



WHEELCHAIR SKILLS

INFORMATION SHEET

At SIA we believe that everyone with a spinal cord injury (SCI) should be able to live a fulfilled life.

Being able to use your wheelchair well is essential for your independence and enabling you to take part in all the activities you want to.

Wheelchair skills training is part of this, and the following information aims to explore what wheelchair skills are, how they can benefit you and how you can get them.

Wheelchair skills can also improve the experience of your carers and friends and family, enabling them to help you in the way that's best for you.



WHEELCHAIR SKILLS

Wheelchair skills training is essential for people with a spinal cord injury, whether they use a manual or powered wheelchair. Skills can be tailored to what you need and want to learn and can include:

- pushing forwards and backwards
- turning
- one-handed pushing
- pushing whilst carrying items
- back wheel balance (wheelie)
- going up and down ramps
- going up and down kerbs
- going up and down steps
- wheelchair maintenance



BENEFITS OF WHEELCHAIR SKILLS

The benefits of wheelchair skills training are limitless. They can give a person with a spinal cord injury greater confidence and independence. They can reduce the barriers faced by many people in accessing their environment and they make day-to-day life easier. The correct pushing technique will be more efficient, meaning you won't tire as easily and you're much less likely to develop overuse injuries in your upper body.

- Being able to give clear verbal directions and instructions to your carers and / or family members is also an important part of wheelchair skills training. Having the knowledge and confidence to do this can keep you and them safe when mobilising.

WHEN DO YOU NEED WHEELCHAIR SKILLS TRAINING?

Following a spinal cord injury, it's important to have wheelchair skills training as you adjust to using a wheelchair. There'll be lots of new skills to learn, which will all help to improve your independence. However, it's important that your wheelchair skills are reviewed regularly, and that you recap or update your learning whenever you need to. This could be when you receive a new wheelchair, for instance, or as you age and your abilities change. Or it may be when you decide to take up a new hobby, go travelling, or start a new job. It's never too late to learn new skills!

HOW CAN I GET WHEELCHAIR SKILLS TRAINING?

You might be offered wheelchair skills training when you're in hospital during a period of rehabilitation. Remember that training should be tailored to your individual abilities, wishes and needs and will be an ongoing process.

If you don't go through a period of rehabilitation in the community or in a hospital, or you aren't offered wheelchair skills training, then there are lots of organisations you can approach to get your training.

- The Wheelchair skills college is a brilliant resource for people using a manual wheelchair. There are lots of videos showing the skills from basic to advanced for you to look at in your own time. They can also offer in-person training courses.



- The charity Back Up also has a number of wheelchair skills videos and has produced a useful app which runs through wheelchair skills training for both powered and manual wheelchair users. Back Up also offers in-person training sessions for wheelchair skills, including specific courses such as city skills.
- Whizz Kidz offer wheelchair skills training to young people aged up to 25. They also have a series of how-to videos for both manual and powered wheelchair users



FURTHER INFORMATION

Other providers include:

- Freedom Wheelchair Skills (learn essential everyday skills with Stuart)
- Silver Fern Therapy (wheelchair skills training)
- Go Kids Go (wheelchair skills training)
- Experience Community wheelchair skills courses (pictured below)
- Wheelchair skills program (Dalhouse University)



Find out more:

- Speak to your SIA support network coordinator for advice and for insights into their experiences with wheelchair skills.
- Attend your local SIA community support group to talk to other people who have a spinal cord injury and use a wheelchair for mobility.

For more information, visit our [Travel Hub](#) or contact us at:

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e: travel@spinal.co.uk t: 0800 980 0501 (freephone support line: Monday - Friday 10.00am-4.00pm)