Your guide to Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

Sign up to our enewsletter at motability.co.uk/signup or like us on Facebook to join the conversation!
Watch our short film to find out more...

If you’re considering a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) for the first time you may be wondering if it’s the right choice for you, and if so, what to do next.

To accompany this guide we’ve produced a short film to help answer some of the questions you might have and highlight some things you perhaps hadn’t thought about. Watch ‘A steer in the right direction’ now at motability.co.uk/wavfilms

- Meet three families searching for their next WAV, talking about their needs and what they’re looking for
- Find out about different types of WAVs available and what to expect when travelling in a WAV
- Listen to our families’ advice on what to discuss with a WAV supplier to find the right vehicle for your needs
- Hear our top 10 tips for choosing a WAV

If you would prefer to receive a DVD of the film please call us on 0800 093 1000.

Our website is full of useful information if you’re considering a WAV motability.co.uk/wavs
With the Motability Scheme you can simply exchange your allowance to lease the WAV of your choice. We take care of arranging payment directly from the Department for Work and Pensions, so as long as you have at least 12 months’ award remaining on any of the following allowances, you can apply:

- **Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance**
- **Enhanced Rate of the Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payment**
- **War Pensioners’ Mobility Supplement**
- **Armed Forces Independence Payment**

This includes children aged 3 or over in receipt of the relevant allowance.

For current prices and more information, please visit [motability.co.uk/wavs](http://motability.co.uk/wavs).

**Contents**

4 All about Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles  
6 Nearly New WAVs  
8 Where do I start?  
14 Getting the most out of test drives and demonstrations  
16 Ordering your Motability WAV  
18 Useful contact details
All about Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

What is a WAV?
All Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (or WAVs) start as a standard vehicle and then a specialist company makes a number of fairly significant alterations to allow a wheelchair user to access and remain in their wheelchair when the vehicle is moving. 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 it but all WAVs have easy access and provide safe travelling for the wheelchair user.

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 be the answer. We have over 28,000 WAV customers who value the independence it gives them.

Affordable lease packages
WAVs tend to cost more than standard cars because there are a number of different stages and companies involved in getting the conversion right for you. On top of the production costs of the original standard vehicle, the conversion company makes considerable changes to the vehicle and sometimes also adaptation specialists are required to further customise the vehicle. And because there are fewer WAVs on the road than standard cars, the converters are less able to benefit from mass production.

That’s where leasing a WAV through the Motability Scheme comes in. We work with our WAV suppliers to keep prices as low as possible and the lease payments come directly from your higher rate mobility allowance. You’ll need to pay an Advance Payment at the start of your lease to make up the difference between your allowance payments and what the lease costs. Then at the end of your lease you simply hand the WAV back and choose a new one that suits your needs.

In some situations Motability, the Charity, may be able to offer a grant towards the vehicle that meets your needs. For more information please see page 17.

Are there alternatives to a WAV?
Yes! If you are able to transfer out of your wheelchair without too much trouble or discomfort you may be better off with a standard car that’s fitted with adaptations. Adaptations such as a transfer plate, swivel seat or person hoist could help with improving access to a car. There is also a wide range of adaptations available to help you store your wheelchair or scooter such as boot hoists or rooftop stowage boxes.

For more information visit our website at motability.co.uk/adaptations where you can:

- Click through the interactive tool which shows how different adaptations can help
- See film clips of how some of the more popular adaptations work
- Download our adaptations guide
- Find contact details for adaptation installers in your area.

motability.co.uk
Drive from Wheelchair Vehicles
This guide focuses only on WAVs where the wheelchair user is a passenger in the vehicle. If you would like to drive the WAV yourself, then there are a few types of vehicle that can be converted to allow you to drive from your wheelchair. These often require additional driving adaptations to suit individual needs and require more specific advice. It’s important to know that these are a more expensive option and it’s likely that it will take much longer for your vehicle to arrive than a standard WAV due to the complexity and bespoke nature of the vehicle. More information is available about Drive from Wheelchair Vehicles on our website at motability.co.uk/dfw.

What’s included with the Motability Scheme?
With the Motability Scheme, you can either choose to lease a new WAV for five years or a Nearly New WAV for three years. No matter which WAV you choose the real benefit of the Motability Scheme is that it comes with a completely worry-free lease package – everything is included so there are no unexpected costs during your lease. As with every Motability Scheme vehicle, your lease includes:

✓ Insurance for two named drivers (you can pay an additional fee to add a third driver)
✓ Servicing and maintenance which covers both the standard base vehicle and the conversion elements
✓ Full breakdown assistance from the RAC
✓ Replacement tyres fitted by Kwik Fit
✓ Windscreen and window repair or replacement
✓ Annual car tax

Additionally, for our WAV customers we also offer:

✓ A dedicated WAV supplier who acts as the first point of contact for any issues with your WAV
✓ A home visit about a month after your WAV is delivered to check it is meeting your expectations
✓ Every 12 months your WAV supplier will carry out a health check on the conversion elements of your WAV at your home
✓ Any critical repairs that prevent you from using your WAV will be attended to within 72 hours
✓ Where possible your supplier will try to complete any repairs at your home
✓ If your vehicle is out of action for more than 48 hours, we aim to provide a converted alternative to bridge the gap until yours is repaired
How do you choose between WAV suppliers?

Through the Motability Scheme you can choose from 16 dedicated WAV suppliers. It is important to remember that every WAV supplier will have their own way of converting each vehicle and so a Citroën Berlingo WAV from one supplier might be quite different from a Citroën Berlingo WAV from another supplier. Some suppliers may focus on offering a best value solution with lower Advance Payments, whilst others offer a higher standard specification but their conversion may have a larger Advance Payment.

When you are narrowing down your choices, it is important you understand what each supplier includes as standard. The best advice, as with any decision this important, is to always do your research, speak to a number of different converters and test drive a few different vehicles to find out which vehicle matches your needs and budget.

Nearly New vs Brand New

So how do you know whether a new or Nearly New WAV is right for you? A lot of it depends on your budget as our Nearly New WAV options have lower Advance Payments than the equivalent new WAV. The other important factor is availability as Nearly New WAVs are basically WAVs that have been returned by other customers after less than three years. This means that stock is limited and not all brand new WAVs that you can lease through the Motability Scheme will be offered via our Nearly New lease option. Nearly New WAVs are split into three price bands based on the size, condition and age of the vehicle.

If you’re interested in a Nearly New WAV, please speak to a WAV supplier and they will advise on their availability of vehicles to meet your needs. You can find examples of pricing available on our website at motability.co.uk/wavs.

Here’s a quick summary of the differences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s the difference?</th>
<th>New WAV</th>
<th>Nearly New WAV</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lease length</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mileage allowance</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle age</td>
<td>Brand new</td>
<td>Less than three years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery times</td>
<td>On average 12-16 weeks</td>
<td>A few weeks or less</td>
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Now you know all about what the Motability Scheme lease package offers and whether a new or Nearly New WAV might suit your needs, it’s time to get down to the nitty gritty detail of which WAV will suit your needs.

**A Nearly New WAV may be the right option for you if:**

- There is one available that suits your needs; make sure the WAV you choose is suitable for you and your lifestyle
- You need to get a WAV quickly; if it’s in stock your WAV supplier 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; Nearly New WAVs come with a three year lease rather than five
- While all our Nearly New WAVs are carefully checked by an approved supplier, they are not brand new and therefore you should expect some wear in line with its age.
Where do I start?

Once you’ve decided that a WAV is right for your needs, we want you to make an informed decision about which vehicle you choose as it will support your mobility for several years to come.

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 our 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.

WAVs come in a range of shapes and sizes so there should 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 equipment that you need to take with you on your journeys.

Small

- Most small WAVs can accommodate up to four people
- These WAVs normally have a ramp, rather than a lift, to allow access
- They usually have a lowered floor to give more headroom inside the vehicle and reduce the angle of the ramp, making it easier to get in and out.

Medium

- A medium WAV is more suited to a larger wheelchair or if you need to travel with equipment
- They usually seat between five and seven people including a wheelchair passenger
- Most medium WAVs have a ramp but some are available with an electric lift instead.

Large

- Large WAVs are a good option if you regularly travel with many passengers
- They are also suitable for a large or heavy wheelchair or if you have a lot of equipment that you need to keep with you
- These WAVs are normally fitted with a lift to allow easier entry.
If you don’t know where to start, or if this is the first time you’ve considered a WAV, then you may find it useful to create a checklist of the things that are important to you.

We have listed below some questions you might want to consider. You could also use this checklist when talking to WAV suppliers and comparing potential vehicles.

It is essential to speak to a WAV supplier about your needs so they can help you select the right vehicle, you can then arrange a home demonstration once you have an idea of what may be suitable.

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**WAVs are different from cars!**

On top of all the usual things to think about when choosing a car, your budget; manual vs automatic; diesel vs petrol; number of seats and so on, there are a few other things that are specific to choosing a WAV which you will need to consider:

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**Everyday usage**

- Do you regularly travel with just the driver? In most WAVs the wheelchair passenger sits behind the driver, would this be an issue for you?
- WAVS are generally bigger and lower than most cars – are there lots of speed bumps or height restrictions on your regular journeys?
- Parking for a WAV needs to have space for the wheelchair user to access the vehicle – will there be room for a lift or a ramp to fully extend at home and the places you regularly visit?
- Are you sensitive to temperature? Would you benefit from additional heating and air conditioning?

**Size and space considerations**

- How big is your wheelchair? Will you need a newer or bigger chair during your lease?
- Your seated height in your wheelchair will affect the headroom you need within the WAV both at the point of entry and in the seated position.
- What equipment will you need to regularly transport in the WAV and is it especially large or heavy?
Getting in and out

All WAVs are fitted with either a ramp or a lift, and access for the wheelchair user 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. They 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 more easily. It’s also important to consider and test the angle and length of the ramp as they’re not all the same and some will be easier than others. Some converters offer powered winches at no extra cost, so if you think this may help ask your converter what options are available.

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 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 is likely to be higher.

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 pull the wheelchair into the vehicle. Winches can often be supplied at no extra cost

- If your carer finds bending and lifting difficult and you use a medium or large WAV, having a lift might be the best option for you. Lifts are usually operated by a remote control and require the least amount of physical effort from your carer

- 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 parking 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 for 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 on your regular routes and 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 WAV supplier if this applies to the WAV that you are considering.
- 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. There are some WAVs where the wheelchair passenger can sit beside the driver, but these will be more expensive.

To give you an idea of the seating layouts available, the three diagrams below show the most popular arrangements. However, there are lots of options available depending on the size of vehicle and your specific requirements. Speak to your WAV supplier to find out which seating layouts are available to you.

Things to think about

- Depending on the seated height of the wheelchair user and the seating arrangement, they may have difficulty seeing out of the windows or hearing other passengers near the front of the vehicle. Make sure you check this when you have a demonstration and let your WAV supplier know if you have a preference.
- 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 WAV supplier 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 smaller than a standard seat 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 in larger vehicles, if the wheelchair user is sensitive to temperature, additional heating may be required.
**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 WAV supplier 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.

**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 shopping 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 brake suddenly. Car accessory shops sell accessories that can hold luggage in place and roof top boxes are another option for carrying luggage.
Vehicle Demonstrations

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 supplier. 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 WAV suppliers you think might be suitable and book a home demonstration – there’s no cost involved and no obligation to order. To ensure that we are able to provide the best level of choice and customer service throughout the UK, nearly all of our specialist WAV suppliers will offer you a nationwide service. Some work with a network of regional dealers to supply and support your WAV; others will supply directly. In order to locate your local WAV supplier, use our ‘Find a dealer’ tool at motability.co.uk/wavs or call 0800 093 1000.

Our WAV suppliers 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.

Nearly New WAVs

If you’re considering a Nearly New WAV it’s unlikely that the supplier 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 the wheelchair user, the passengers and the driver.
Here are our top ten things to consider to make sure you get the most out of a vehicle demonstration.

1. **Try more than one**
   - Try out a few different makes and conversions of WAVs
   - Book a test drive at a time that is good for you so you feel comfortable trying out the vehicle fully.

2. **Involve the people you travel with**
   - It's essential you bring the people you regularly travel with for the test drive
   - Your carer must be happy helping you into the WAV, securing your wheelchair and driving the vehicle.

3. **Try the WAV where you will use it**
   - Visit places and roads you would regularly use to see if a WAV will fit with your day-to-day life
   - The driver should practice parking and making sure they have clear visibility when the wheelchair user is in their seated position
   - It's important whoever is driving feels comfortable and confident in the vehicle.

4. **Pack your bags**
   - If you regularly travel with luggage or extra equipment make sure you bring those to your test drive so you can ensure there is enough storage space.

5. **Load and unload**
   - You and your carer should practice getting in and out and loading everything a couple of times
   - This will also help identify if you need any extra features, such as a winch (often available at no extra cost), to help move the wheelchair passenger up the ramp and into position.

6. **Practice makes perfect**
   - The WAV supplier will demonstrate how the features of a WAV work
   - You should practise these yourself to check you feel comfortable and confident with them
   - This will help you decide if you could use them on a daily basis.

7. **Take your time**
   - When you're on a test drive, don't rush it, take as long as you feel you need
   - Try out the regular journeys you normally make
   - Make sure you get a thorough understanding of the WAV
   - Don't be afraid to ask your WAV supplier questions – they have the best knowledge to advise you.

8. **Consider the fuel costs**
   - Consider how often you will use the vehicle and what sort of journeys you will make
   - Ask your WAV supplier how your travelling may impact fuel costs and whether a petrol or diesel would be a better option.

9. **Think of the future**
   - Consider whether your needs will change during the course of your lease. For example, if you will need a bigger wheelchair during the next five years this may impact on the amount of space you need or the size of WAV
   - It's also a good idea to think about whether you will need additional seating for passengers who will travel with you in the future.

10. **Sleep on it**
    - Don't feel obliged to order because you've had a home demonstration
    - WAV suppliers understand this is an important decision to make and cannot be rushed
    - Only place an order if you're sure the vehicle meets all of your needs and you're happy.
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 supplier. This is a simple process and your WAV supplier will manage everything from start to finish.

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

- **Statement of Responsibilities and Suitability Confirmation**, which checks that you and your drivers understand and agree to abide by the Scheme rules around your 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 your nominated drivers’ driving licences**
- **Your award letter**, if you are receiving a grant from Motability (the Charity).

At this point you should make sure your supplier has explained how the Advance Payment works and when you will need to pay this. Then, your WAV supplier will 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 paperwork, as this will act as your signature and acceptance of the terms and conditions of your lease agreement. Your WAV supplier will usually send you an order form to sign and return which will specify the vehicle you’ve chosen and any options you have added to your WAV.

**Taking delivery of your WAV**

Once your order is placed your WAV supplier will let you know when it will be ready for delivery.

On average it will take between 12 and 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 supplier will deliver it to your home. They will then 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 supplier questions – that’s what they’re there for. Your WAV supplier will also ask you to sign a document to give them the authority to use your PIN on your behalf and then you can officially take delivery of your WAV.

Your supplier will give you a welcome pack, including 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.
Grants
For customers who would otherwise be unable to afford the type of vehicle they need, Motability (the Charity), may be able to offer a grant. To ensure their limited funds go to those in most need, applications are means-tested and any help will only be given towards your basic mobility needs.

This means that if you are successful you will not necessarily receive help towards your preferred vehicle if a better value alternative that meets your needs is available on the Scheme. For that reason, if you think you will need a grant, always consider the lowest cost vehicles first. For more information on grants, please call 0300 456 4566.

It’s fantastic. I couldn’t do without it. It’s worry-free motoring.

William Reid
Useful Contacts

For enquiries about the Motability Scheme

Motability Operations Ltd.
City Gate House
22 Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 9HB
Telephone: 0800 093 1000
motability.co.uk

If you are an existing Motability Scheme customer, please call our Customer Services team on 0300 456 4566

If you have specialist Minicom equipment, call our text phone: 0300 037 0100

For enquiries about the Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment

Department for Work and Pensions
Telephone: 03457 123 456
dwp.gov.uk

Department for Communities (NI)
Telephone: 0300 123 3356
communities-ni.gov.uk

For enquiries about the War Pensioners’ Mobility Supplement or Armed Forces Independence Payment

Veterans UK
Telephone: 0808 191 4218
veterans-uk.info

For independent information and advice

Driving Mobility
A network of 17 Centres across the UK which provides practical advice and assessments for vehicles, as well as information on most mobility and disability issues.
Telephone: 0800 559 3636
drivingmobility.org.uk

Rica
Rica is an independent research charity that provides information to enable disabled and older people to live independently. Their website provides motoring advice including information on WAVs. They also have printed publications on car adaptations, motoring guides for people with specific disabilities and public transport.
Telephone: 0207 427 2460
rica.org.uk
A wide range of WAVs to choose from
A range of affordable Nearly New WAVs
Worry-free package including insurance, servicing and maintenance, breakdown cover and tyre and windscreen replacement
100,000 mileage allowance over five years or 60,000 for Nearly New WAVs
Insurance for two named drivers – you don’t have to drive
Many adaptations at no extra cost