



# Motoring with cerebral palsy

2016

# Motoring with cerebral palsy

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This booklet is for people with cerebral palsy and outlines some of the key things to consider when choosing or adapting a car. This information comes from people with cerebral palsy and other experts. Price information comes from our market research – use it as a guide only and shop around for the best price.

First we talk about how your condition may affect your driving and the rules about driving with a disability.

Then we tell you about useful features on standard cars and about specialist products and techniques.

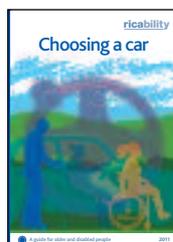
At the back, there is information, including addresses, about sources of funding and expert advice.

More detailed information on choosing and using a car can be found in the Rica guides shown here. All our guides are free – contact us for a copy or read them on our website:

**020 7427 2463**

**[www.rica.org.uk](http://www.rica.org.uk)**

The website also has the **Finda car** database of car measurements that will help you find a car to suit you.



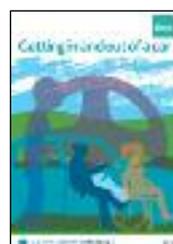
### Choosing a car

Features that may help you and ways of adapting a car



### Family cars

Cars and equipment for families of disabled children



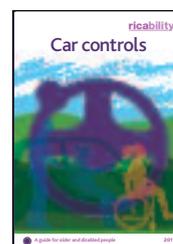
### Getting in and out of a car

Techniques and equipment that may help



### Mobility address list

All the adaptation suppliers and car converters in the UK and the services they offer



### Car controls

Adaptations and how to get them



### Getting a wheelchair into a car

Equipment to help you stow or carry a wheelchair



### Wheelchair accessible vehicles

Converted vehicles to carry you in your wheelchair

## Driving with cerebral palsy

The cause of cerebral palsy (CP) is most commonly the failure of a part of the brain to develop before birth or in early childhood. This can be through a range of illnesses or complications in pregnancy, labour or early childhood. Occasionally CP is due to an inherited disorder, but this is rare. It is a non-progressive condition, but you may still experience physical changes with time.

There are three main types of CP, depending on which part of the brain is injured.

- With spastic CP, some muscles become stiff and weak and your control of movement is affected.
- With athetoid CP, there will be some difficulty controlling your posture and a tendency to make unwanted movements.
- With ataxic CP, you will have balance problems and possibly shaky hand movements and irregular speech.

The effects of CP can range from slight muscle stiffness in one limb, through to a profound disability affecting all limbs.

Other effects of CP include:

- sensory impairments – for example you may have a limited field of vision
- cognitive impairments – you may find it hard to plan or concentrate
- fatigue – you may tire more quickly because of the effort involved in controlling your movements
- epilepsy.

For more information on cerebral palsy, contact Scope (see page 11).

### Assessment

- **No two people with CP are affected in the same way, so it's important to go to a Mobility Centre for a full driving assessment.**
- **They will advise you on what you need to do and on any adaptations you need.**

### LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

When applying for a driving licence you must tell the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) that you have CP. They will assess your fitness to drive using the information you provide and may ask you to have a medical examination or a driving assessment.

You may be:

- given a full licence
- given a medical review licence, valid for one, two or three years
- given a licence that specifies which adaptations you need to use
- refused a licence.

For more information on getting a driving licence, get *What you need to know about driving licences* (D100) from a post office or go to: [www.gov.uk/dvla](http://www.gov.uk/dvla).

If you are affected by epilepsy, you can drive if you have not had a seizure for at least one year, or if you've only had them in your sleep for at least three years. You must continue to follow your doctor's advice, including taking any medicines you need. You must tell DVLA about any seizures you have had.

You must tell your insurance company about your disability and any adaptations that you use or limitations on your driving licence.

# Plan of action

## 1 Ask some basic questions

Think about what you may need in the future as well as about what suits you now. Prepare to compromise as you may not find everything in one car.

**How will you get in and out?** Do you need wide or high doors, or specialist equipment to help? See *Products and techniques* (pages 6-8).

**Will you be comfortable in the seat?** And will you be able to reach the controls?

**Will you need specialist controls?** There is a big range – from simple gadgets to more complex controls. See pages 6-8.

**What equipment will you carry?** Think about everyday and occasional use.

**Do you use a wheelchair?** Will you load it into the boot or travel sitting in it? Will you need specialist equipment?

## 2 Collect information

Start with motoring magazines, the internet and manufacturers' brochures. You can also try the following:

**Disabled Motoring UK** (see page 10) publishes a monthly magazine with reviews and articles.

**Mobility Centres** (see page 10) offer driving assessments and tell you what equipment may suit you. Charges vary from centre to centre – up to £130. Free in Scotland if you're referred by a GP. Free UK-wide with Motability.

**Mobility Roadshows** and **Motability One Big Day** (see page 11) to see and try out vehicles and adaptations.

**Motability** (see page 11) have a list of car dealers with specialist knowledge and facilities for disabled people. They have free print, web and video guides.

**www.youreable.com** have an online discussion forum covering topics including benefits and motoring.

## Find a car

- use our online search tool of car measurements
- search for cars with wide doors, low sills or lots of headroom or look for a boot to fit your wheelchair
- go to [www.rica.org.uk](http://www.rica.org.uk) and follow the link for the car measurement database.

## 3 Try out before buying

Try any car you are considering. Dealers may bring one to you and should be able to find an automatic version. Try getting in and out several times. If you use a wheelchair, check that it fits. You might be able to try out adapted cars at a Mobility Centre or an adaptation firm. They will also tell you if the adaptations can be fitted to your chosen car.

## 4 Get plenty of practice

Make sure that you are not driving with adaptations for the first time when you collect the car. Your adapter may have a demonstration model and they must give you the chance to try your adapted car before you take it away.

Mobility Centres can help you find specialist driving instructors locally.

## Choosing a car

Many people with CP are able to drive a standard car, particularly if it has automatic transmission and power steering. Other helpful features, like height adjustable seats, are available on a wide range of cars too. The less a car has to be modified to suit your needs, the higher its resale value.

If you are going to get a standard car, use the list below to tick the features you might find useful. Alternatively, *Products and techniques* (pages 6-8) gives an overview of the equipment that might help you.

### GETTING IN AND OUT

- doors which open easily
- tall and wide door openings – doors on two- and three-door cars are usually wider
- doors with a wide opening angle
- no door sills or low, narrow sills
- conveniently placed handholds
- seat height that best suits you
- seats that go up and down and back and forwards easily – useful if you need space to get your legs in but you need to sit closer to the wheel for driving
- plenty of space around the seat.

### LOCKING AND IGNITION

- remote and central locking
- keyless entry system – easier than using a key
- push button start
- windows that close automatically when the car is locked.

### PRIMARY CONTROLS

For steering, braking and accelerating:

- automatic transmission – a must for many disabled drivers
- power assisted steering – on some cars the effort needed can be lightened by the dealership or by specialist converters
- cruise control to maintain a constant speed
- handbrakes can be stiff if you have a weak hand and wrist – check that you can put it on and off
- some cars have electronic, push button handbrakes and you can have one fitted to many others.

### SECONDARY CONTROLS

For things like the horn, lights and indicators – try to find a model where these are in the best position for you.

Also look for:

- electric windows
- electric and heated door mirrors
- heated windscreen
- automatic wipers
- automatic lights
- easy controls for audio equipment, air conditioning etc – some cars have voice activated controls
- parking sensor – sounds if you are near an obstacle
- reversing camera.

### BOOT

- no sill or low sill
- rear seats which fold flat by power
- boot which opens by power
- internal boot release
- space for your wheelchair if you have one.

## Products and techniques

There is a range of equipment and adaptations available to help you with getting in and out and driving a car. These pages, and our other guides (see page 9), give more information. You can also get individual advice from a Mobility Centre (see pages 10-11).

### Gadgets

- **Pump Pal holds petrol pumps open – useful if you have weak grip or can only use one hand (£9.99 from [www.pumppal.co.uk](http://www.pumppal.co.uk)).**
- **Handy Bar fits quickly into the door catch to give you a firm handhold for getting in and out (£30 from adaptation firms, motoring suppliers and general aids suppliers).**
- **Key holders help give more leverage if your key is small and hard to turn (£5 from general aids suppliers).**
- **Swivelling cushions help you turn in the seat when getting in and out (£20 – £85 from general aids suppliers).**

## GETTING IN AND OUT

The best way to get in is to sit first then turn and bring your legs in, doing the reverse to get out.

You can have the door hinges modified or the seat runners extended to give you more space to get in and out. You can make your existing seat higher or height adjustable, add a swivelling

mechanism or have a specialist replacement seat fitted (from £1,250).

### Wheelchair users

There are transfer boards and other devices to help you from a wheelchair into the seat and hoists and lifts to help stow your wheelchair in the car, including some where you transfer to the seat first. Alternatively, you can get a wheelchair accessible vehicle, where you travel in your wheelchair (see our guide *Wheelchair accessible vehicles*).

## PRIMARY CONTROLS

### Steering

If you have to steer one-handed, for example if you have hand controls, you can fit a steering ball or spinner to the steering wheel.

Spinners come in several shapes to suit different types of grip (£15 - £110).



A range of steering wheel grips

### Changing gears

Automatic transmission means fewer gear changes and helps with pulling away, especially in hill starts.

Usually automatics have a mechanical gear selector. If this is too hard for you to use, you can have an electronic system fitted, but these can be expensive. Take advice from a

Mobility Centre before investing in one of these systems.



Electronic gear selector

Some manual cars have automated gear systems which work without using a clutch pedal. You move a lever or use push buttons or paddles on the steering wheel to select a gear.



Gear controls on steering wheel

If you can operate the gear stick, but not the clutch pedal, you can fit a lever or button on the gear stick of a manual car that allows you to operate the clutch with the hand that you use to change gear (from £2,145).



Gear stick mounted Duck clutch, from Elap

## Accelerating and braking

If the strength or control of your legs is poor, you can have brake assistance added to reduce the effort required.

If only your right leg is affected, one option is to have an automatic car and fit a left foot accelerator on the left side of the brake pedal, for around £400. These pedals can be removed or flipped up out of the way when not in use.



Flip up pedal – here the right pedal is down

## Hand controls

Many people find hand controls fitted on an automatic car easier to get used to than a left foot accelerator. There are a few different types of system. They can be powered and the amount of force you need to operate them can be adjusted. You can fit a footrest, shaped to suit you (from £75), and a guard to stop your feet interfering with the pedals (from £100).



Single lever accelerator and brake – here fitted with optional indicator switch

## Combined controls

- steering column mounted (picture on previous page) – push the lever to brake and pull it towards you to accelerate (from £400)
- a radial lever that you use clockwise to accelerate and push away to brake (from £700)
- floor mounted push-pull levers – the height, length and strength needed can be set to suit you (from £900)
- clamp on controls simply bolt on to the pedals (£350) – best as a short term option.

## Separate accelerators and brakes

- accelerator rings need less effort than a push-pull lever and you can steer with both hands on the wheel (from £1,800)



Under ring accelerator

- hand operated floor mounted brakes (from £550)
- custom built accelerators made to be worked by different parts of your body.

## Parking brake

Mechanical attachments can make it easier to use the handbrake (from £70). Electronic parking brakes cost from around £700.

To help with pulling away, manual cars can be fitted with RSE Auto-brake – ask your adaptation advisor.

## SECONDARY CONTROLS

If you have difficulty using controls for the lights and indicators, there are simple and complex solutions.

If you need to work the indicator with your right hand, for example, you can fit an extension to the indicator stalk that takes it over the steering column.

If you have more complex needs, electronic systems can be fitted that bring all the secondary controls together in one unit.



Steering knob combined with wireless secondary controls

Some consist of keypads with a number of buttons on. Others have just one button and cycle through the functions till you reach the right one.

Prices vary widely depending on how complex the controls are and on the wiring system of the car (from £700). Check the cost of any adaptation you are considering and its compatibility with your car with an adaptation specialist before ordering your car.

## OTHER WAYS OF DRIVING

Nearly all controls can be altered or adapted to suit you and complete systems built around you if necessary. You will certainly need an assessment at a Mobility Centre and specialist instruction for systems that involve driving in a very different way.

## RICA GUIDES

Our larger guides give more detailed information. Contact us for your free copy, or read them on our website.

### **Getting in and out of a car (2011)**

- hoists which lift and lower you on to a car seat
- lifting seats which swing in and out of the car, lowering and locking into a position to suit you
- wheelchair systems that slide into the car while you are sitting in them and become the car seat.

### **Getting a wheelchair into a car (2010)**

- hoists, lifts and ramps to help get a wheelchair or scooter into the boot
- boot and rooftop hoists which stow a wheelchair once you are in your seat.

### **Wheelchair accessible vehicles (2011)**

- adapted cars that let you travel in your wheelchair.

### **Car controls (2011)**

- primary and secondary control adaptations.

## Finance

**Motability** – Car leasing scheme for people receiving the Higher Rate Mobility Component of DLA or PIP, War Pensioner’s Mobility Supplement or AFIP (see page 11 for more information).

**Access to Work** – May help if you are working or about to start work. Phone 0345 268 8499, ask at your Jobcentre or go to [www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople](http://www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople).

**VAT exemption on adaptations** – You do not have to pay VAT on adaptations, or on installation, repairs or maintenance.

**VAT exemption on a new car** – If you use a wheelchair or stretcher, you may not have to pay VAT on the purchase and maintenance of an adapted car. Information from HM Revenue and Customs (see page 11).

**Vehicle Excise Duty (Road Tax)** – You don’t have to pay this if you get the Higher Rate Mobility Component of DLA or PIP, War Pensioner’s Mobility Supplement or AFIP. You can claim disability exemption when you apply for vehicle tax  
[www.gov.uk/vehicle-exempt-from-vehicle-tax](http://www.gov.uk/vehicle-exempt-from-vehicle-tax).

**Charities** – To find one that may help try:

- Charity Search – provides a free service for people over 50, to help find a grant-giving charity  
Tel: 0117 982 4060 (9am-2.30pm)  
[www.charitysearch.org.uk](http://www.charitysearch.org.uk)
- Turn2Us – a website for people in financial need: [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)
- contacting local support groups (see pages 10-11)
- your library for local charities such as the Round Table or the Rotary or Lions Clubs.

**Car insurance** – Under the Equality Act 2010, insurers aren’t allowed to refuse disabled drivers insurance or charge extra without justifying evidence. Shop around for the best deal. Mobility Centres and organisations of disabled motorists (see pages 10-11) have lists of companies specialising in disabled drivers.



## Further information

### Blue Badge Scheme

**Allows disabled people to park in restricted areas. The rules are different in different places so do read and follow the conditions of use carefully. The scheme is administered by local authorities who deal with applications and issue badges. Contact your local authority for more information or phone:**

**0844 463 0213 (England)  
0844 463 0214 (Scotland)  
0844 463 0215 (Wales)**

**[blue.badge@northgate-is.com](mailto:blue.badge@northgate-is.com)  
[www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge](http://www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge)**

### Demand

- national charity that designs and makes specialist equipment for disabled people
- carries out maintenance and repairs on specialist equipment
- online shop selling new and second hand specialist sporting and mobility equipment.

Tel: 01923 681 800

Email: [info@demand.org.uk](mailto:info@demand.org.uk)  
[demandequipment.com](http://demandequipment.com)

### Disability Benefits Helpline

- government information service.

Tel: 03457 123456 (DLA)

03458 503322 (PIP)

[www.gov.uk/disability-benefits-helpline](http://www.gov.uk/disability-benefits-helpline)

### Disabled Living Foundation

- advice and information on equipment and services for disabled people
- training for professionals.

Tel: 0300 999 0004 (10am-4pm)

[www.dlf.org.uk](http://www.dlf.org.uk)

[www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk](http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk)

### Disabled Motoring UK

- the campaigning charity for disabled motorists. They run the Baywatch campaign against parking abuse and represent disabled people's needs at a national level. Membership £24 per year – includes monthly magazine.

The Street

Ashwellthorpe

NR16 1EX

Tel: 01508 489449

Fax: 01508 488173

Email: [info@disabledmotoring.org](mailto:info@disabledmotoring.org)

[www.disabledmotoring.org](http://www.disabledmotoring.org)

### DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency)

Drivers Medical Group

Tel: 0300 790 6806

Fax: 0845 850 0095

Email: [eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions](http://www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions)

### Driver & Vehicle Agency (Northern Ireland)

Driver Licensing Medical Section

Tel: 0845 402 4000

Email: [dva@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:dva@doeni.gov.uk)

[www.dvani.gov.uk](http://www.dvani.gov.uk)

### Forum of Mobility Centres

- a network of independent, accredited Mobility Centres which will: assess your driving and give you advice about how to make it safer, easier and more comfortable; give advice to carers; in some cases, help you find a specialist driving instructor
- national information service on driving, specialist equipment and vehicle adaptations.

Freephone: 0800 559 3636

[www.mobility-centres.org.uk](http://www.mobility-centres.org.uk)

### HM Revenue and Customs

- VAT relief on adaptations (VAT Notice 701/7) and motor vehicles (VAT Notice 701/59) for disabled people.

Tel: 0300 123 1073

[www.gov.uk/hmrc](http://www.gov.uk/hmrc)

### The Mobility Roadshow

- free events with advice, demonstrations and test drives on cars and mobility products and services
- includes **Get Going Live**, the event for young disabled motorists, where you can test drive cars and controls from the age of 15.

Email: [info@mobilityroadshow.co.uk](mailto:info@mobilityroadshow.co.uk)

[www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk](http://www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk)

### Motability

- Use Higher/Enhanced Rate Mobility Component of DLA, PIP or AFIP or your War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement to lease a car.
- Maintenance and servicing, insurance and breakdown assistance are included. Motability contribute towards the cost of adaptations.
- You may have to make an advance payment to cover the cost of the car.

- Motability have useful information, including videos on choosing a car and driving adaptations on their website.

Tel: 0300 456 4566

Textphone: 0300 037 0100

[www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)

### One Big Day/Big Event

- Motability run these regional events for customers and people interested in the scheme – you can see and test drive cars and adaptations.

Tel: 0300 456 4566

[www.motabilityevents.co.uk](http://www.motabilityevents.co.uk)

### Remap

- voluntary group of engineers who design and make specialist equipment for disabled people.

#### In England and Wales

Tel: 01732 760209

Email: [data@remap.org.uk](mailto:data@remap.org.uk)

[www.remap.org.uk](http://www.remap.org.uk)

#### In Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9086 4251

Email: [victor.cole@remapni.org](mailto:victor.cole@remapni.org)

[www.remapni.org](http://www.remapni.org)

#### In Scotland

Tel: 01466 730736

Email: [remap-scotland@btconnect.com](mailto:remap-scotland@btconnect.com)

[www.remap-scotland.org](http://www.remap-scotland.org)

### Scope

- national organisation for people with cerebral palsy.

Tel: 0808 800 3333

Email: [response@scope.org.uk](mailto:response@scope.org.uk)

[www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)



Consumer research for older and disabled people.

Rica is an independent charity that publishes information on products and services for older and disabled people.

Tel: 020 7427 2460

Email: [mail@rica.org.uk](mailto:mail@rica.org.uk)

[www.rica.org.uk](http://www.rica.org.uk)



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forum of mobility centres

