

# Stepping out

A guide to wheeled  
walking frames



## Stepping out - a guide to wheeled walking frames

This guide will help you decide what kind of walking aid is right for you.

If a wheeled walking frame would be a good choice, this guide will help you choose a suitable model.

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## Getting about safely

Many of us have difficulty getting about, whether it's into the kitchen to make a cup of tea, round the garden, down to the high street for the shops or on walks with family and friends. A wheeled walking frame or some other walking equipment can help. You may need it for a short time while you recover from an injury, an illness or an operation or you may need it longer. Either way, the right one can improve your health, freedom and confidence and help keep you from falling.

It's important to get the right equipment and to make sure that it fits properly and you know how to use it. Otherwise it can even make it harder or less safe to get about. It is wise to get advice from an expert if you need anything more than a simple stick. You will also have to try it out to see if it is comfortable and you can use it easily. See Getting a wheeled walking frame (page 25) for where to go for help and advice.

### What kind of mobility aid?

In this section we give a brief rundown of the kinds of equipment you can get to help with getting around. If you know you need a wheeled walking frame, go straight to our guide (page 8).

If you are having difficulty getting about, and it is stopping you from doing things you want to do, consider getting some equipment to help. Sometimes you may find that you can make life easier by changing the way you do things, or moving things around in your house. Your occupational therapist may advise you about this.

If you're getting a mobility aid, aim for something that makes you feel safe and helps you get around as naturally as you can. You might choose different equipment for different purposes - you might find a walking stick is fine indoors, but you need a wheeled walking frame or a scooter for the shops.

- A walking stick (see page 4) may be all you need. It can help you with balancing and make you feel safer. It also is a way of letting other people know you have difficulty getting around. If you're comfortable with a stick, and you can get around safely and happily, then great.
- Using two sticks together gives more help with balancing. You might need this if both legs are affected, if you cannot use one leg at all, or if you just find it specially hard to balance.
- Crutches (see page 5) are more secure than sticks, as they let you use your arms much more to help with balancing. This can be specially helpful if you can only carry your weight on one leg. Crutches are only really suitable for short stretches or for temporary use.
- A walking frame (see page 6) provides more stable support than crutches. For many people, a wheeled walking frame is easier to use than one without wheels, because you don't have to keep lifting it up to move it along. Make sure it's suitable for the places where you are going to use it (see page 13).
- If some of the trips that you want to make are too long for you to manage with any of these, think about a wheelchair or scooter (see page 7).

## Walking sticks and crutches

A walking stick might be just what you need to give you a little bit of help and improve your confidence. There is a larger choice than you might think.



You can get walking sticks made of wood, metal and carbon fibre.



They come plain or in a variety of colours and patterns.

You can also get sticks that fold up to fit in a carrying case or handbag and some are

adjustable so getting a stick of the right length is easy.

### What type of handle?

There's a wide variety of styles. Try any stick you are thinking about to make sure it is comfortable to hold.

The main types are:



#### T handle

Gives good grip and control.



#### Crook handle

The hook is useful for hanging up the stick.



#### Ergonomic handle

Shaped to fit your hand closely so the pressure is spread across your palm. Good if you have very stiff or painful hands or find it hard

to grip. Left and right-hand handles are different.



#### Swan neck handle

Can make the stick feel more balanced.



#### Three and four footed sticks

You can get sticks with three or four feet at the bottom which helps keep them steady. These sticks

can be quite tricky to use safely, specially on uneven surfaces or stairs. You should not get one of these sticks without taking advice from a professional.

## Crutches



- The most usual type of crutch is the elbow crutch, which has a cuff around your lower arm to keep it steady.
- You usually bear your weight on your hands, though if this is difficult for you, your therapist may recommend crutches which support your whole forearm.
- Crutches can be tiring to use so most people combine them with a wheelchair or scooter.
- Crutches are usually adjustable. The top part, between the handle and the elbow cuff, is sometimes adjustable too. You need to make sure this part fits.
- You should always get professional advice before choosing crutches.

### Tips on using sticks and crutches

#### Walking

If you are using one stick, it goes on the same side as the stronger leg and moves when the weaker leg does. If you are using two sticks or crutches you either move them both together with the weaker leg or move them in turn together with the opposite leg. You should take advice about this, and you may have to practise to get it right.

#### Stairs

If there is a handrail, hold on to it. Use your stick in the other hand. If there is no handrail,

the stick goes on the same side as the weaker leg. Lead with your stronger leg when going up and your weaker leg when going down. If you use two sticks, you should talk to your physiotherapist about managing stairs.

#### Make sure it fits

It is important your sticks or crutches are the right length or they could make walking more difficult and painful. Non-adjustable sticks may need to be cut to size.

The handle should be level with your wrist bone when you are standing in your natural upright position with your arms straight down. The wrist bone is the hard lump that sticks out on the same side as the little finger.

#### Check the ferrule

Sticks and crutches have rubber feet, called ferrules, which keep them from slipping. Check these regularly for wear and replace them if necessary. Replacements are easy to buy and fit. You can also get special ferrules that give added grip or stability.

#### Check for wear

Adjustable sticks and crutches can become worn around the joints, and this can be dangerous if you don't notice in time. Check regularly. If the joint is very worn, replace the stick.



#### Clicks and rattles

Folding sticks and adjustable sticks and crutches sometimes click or rattle as you walk with them because the sections don't fit together very well. This can be annoying, and it can also make the joints wear out more quickly. Check this out before you buy.

## Walking frames indoor and outdoor

If you need a lot of support, you should get a walking frame.

Simple walking frames without wheels, often called Zimmer frames, are designed for use around the home, though you can use them outdoors on level surfaces. You can get folding ones.

Two-wheeled walking frames can be easier to use because you don't need to stop to move the frame forwards between steps. They are not suitable for outdoors, because the wheels are very small and the ferrules on the back legs wear out very quickly.

Three and four-wheeled walking frames can be used both indoors and outdoors, though some are quite large, which might cause difficulties if your rooms are small. Most come with trays, baskets or bags for carrying things. Many have seats which you can use to take a short rest.



Walking frames are usually adjustable or come in a range of sizes. It is important to get the right height. The handles should be level with your wrist bone when you are standing in your natural upright position with your arms down. The wrist bone is the hard lump that sticks out on the same side as the little finger.

For safety, support and comfort it's also important that you walk as upright as you can and that you don't have to lean forwards to reach the handles. You should be able to walk right inside the frame with the handles by your thighs. On some frames the seat or something else is in the way and you find yourself having to lean forwards over the hand grips. Some seats fold up out of the way while you walk.

**We tested 18 walking frames for this guide - see pages 14-24.**

## Trolleys - indoor and outdoor

These can help if you just need a little bit of support to give you confidence, or help with carrying things. Household trolleys are designed to help you carry things indoors. Shopping trolleys can be a great help when going outdoors.

Think about where you are going to use the trolley. Indoor trolleys can be difficult to steer through doorways or over thresholds, carpets or uneven floors.



## Scooters and wheelchairs

If you can't manage to walk as far as you need to, even with a stick, crutches or a walking frame, a scooter or wheelchair may be the solution. You may be able to manage some things with a stick or frame and others may be easier with a scooter or wheelchair.

Some scooters are designed to be driven on the road, and you can use these between your home and the shops for example, but you may have to get off to go indoors. Smaller scooters can be used on the pavement and in shops etc. Some people carry these in the back of the car.



If you need special seating or if you're going to spend long periods in it, a wheelchair is more suitable. Manual wheelchairs are usually light and manoeuvrable. Electric wheelchairs ('powerchairs') are heavier, but don't need to be pushed! You can get a wheelchair that you drive yourself or one that someone drives for you.

### Getting a scooter or wheelchair

If you need a wheelchair permanently you may get one from the NHS on a long-term loan. Your GP or hospital doctor or social services can refer you to your local wheelchair service. They will work out your needs and provide you with a manual or electric wheelchair if you are eligible.

If you want something more sophisticated than the chair provided by the NHS, they may give you a voucher towards the price of the wheelchair you want. The wheelchair clinic will have to approve your choice.

If you receive the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance or War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement, you can use the Motability scheme (see page 29) to get a powered wheelchair or scooter.

If you need a wheelchair temporarily you may be able to borrow one from social services or from your local British Red Cross branch (see Shops and Suppliers page 29).

In some areas, there are local schemes that lend or hire scooters for a long or short term. Ask your social services. There are Shopmobility schemes (page 29) in many UK towns and cities that lend or hire wheelchairs or scooters to use in the town centre for the day. This can be a good way to try a scooter or wheelchair out before you buy one.

Scooters and wheelchairs are expensive and complicated and there is a lot of choice out there, so even if you are buying it yourself you should take advice from your therapist or your local NHS Wheelchair service. There are also other organisations that can give you advice about wheelchairs (try a local Mobility Centre, or Disabled Living Centre - see Information and advice page 28).

## Choosing a wheeled walking frame

This section gives some general information about wheeled walking frames, and looks in detail at 18 frames that were assessed by our team.

### Why get a wheeled walking frame?

- can be used inside and out
- suitable for long trips
- can all be folded for transport or storage
- most have baskets for shopping
- some have seats so you can have short rests

### Three or four wheels?

The basic choice is between three and four-wheeled walking frames.

Some people prefer three-wheeled walking frames because they look smaller and less obtrusive. They can also be a bit lighter and easier to steer in small places than some four-wheeled models.

However, many therapists advise against three-wheelers because they are easier to tip. It is also not always obvious if they have been properly unfolded, which can be risky if you don't notice in time. If you want a three-wheeler, go for one which has a supporting strut that locks into place automatically as you push the frame forwards or has an indicator that shows you clearly if it's not locked.



Most three-wheeled walking frames don't have seats - see **Our tests** from page 14.

### Folding

Walking frames fold up for storage and transport. Some are easier to fold than others, and some fold up smaller than others.

Measurements of the folded frames are given in the summaries (pages 15 - 24).

Some models can be difficult to fold or unfold. Because they cannot support you when you are folding them there is a danger of overbalancing. You can also trap your fingers.

**Ask the shop to show you how the frame folds and try it out a few times to make sure you can do it safely.**

**Check that you (or whoever will do it) can pick up the folded frame to put it away or get it into the back of the car.**

Some walking frames will stay standing up when folded and some have a clip or catch that holds them secure in the folded position. These features make them easier to use.

### Holding on



Most people hold and steer the walking frame with both hands, holding on to the frame



or holding on to handles.



If your hands are stiff or painful you can have forearm supports on some models. You should take professional advice if you are considering a forearm walker.

### Hand grips

You may use your walking frame for long periods, and you will be holding the handles all the time. It's important to make sure they are comfortable. Try out different hand grips in the shop, allowing enough time to really get a feel for them.



This frame has soft foam grips. These types are easy to hold and usually comfortable, as long as they are the right thickness for your hand. Try them out to see.



Some walking frames have straight hand grips.



These are covered with padded tape, like on a bicycle.



Others have specially shaped hand grips (sometimes called ergonomic or anatomic grips) that are meant to fit your hand more comfortably. Check this - they can actually be very uncomfortable if the moulding doesn't fit your hand closely.

## Brakes

All walking frames have brakes of one kind or another.



**Pressure brakes** go on when you push down on the frame (see picture - above). They are easy to use because it is easy to use your weight to press down. They only stay on while you are pushing, so you cannot lock the brakes on if you want to stay put for a while. Make sure they are properly adjusted, otherwise they might come on when you are not expecting it.



**Hand brakes** work by squeezing a lever like on a bicycle (see picture - above left), or a strap (see picture - above right). They can be used to slow you down as you are going along and can be locked on to keep the frame steady while you sit down or put things on the tray or basket.

Lever brakes usually work with cables. Sometimes these are hidden inside the frame, which is better because then they can't get caught on things.

**If you are choosing a walking frame with hand brakes, check you can stretch your fingers far enough and squeeze with enough force to comfortably apply the brakes. You also need to be able to push the lever or strap down to lock the brakes on. Some brake levers are shaped to make them easier. Try a selection in the shop.**

## Seats and backrests

All four-wheeled walking frames have seats. Very few three-wheelers do. Seats can be useful, especially on longer trips. They are meant for short rests, not sitting in for a long time. They are made of fabric, wood or plastic, and may be rigid or flexible. Some are padded and some have backrests.

- Try them out to find out what suits you, and take enough time to test for comfort.
- Check that the seat is the right height for you to sit comfortably, and high enough to let you sit down and get up easily. Some are adjustable and some frames come in a range of sizes - so make sure you are trying the right one for you.
- Make sure the walking frame and seat are stable and you can sit down and stand up safely.
- If you need back support check it is at the right height to support you comfortably. A few backrests are adjustable.



This Homecraft Space Saver has a padded seat; the backrest is a solid bar.



This Etac Avant has a solid folding seat; the backrest is a solid bar.



This Etac Tango has a fabric seat; the backrest is a plastic strap.

## Bags, baskets and trays

Many frames have a bag or basket.

You might have to take the bag or basket off, or at least empty it, before you can fold the walking frame. If you're using the bag for shopping, and you know you're going to have to fold the walking frame to get it into the car, say, it's a good idea to put a shopping bag into the frame's bag first - then you can lift everything out in one go.

Some bags or baskets can be a bit difficult to get at, especially when you are sitting down (some are under the seat).

Think about whether this is going to be important for you.

Some baskets sit at the front of the frame. If you are worried about things being stolen, look for a basket or bag that can be closed, or is harder to get at.

Many frames have a tray - useful for carrying things from room to room at home. Check that you can reach it easily (some are very low) and they are firm enough (some shake around a bit).

## Other features

Standard or optional features include walking stick holders, drink holders, oxygen cylinder holders and parasols.

Some walking frames have 'kerb climbers'. These are small pedals attached to the rear wheels that are meant to make it easier to get up kerbs. We found they didn't help much.

**If you find the walking frame runs away from you, or if you're going to be using it on a slope, you can get one fitted with 'slow down' brakes on the back wheels. These will slow the frame down and make it easier to keep it under control. Find out which frames you can get these with on pages 15-24.**



Basket on the front:  
Rebotec Polo.



Zip-up bag:  
Uniscan Triumph.



Slow down brake:  
Volaris S3.

## Maintenance

Your walking frame shouldn't need much in the way of maintenance. You should keep it clean and check the wheels and moving parts for wear.

You do need to check the joints and catches to see that they have not become worn with use. If they are badly worn the walking frame will need to be replaced.

Brakes should not need much maintenance if they have been set up properly. Pressure brakes have rubber ferrules. These need to be checked regularly and replaced if worn. Strap and lever brakes may need to be adjusted to allow for wear. Make sure that you know how to do this, or that there is someone around who can help. It's easy to do, but with some types you will need two spanners (not supplied with the frame) and two hands.

Some shops will offer to help with regular servicing for a fee.

## Things to check

Think about how you will be using the walking frame and work out which of these things will be most important for you. Take this list with you into the shop.

### Is the walking frame suitable for the places you will be using it?

- Will you be using it indoors?
  - Will it fit in your home?
  - Will it go through your door?
- Will you be using it outdoors?
  - If you have sloping or uneven ground, will it be all right on that?

### Is the walking frame suitable for someone of your size?

- Get it adjusted to the right height for you. Try it out.
- Is it comfortable?
- Is it strong enough to support your weight? Walking frames are available for particularly heavy people.

### Will you need to fold the walking frame?

- If so, can you fold and unfold it safely and can you pick it up when it's folded?
- Can you tell when it is securely unfolded?

### Try the hand grips for as long as you can. Will they be comfortable?

### Try the brakes. Make sure you can work them.

### Try the seat for comfort and for stability.

### Will you be using the bag or basket?

- If so, can you get at it easily enough?
- Will you have to unpack it to fold the walking frame if you have to?

You really need to have a good try-out with any walking frame before you buy it, making sure it will help with everything you want it for. Try out any features you are likely to need. Try the handles and seat for comfort for as long as you can.

Even if you're buying online or by mail order you can go to a Disabled Living Centre (see Useful organisations, page 28) to have a look at the available models.

## Our tests

We asked a group of ten professionals and two walking frame users to assess eighteen walking frames. They checked out the various features they had and assessed them for ease of use.

## Safety

All of the frames were judged to be mechanically safe by engineers at the lab, though there were minor concerns about three of them.

There is a risk of trapping your fingers when unfolding the Etac Tango - you need to push down on the sides of the seat to lock it into place, and you might wrap your fingers round and trap them underneath. If you're thinking of getting one of these walking frames, make sure you understand how the folding mechanism works.

There is a very small risk with the Etac Avant and Etac Salsa that you could use them with a loose front wheel if they have not been properly adjusted. This adjustment only needs to be done once, so shouldn't be a worry if any adjustment is done by someone who knows what they're doing.



**Etac Avant**  
**£199**

### Dimensions (HxWxL):

740-990mm x 600mm x 600-770mm  
740-990mm x 600mm x 310mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 8.3kg

**Features:** Taped bar grips, strap brakes, folding wooden seat, wire basket, optional tray (£13). Handle height and seat height are adjustable. A useful feature is that the height adjustment is done at the legs, which means that the base gets wider as the walking frame gets higher, so there is no loss of stability for taller users. This also means that the seat height varies with handle height, which helps with sitting comfort and ease of standing up.

## Our verdict

**Handling:** Light and easy.

**Hand grips:** Comfortable and easy to hold.

**Brakes:** Easy to operate, and effective.

**Folding:** Tricky and the frame does not stand when folded, though it is secure when unfolded.



**Etac Salsa**  
**£199**

### Dimensions (HxWxL):

650-800mm x 580mm x 560-660mm  
650-800mm x 580mm x 270mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 5.6kg

**Features:** Taped bar grips, strap brakes, folding plastic seat, detachable bag with velcro closure, no tray. Can be folded with the bag in place. Handle height and seat height are adjustable. As with the Avant, height adjustment is done at the legs, which means that the base gets wider as the walking frame gets higher, so there is no loss of stability for taller users. This also means that the seat height varies with handle height, which helps with sitting comfort and ease of standing up.

## Our verdict

**Handling:** Light and easy.

**Hand grips:** Comfortable and easy to hold.

**Brakes:** Easy to operate, and effective.

**Folding:** Tricky and the walking frame does not stand when folded, though it is secure when unfolded.



**Etac Tango**  
**£199**

**Dimensions (HxWxL):**

760-980mm x 600mm x 680mm  
760-980mm x 190mm x 680mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 9.3kg

**Features:** Shaped hand grips, lever brakes, fabric seat, strap backrest, removable wire basket and tray. Handle height is adjustable.

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** Light and easy.

**Hand grips:** Might become uncomfortable - there is a screw head right where your thumb goes.

**Brakes:** Not easy to operate, but very effective.

**Folding:** Tricky - you can fold yourself up inside the frame. Does stand when folded. Secure when unfolded. Take care not to trap your fingers in the mechanism when unfolding.



**Etac Ono**  
**£179**

**Dimensions(HxWxL):**

750-1000mm x 590mm x 660mm  
750-1000mm x 590mm x 400mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 9.3kg

**Features:** Shaped hand grips, lever brakes, solid plastic seat, optional padded backrest (£23), removable wire basket and tray, optional slow-down brakes (£32). Handle height is adjustable.

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** OK.

**Hand grips:** Shaped hand grips have a wide flange to support the thumb joint, which is good, though might become uncomfortable if they don't fit your hands.

**Brakes:** Easy enough to operate, and effective.

**Folding:** Easy enough, though does not stand when folded. Unfolding quite difficult - you have to support the weight of the frame while you do it and it is stiff.

**Seat:** Not comfortable. It is narrow and hard. There is also a risk that you knock the brakes off with your thighs when sitting down.



**Rebotec Polo**  
**£130**

**Dimensions (HxWxL):**

800-980mm x 620mm x 700mm  
800-980mm x 620mm x 400mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 6.7kg

**Features:** Padded bar grips, lever brakes, folding plastic seat, bar backrest, removable wire basket, tray. You can adjust the height of the hand grips.

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** Easy.

**Hand grips:** Comfortable, though if you have very thick hands or knuckles you might find the gap a little tight.

**Brakes:** Easy to operate and reasonably effective, though the tyres did slip on some surfaces.

**Folding:** Difficult - you need two hands, and it's easy to get it wrong. Does not stand when folded. Unfolds easily and clicks right into place.

**Seat:** Very narrow, and the bar backrest tends to push you out of the seat.



**Volaris S7**  
**£198**

**Dimensions (HxWxL):**

760-1000mm x 590mm x 700mm  
760-1000mm x 210mm x 700mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 7.7kg

**Features:** Straight hand grips (optional shaped hand grips), lever brakes, solid plastic seat (optional padded seat), optional strap backrest (around £10), removable wire basket (with optional bag), tray, optional slow down brakes (around £30).

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** Easy, except that the rear wheels can clip the bend on corners.

**Hand grips:** Comfortable.

**Brakes:** Easy to operate and very effective.

**Folding:** Easy, though the two sides didn't go very close together. Does stand when folded. Unfolds easily and clicks right into place.

**Comments:** Nice large basket, but tray is very low, and hard to use.



**Volaris S3**  
**£229**

**Dimensions (HxWxL):**

745-900mm x 595mm x 725mm

745-900mm x 265mm x 725mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 9.8kg

**Features:** Straight hand grips, lever brakes, solid plastic seat, optional strap backrest (around £10), removable wire basket (with optional bag), optional tray (around £12), optional slow down brakes (around £30), optional bag basket, kerb climber. Handle height easily adjustable. You can also adjust the angle of the hand grips, though the range is not very great.

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** Easy.

**Hand grips:** Comfortable.

**Brakes:** Very easy to operate and very effective.

**Folding:** Easy. Does stand when folded. Velcro-fastening strap to keep the two sides together. Unfolds easily and clicks right into place.

**Seat:** Comfortable.

**Comments:** Large basket. Tray very low, and hard to use.



**Uniscan Cadet**  
**£140**

**Dimensions (HxWxL):**

749-902mm x 584mm x 600mm

749-902mm x 584mm x 210mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 4.1kg

**Features:** Soft foam hand grips, padded seat, pressure brakes fitted as standard (optional lever brakes - £25), no backrest, basket or tray, optional shopping bag (£18). Handle height adjustable (3 positions). Seat not adjustable, but the frame is available in two sizes.

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** Easy. Pressure brakes caused some slight problems when standing up from sitting.

**Hand grips:** Very comfortable.

**Brakes:** Easy enough to operate and effective. It is important to have pressure brakes adjusted correctly, or they will come on when you are not expecting. Adjustment is done at the factory.

**Folding:** Very easy. Does stand when folded. Unfolds easily and clicks right into place.



**Uniscan Glider Plus**  
**£228**

**Dimensions (HxWxL):**

597-1054mm x 635mm x 600mm

597-1054mm x 635mm x 300mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 5.6kg

**Features:** Soft foam hand grips, padded seat and backrest, lever brakes fitted as standard (optional pressure brakes - no cost), removable bag under seat. Handle height adjustable (3 positions). Seat not adjustable, but the frame is available in two sizes.

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** OK.

**Hand grips:** Very comfortable.

**Brakes:** Easy to operate and effective.

**Folding:** Very easy. Does stand when folded. Unfolds easily and clicks right into place.



**Homecraft Space Saver**

**Dimensions (HxWxL):**

840-940mm x 660mm x 660mm

840-940mm x 660mm x 360mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 9.5kg

**Features:** Foam handgrips, lever brakes, padded seat, bar backrest, bag under the seat, no tray. Handle height adjustable but seat height not.

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** Easy.

**Hand grips:** Comfortable.

**Brakes:** Easy to operate, and very effective.

**Folding:** Tricky - needs two hands and frame is heavy. Does not stand when folded. Unfolds easily enough and is secure.

**Comments:** Designed to fold up smaller than similar models. Works well, but frame is heavy, so you may find it difficult.



## Homecraft Bariatric Rollator

### Dimensions (HxWxL):

780-1010mm x 760mm x 750mm

780-1010mm x 760mm x 420mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 10.5kg

**Features:** Shaped handgrips, lever brakes, padded seat, removable backrest, no bag or tray. Handle height adjustable but seat height is not.

### Our verdict

**Handling:** Easy, though hampered slightly by the increased width.

**Hand grips:** Fairly comfortable.

**Brakes:** Easy enough to operate, and very effective.

**Folding:** Easy enough. No clip to secure folded frame, but it does stand up. Unfolding is easy enough and secure.

**Comments:** Designed for larger users: up to 200kg - 31.5 stone. Very sturdy and wide.



## Z-Tec Ergo Plus Duo

### Dimensions (HxWxL):

810-980mm x 620mm x 670mm

810-980mm x 620mm x 630mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 10.2kg

**Features:** Shaped handgrips, lever brakes, seat and backrest - both memory foam, basket under seat with removable bag, no tray. Handle height adjustable but seat height is not.

### Our verdict

**Handling:** Easy.

**Hand grips:** Model tested had uncomfortable, hard moulded hand grips. Thicker, softer grips on new models may be more comfortable.

**Brakes:** Easy to operate, and effective.

**Folding:** Tricky - needs two hands and the frame is heavy. Does not stand when folded. Model tested could be used with catch not fully on - new models have different catch which should solve this.

**Comments:** Doubles as a wheelchair for occasional use. OK on very smooth surfaces, but difficult to push.



## Z-Tec Topro Troja

### Dimensions (HxWxL):

750-1000mm x 610mm x 630mm

750-1000mm x 230mm x 630mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 7.6kg

**Features:** Soft moulded handgrips, lever brakes, fabric seat, strap backrest, net bag, no tray. Handle height adjustable but seat height is not. Memory feature allows you to return the handles to a set height, after, for example, collapsing to put into a car boot.

### Our verdict

**Handling:** Very light and easy.

**Hand grips:** Moulded hand grips are nice and soft.

**Brakes:** Easy to operate, and effective.

**Folding:** Very easy. Stands when folded, and locks securely into place when unfolded.

**Seat:** Comfortable.



**Liberty  
Triwalker**  
£50-70

**Dimensions (HxWxL):**

815-965mm x 640mm x 670mm  
815-965mm x 265mm x 670mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 6.9kg

**Features:** Shaped hand grips, lever brakes, removable wire basket, no tray, optional bag (£9.85). Height and angle of hand grips adjustable.

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** Very light and easy.

**Hand grips:** Hard shaped grips might become uncomfortable.

**Brakes:** Easy enough to operate, though difficult to lock. Reasonably effective.

**Folding:** Very easy. Does stand when folded. Unfolds easily and catch clicks into place - it would be obvious if this hadn't engaged (see picture).

**Comments:** Small basket was difficult to get in the right place.



**Uniscan  
Triumph**  
£210

**Dimensions (HxWxL):**

800-914mm x 610mm x 600mm  
800-914mm x 220mm x 600mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 5.8kg

**Features:** Soft foam hand grips, lever brakes, folding padded seat, closable bag that doubles as a backrest (optional - £22). Handle height adjustable. Seat not adjustable.

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** Easy.

**Hand grips:** Very comfortable.

**Brakes:** Easy enough to operate and effective.

**Folding:** Very easy. Does stand when folded. Unfolds easily and securely.

**Seat:** Comfortable enough. Seat needs to be pulled up into place before sitting.



**Uniscan  
Triumph Plus**  
£235

**Dimensions (HxWxL):**

800-914mm x 610mm x 600mm  
800-914mm x 220mm x 600mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 6.7kg

**Features:** Soft foam hand grips, lever brakes, folding padded seat, closable bag that doubles as a backrest (optional - £22). Handle height adjustable. Seat not adjustable.

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** Easy.

**Hand grips:** Very comfortable.

**Brakes:** Easy enough to operate and effective.

**Folding:** Very easy. Does stand when folded. Unfolds easily and securely.

**Seat:** Comfortable enough. Seat needs to be pulled up into place before sitting.



**Days  
Adjustable  
Three-  
Wheeler**

**Dimensions (HxWxL):**

815-965mm x 640mm x 670mm  
815-965mm x 225mm x 670mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 6.0kg

**Features:** Shaped hand grips; pressure brakes; closable bag inside the frame can be left in place when you fold the walking frame (as long as it's empty). Handle height and angle adjustable.

**Our verdict**

**Handling:** Very light and easy.

**Hand grips:** Hard shaped grips might become uncomfortable.

**Brakes:** Easy enough to operate and effective. It is important to have pressure brakes adjusted correctly, or they will come on when you are not expecting. Adjustment by hand.

**Folding:** Very easy. Does stand when folded. Unfolds easily, but does not secure itself.



## Homecraft Three-Wheeled Rollator

### Dimensions (HxWxL):

815-965mm x 640mm x 670mm

815-965mm x 270mm x 670mm (folded)

**Weight (without accessories):** 6.5kg

**Features:** Shaped hand grips, lever brakes, removable wire basket, tray, optional bag. Handle height and angle adjustable.

### Our verdict

**Handling:** Very light and easy.

**Hand grips:** Hard shaped grips might become uncomfortable.

**Brakes:** Easy to operate and very effective.

**Folding:** Very easy. Does stand when folded. Unfolds easily, but does not secure itself.

**Comments:** Small basket was difficult to get in the right place. Tray slopes (see picture), could be dangerous - at the very least you could spill your drink!

## Getting a wheeled walking frame

### Where to get information

It's a good idea to get as much information as you can before getting a walking frame.

#### Ask an expert

Ask your local NHS or social services about what's available. You can also see an occupational therapist privately - contact the College of Occupational Therapists (see Information and advice, page 276) to find one. Speak to a physiotherapist for advice on what kind of walking frame is best for you, and how to adjust and use it. Your GP will be able to find you a community physiotherapist if you haven't already got one. Alternatively the CSP or Physio First (see Information and advice page 27) will help you find a private physiotherapist.

#### Read about them

You can get catalogues from mail order companies or have a look on the internet (see Shops and suppliers, pages 29 - 30). You can also get information from the DLF (page 28).

#### See for yourself

Go and have a look at some walking frames at your local specialist shop (see Suppliers page 29 - 30), or Disabled Living Centre (see Information and advice, page 28).

### Assessment and fitting

Before getting a walking frame you should make sure it is right for you. An assessment carried out by a trained professional will look at your needs and help determine the best way to meet them.

Some shops, mail order companies and manufacturers will sell walking frames without doing an assessment. If you are buying a walking frame from any of these sources it is a good idea to have a professional assessment first.

You may be able to get an assessment from your local social services - ask your occupational therapist if you have one, or contact your council. Some Disabled Living Centres (see Information and advice, page 29) offer free assessments. They will all give you helpful advice. The CSP, Physio First or the College of Occupational Therapists (see Information and advice, page 27) will be able to find you a therapist to carry out a private assessment.

You should also make sure your walking frame has been properly adjusted to fit. If this wasn't done in the shop (or if you bought the frame by mail order), whoever did your assessment should be able to help. The guidance given in this booklet should help you to do this yourself if you are comfortable with that.

## Paying for it

You may be able to get a walking frame from your local NHS or social services. How this works varies from area to area and will depend on your personal circumstances. The first step is to talk to your doctor, therapist or social services and ask them for an assessment.

Walking frames cost between about £50 and over £250. If you're buying it yourself you should make sure you get good advice before you do.

You don't have to pay VAT on products designed and sold for disabled people. Specialist shops will automatically sell you equipment without charging you VAT, but you may have to ask in high street shops.

## Suppliers

You can get walking frames from a local mobility shop (look in the business pages under 'disability equipment' or 'mobility equipment'). You can also get them from some local chemists and more general retailers.

Staff in a specialist mobility shop should be able to advise you on the products they have, but the general retailers will not have expert staff.

Specialist staff will know about the differences between the products they stock and will be able to fit them properly and advise you on maintenance. Non-specialist retailers may not be able to provide all this.

Shops only stock a limited number of models. If you can't find a feature you are looking for, or if you don't like any of the models you see, ask them about it; if they can't give you what you want, try somewhere else. If you are buying in a shop, make sure you are given plenty of time to look at the walking frames and try them out. Don't be pressured into buying if you don't think any in the shop are right for you.

There are also a number of mail order and internet suppliers (some of these are listed in Shops and suppliers, page 29 - 30). These are fine if you already know which walking frame you want. Mail order suppliers are obliged to accept returns within 28 days if the product isn't right for you, and hasn't been used, but some may refuse to take equipment back once it has been unpacked. Make sure you know what the returns policy is before ordering. You will also have to put the walking frame together yourself (some come in several pieces), adjust it to fit and set up the brakes correctly.

Some manufacturers and importers sell directly to the public (see Shops and suppliers, page 29 - 30). Some of these will give you an assessment before recommending one of their models (of course they don't sell other manufacturers' walking frames) and help you get it set up properly. Some offer guarantees and after sales service; you should ask about this if it is important to you.

## Useful organisations

### Assessment

You can get an independent assessment from an occupational therapist or physiotherapist. These organisations will help you find one locally. You will have to pay.

#### The College of Occupational Therapists

Tel: 0800 389 4873  
www.cotss-ip.org.uk

#### The Chartered Society of Physiotherapists

Tel: 020 7306 6666  
www.csp.org.uk/physio2u

#### Physio First

Physio First  
Minerva House  
Tithe Barn Way  
Swan Valley  
Northampton  
Northants NN4 9BA

Tel: 01604 684960  
Email: towcester@physiofirst.org.uk  
www.physiofirst.org.uk

#### Disabled Living Centres

Contact Assist UK (see page 28) to find your local DLC, and to see if they can give you an assessment.

### Information and advice

Wherever you live there will be information agencies that know about what's available locally. Many areas have a local disability organisation or action group. Ask at your library or council information services. It is also worth looking under disability in your local classified telephone book.

#### The BHTA

The British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) is the trade association for the healthcare industry. It has a national membership of manufacturers and suppliers of mobility aids and other products. The BHTA code of practice sets out standards that its members must meet.

Shops and suppliers will display their BHTA membership if they have one.

Suite 4.06  
New Loom House  
101 Back Church Lane  
London E1 1LU  
Tel: 020 7702 2141  
Email: bhta@bhta.com,  
or: complaints@bhta.com  
www.bhta.net

## DIAL UK

DIAL UK is a network of some 120 local Disability Information and Advice Line services (DIALs). They are run by disabled people for disabled people. They give information and advice on anything to do with living with a disability. They can help you find a local mobility shop.

To find your nearest DIAL contact:

St Catherine's  
Tickhill Road  
Doncaster DN4 8QN  
Tel: 01302 310123  
Fax: 01302 310404  
Textphone: 01302 310123 and use voice  
announcer  
Email: [informationenquiries@dialuk.org.uk](mailto:informationenquiries@dialuk.org.uk)  
[www.dialuk.info](http://www.dialuk.info)

## Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)

The DLF provides comprehensive information about equipment and where to get it. Their website includes clearly written guides about a range of daily living equipment. They produce a range of factsheets and guides.

AskSARA is a very helpful online system that will tell you what kind of equipment may help you. You choose a topic (such as bathroom, gardening, hobbies or leisure or hearing) and answer a series of very simple questions. AskSARA then will give you a rundown of things that might help, things to think about and advice on what to do next.

Their helpline will give you information by phone, and they can send you printed guides and information.

380-384 Harrow Road  
London W9 2HU

Local rate Helpline: 0845 130 9177

Fax: 020 7266 2922

Textphone: 020 7432 8009

Email: [advice@dlf.org.uk](mailto:advice@dlf.org.uk)

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

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

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

## Disabled Living Centres

There are over 40 Disabled Living Centres (called independent living centres in some places) up and down the country. Most centres have displays of equipment that you can see and try out – they stock and display a variety of products to meet most needs. They can advise you about the range of equipment and solutions available to meet your needs and where it is available. They will often advise you about the best way of getting equipment too, whether this be by buying privately or through the social or health services.

Most DLCs operate as charities and offer impartial advice. If they do sell equipment their main consideration is to provide you with the information for specific solutions and give you a choice. If possible ring to make an appointment before you visit a DLC so they can make sure there is someone free to talk to you.

To find your nearest centre contact **Assist UK**:

Redbank House  
4 St Chad's Street  
Manchester M8 8QA  
Tel: 0161 834 1044  
Fax: 0870 770 2867  
Textphone: 0870 770 5813  
Email: [general.info@assist-uk.org](mailto:general.info@assist-uk.org)  
[www.assist-uk.org](http://www.assist-uk.org)

## Shopmobility

Independent charity supporting shopmobility schemes throughout the UK. To find your nearest scheme contact:

P O Box 6641  
Christchurch BH23 9DQ  
Tel: 08456 442446  
Fax: 08456 444442  
Email: [info@shopmobilityuk.org](mailto:info@shopmobilityuk.org)  
[www.shopmobilityuk.org](http://www.shopmobilityuk.org)

## Financial support

This section tells you where you can go for financial support. The organisations listed here will be able to help you find charitable and other sources of money to buy mobility equipment.

## Charity Search

If you are over 60, Charity Search is a free service to help you find a grant-giving charity. Freepost (BS6610)  
Avonmouth BS11 9TW  
Tel: 0117 9824060  
Email: [info@charitysearch.org.uk](mailto:info@charitysearch.org.uk)  
[www.charitysearch.org.uk](http://www.charitysearch.org.uk)

## Motability

Provide a scheme to pay for a scooter or wheelchair or a car. Contact them if you receive the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance or War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement.  
Tel: 0845 456 4566  
[www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)

## Shops and suppliers

Here we list national organisations that sell mobility equipment by mail order, or national chains of specialist shops.

For local shops that aren't part of a national chain, look in your local business pages, or ask you local DIAL (see page 27).

## Able Living

Sell a range of disability products online and through their catalogue.

2nd Floor Patman House  
23 - 27 Electric Parade  
George Lane  
South Woodford  
London E18 2LS  
Tel: 0871 2205232 / 020 8530 6030  
Email: [info@ableliving.com](mailto:info@ableliving.com)  
[www.ableliving.com](http://www.ableliving.com)

## Ability Answers

Sell a range of disability products online; they can give you advice about their products over the phone.

Unit 2 Cwm Road  
Hafod  
Swansea SA1 2AY  
Tel: 01792 412700  
Fax: 01792 534102  
Email: [info@tekability.com](mailto:info@tekability.com)  
[www.tekability.com](http://www.tekability.com)

## British Red Cross

Sell a wide range of independent living products.

PO Box 400  
Witney OX28 9BZ  
Tel: 0844 8930089  
Email:  
[customerservicecentre@redcross.org.uk](mailto:customerservicecentre@redcross.org.uk)  
[www.redcross.org.uk/shop](http://www.redcross.org.uk/shop)

## DoAbility UK Limited

Suppliers of the Volaris walking frames. You can order a range of disability equipment through their website or phone for a catalogue.

42 West Park Ave  
Leeds LS8 2EB  
Tel: 0870 4020646  
Email: info@doability.co.uk  
www.doability.co.uk

## Hearing and mobility

A chain of specialist shops. They have 27 branches around the country. Contact them by phone or check their website to find one near you.

Tel: 0844 8881338  
www.hearingandmobility.co.uk

## Homecraft Rolyan

Suppliers of the Days and Homecraft frames. You can order a range of disability equipment through their website or phone for a catalogue.

Nunn Brook Road  
Huthwaite  
Sutton in Ashfield  
Nottinghamshire NG17 2HU  
Tel: 08444 124330  
Fax: 08448 730100  
www.homecraft-rolyan.com

## Nordic Care Services

Suppliers of the Etac frames. You can order walking frames through their website or phone for a catalogue.

307-309 Lombard House Business Centre  
12-17 Upper Bridge St  
Canterbury CT1 2NF  
Tel: 01227 479293  
Fax: 01227 477958  
www.walkeze.info

## Nottingham Rehab Supplies

Sell a range of disability products  
Clinitron House  
Excelsior Road  
Ashby de la Zouch  
Leicestershire LE65 1JG  
Tel: 0845 1204522  
Email: customerservice@nrs-uk.co.uk  
www.nrs-uk.co.uk

## Uniscan

Suppliers of the Uniscan frames. You can order walking frames through their website or phone for a catalogue. They can also tell you about shops near you which stock their walkers.

38 Hornsby Square  
Southfields Industrial Estate  
Laindon  
Essex SS15 6SD  
Tel: 0845 6343083  
Fax: 0845 6343084  
www.uniscan-walkers.co.uk

## youreable.com

Sell a range of disability products through their website; includes information about equipment and user reviews.

Tel: 0844 8881337  
www.youreableshop.co.uk

## Acknowledgements

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- Take your medicine - a guide to pill boxes, dispensers and memory aids.
- Are you sitting comfortably? - a guide to riser recliner chairs.

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- Homecraft Rolyan
- Nordic Care Services
- Trulife
- Uniscan
- Z-Tec

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## Ricability

We are a national research charity dedicated to providing independent information of value to disabled and older consumers.

Our reports are all based on rigorous research, and provide practical information in a usable form.

We have information about

- cars and driving adaptations for disabled people
- digital television equipment
- DAB radios
- domestic appliances
- childcare products suitable for disabled parents
- other aids and equipment

Our website also provides a guide to consumer rights and public services and has an extensive database of useful organisations.

Tel: 020 7427 2460  
Textphone: 020 7427 2469  
Email: mail@ricability.org.uk  
www.ricability.org.uk  
www.ricability-digitaltv.org.uk

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**London N1 7EU**

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