying out at least two different WAVs. Book a test drive for a time that is good for you so that you feel comfortable going through the process of trying out the vehicle fully. Not all conversions are the same, so it may be worth looking at different conversions of the same vehicle to make sure you get the one best suited to your needs.

## 2. Involve the people that you travel with

It is essential to bring the people that you will regularly be travelling with, such as friends, family or your carer, for the test drive, especially if they'll be the ones driving the WAV. While your experience is of key importance, your carer must be happy helping you into the WAV and securing your wheelchair as well as driving the WAV. Any regular passengers will need to be comfortable and have enough space when travelling inside the WAV.

## 3. Try out the WAV where you will use it

Visit places and roads that you will regularly use, such as your local supermarket. It's the best way to see if a WAV will fit in with your day-to-day life. Your driver should practise parking, making sure they have clear visibility from their seated position. Driving a WAV can be a very different experience to driving a standard car, so it's important that everyone who will be driving it feels comfortable and confident when they're out on the road.

## 4. Pack your bags

If you regularly need to travel with large luggage or extra mobility equipment, make sure you have the items to hand for the test drive. That way you can be sure there is enough room to safely store your items without compromising on passenger space.



## 5. Load and unload



You and your carers should practise getting in and out, and loading everything into the WAV at least a couple of times. While this may be time consuming and seem like a hassle, it can save you from choosing the wrong WAV for your needs. It can also help you identify if you could benefit from other features to give you a little extra support, such as a winch to help move the wheelchair passenger up the ramp and into position.

## 6. Practice makes perfect



The converter will demonstrate how the various features of the WAV work and ask that you practise using these features yourself to check that you feel confident and comfortable using them. Operating some conversion features, such as a manual ramp or wheelchair tie downs, can be difficult and fiddly at first, but once you've tried them a couple of times you'll be able to see if you could use them on a daily basis with ease, or not.

## 7. Take your time



When out on a test drive, don't rush it, take as long as you need and try out regular journeys that you make. Driving a WAV can feel different if you have previously driven a car, and will take a little time to get used to. There is no set length of time for a home demonstration, so make sure you get a thorough understanding of the whole WAV and don't be afraid to ask questions – that's what the converter is there for and they have the knowledge to best advise you.

## 8. Consider the vehicle's fuel costs



While any car or WAV can provide increased freedom and independence, it's important to bear in mind the long term costs of running it. When test driving the vehicle around your local area, consider how often you'll be using it and for what sort of journeys; will you be travelling long distances or just short local trips? Ask the converter how your travelling may impact fuel cost and whether a petrol or diesel WAV might be a better option for you.

## 9. Think of the future



Consider whether your needs are likely to change during the course of your lease. For example, if you will need a bigger wheelchair during the next five years, this may impact the amount of space you need or the size of the WAV. It's also a good idea to consider whether you have enough additional seating for any passengers that may need to travel with you regularly in the future.

## 10. If you're happy and you know it...



Don't feel obliged to order just because you've had a home demonstration. WAV converters understand that this is an important decision and one that cannot be rushed. Only place your order if you're sure the vehicle meets all of your needs and are happy with your experience.

**If you're considering a Nearly New WAV it's unlikely that the converter will be able to bring the exact WAV for you to test drive. It's still important to test a WAV that is as similar as possible to the one you're selecting to check its suitability for both the wheelchair user, the passengers and the driver.**

# Ordering your Motability WAV

Once you've found the WAV that best suits your needs, it's time to place your order with the WAV converter. This is a simple process, and your converter will manage everything for you from start to finish.

As part of your home demonstration, the converter will take you through the Motability Suitability Questionnaire which you will sign. This document is designed to ensure the WAV you're considering, and the Motability Scheme, meets your needs now, and for the duration of your lease. They will also discuss how the Advance Payment works and when you will need to pay this. Remember that your new WAV will be an important part of your life for years to come.

If you need a vehicle with a particular specification or feature and you can't afford it, Motability may be able to help.

If you need a large, heavily adapted or highly specified WAV and you can't afford it, Motability may be able to provide financial help. The amount will depend upon your personal and financial circumstances. For more information on financial assistance, call our Customer Services team on **0845 456 4566**.

When you are ready to apply for a WAV on the Motability Scheme, your converter will ask you to complete the following simple forms:

- Statement of Responsibilities**, which confirms that you and your drivers understand and agree to abide by the Scheme rules around WAV usage
- Driver consent forms**, so your nominated drivers can give their consent for us to check their details with the DVLA.

Along with these forms, you should also send them:

- DWP entitlement letter** - this can be a copy so you don't have to send your original
- Copies of both parts of your nominated drivers' **driving licences**

Your converter will then place your order through our online system. The processing of your order will usually take a few days and once your application has been accepted, we will send you a letter confirming your order and containing your Personal Identification Number (PIN). Please keep your PIN in a safe place with all your other Motability paperwork, as this will act as your signature and acceptance of the terms and conditions of your lease agreement. Your converter will usually send you an order form to sign and return which will specify the vehicle you've chosen and any options you have had added to your WAV.

## When the big day arrives...

Once your order is placed, your converter will let you know when it will be ready for delivery. It will usually take between 12 to 16 weeks, but can be sooner. If you've ordered a Nearly New WAV it should only take a few weeks.

When your WAV is ready, your converter will deliver it to your home. The converter will show you and your carer around your new WAV and will remind you how each of the conversion features work. Take some time to practise using the features for yourself, and don't be afraid to ask the converter questions – that's what they're there for. Your WAV converter will also ask you to sign a document to give them the authority to use your PIN number on





your behalf, and then you can officially take delivery of your Motability WAV! Your converter will give you a welcome pack which includes a copy of our WAV Handbook, which contains everything you'll need to know over the course of your lease. The pack will also include your insurance documents. It's important that you check that all nominated drivers are on your insurance cover note.

And, that's it!

**All you have to do now is think about what you need, call a converter and book a test drive.**

“

I no longer need to have my husband with me, I can take my son out on my own.

Janet, Kent

”

# Useful contact details

## For enquiries about Motability

Motability Operations  
City Gate House  
22 Southwark Bridge Road  
London SE1 9HB

Telephone: **0800 093 1000**  
(lines open daily, 8am – 8pm)  
**motability.co.uk**

If you are an existing Motability customer,  
please call our Customer Services team on  
**0845 456 4566** (lines open daily, 8am–5pm)

If you have specialist Minicom equipment, call  
our text phone: **0845 675 0009**

## For enquiries about the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance

Disability and Carers Service  
Telephone: **08457 123 456**  
**dwp.gov.uk**

Disability Living Allowance (Northern Ireland)  
Telephone: **028 9090 6182**  
**dsdni.gov.uk**

## For enquiries about the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency  
Telephone: **0800 169 2277**  
**veterans-uk.info**

## Want more?

There is more information about WAVs on our  
website **motability.co.uk**.

You can watch the WAV DVD, find converters,  
look at the prices, find out information about  
the Scheme and more!



Motability Operations  
City Gate House,  
22 Southwark Bridge Road,  
London SE1 9HB

Telephone: **0800 093 1000**  
Lines are open 8am to 8pm daily.  
If you have specialist Minicom equipment,  
call our textphone number on **0845 675 0009**  
Visit: **motability.co.uk**

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**Motability**  
The leading car scheme for disabled people



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