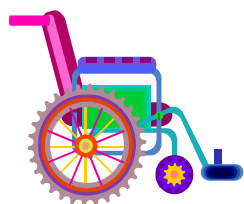


Wheelchair Awareness; Pushing a Friend around school

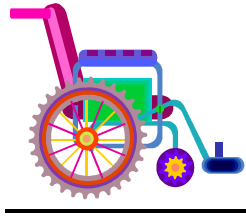


- How does a wheelchair work?
- What is it like sitting in a wheelchair?
- Hazards to watch out for in the school environment
- How to keep your back safe
- How to get through doors
- How to get over door lips and up and down curbs
- How much can you hang on the back of the chair?
- What do you do if the fire alarm goes off?
- How to say, "No".
- What do you do if there is an accident?



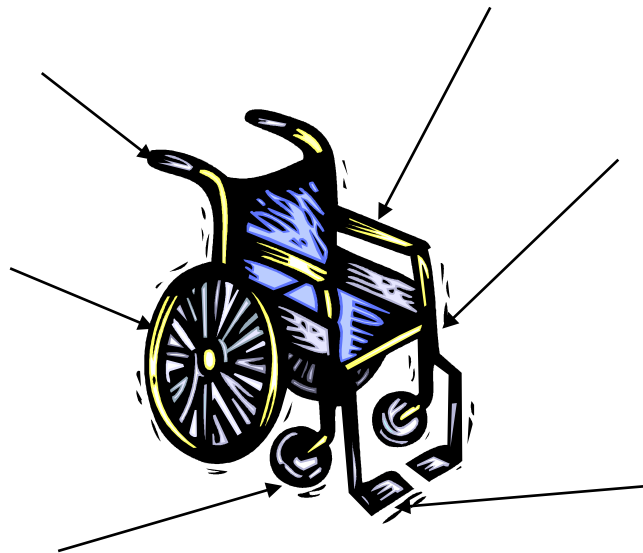
How does a wheelchair work?

There are many different types of wheelchair.



This is a **manual** wheelchair, that means it can be pushed by the person sitting in it, or by someone they trust.

Have a look at the wheelchair in front of you.
Can you label the parts of the chair the arrows are pointing to?



Think About

Why are there big wheels at the back and small wheels at the front?

What height are the handles you use to push the wheelchair?

What is it like sitting in a wheelchair?

Of course everyone is different and so every individual will experience different feelings sitting in a wheelchair.



Think about;

1. How tall are you?
What is at your head height?
How easy is it for you to talk to people who are standing up?
How easy is it for you to turn around to talk to the person behind you?
2. Where do you put your bag?
Can you see your bag?
3. How easy is it to push a wheelchair yourself?
How much room do you need to turn around?



You should never move or touch a person's wheelchair without their permission.

Never push someone in a wheelchair unless they know where you are pushing them and they have agreed to go there!!!!!!

Hazards to watch out for in the school environment

Around your school will be some very safe areas for pushing a person in a wheelchair.

What do you think are safe areas?



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-

What do you think are areas to avoid?



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-

How to keep your back safe

It is important when you are pushing a person in a wheelchair that you look after your back.



Your spine has a natural curve in it.

Keep your 'spine in line'

Don't twist your spine

Try to keep your head facing forward.



DANGER!



NEVER lift a wheelchair with someone sitting in it

NEVER even lift a wheelchair with someone sitting in it over a high curb

If your back hurts, you **must** stop pushing the person in the wheelchair and you **must** tell someone.



How to get through doors



Doors are tricky if they are not automatic.

It is often easier with **two people**, as one person can hold the door open whilst you push the person in the wheelchair through it.



WARNING; Footplates and feet are **NOT** door openers!!!!

If you are on your own **be very careful and do not twist your back.**

Remember to be careful not to catch the hands of the person sitting in the wheelchair on the door frame.

Perhaps;

Ask the person you are pushing if they can push themselves through the door whilst you hold it open.

Wait until someone passes and ask them to hold the door open.

Push open the door, if it can hold itself open you can then push the person in the wheelchair through the door.

Take another route that does not have tricky doors.

How to get over door lips and up and down curbs



WARNING; NEVER lift a person in a wheelchair

DOOR LIPS

Remember; think whether what you are doing is safe...if not, don't do it.

It is ok, especially if the person's wheelchair has 'anti-tips', to gently tip the wheelchair so that the small wheels are lifted over the door threshold. **Only do this if you have been shown how to do it safely and the person in the wheelchair has agreed and is ready for you to gently tip them.**

The person you are pushing may be able to tip themselves and give a gentle push to help you to get over the threshold **but** be careful not to catch their hands.

CURBS



Look for a dropped curb or a route that does not have any curbs.

If you can't find dropped curbs in school you must tell someone, as you should have a safe route to access the school environment

How much can you hang on the back of the wheelchair?



The best answer is nothing!!!!

But.....it is not practical.

Think about; why should you avoid hanging a heavy bag on the back of a person's wheelchair?



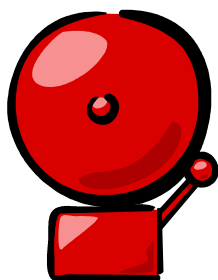
If you are pushing someone in a wheelchair try to avoid putting your bag on the back of their wheelchair. Perhaps ask a friend if they can carry your bag for you.

If you know you will be pushing a wheelchair make sure your bag is as light as possible, (don't fill it with things you don't need for the day, use a locker). Perhaps the person in the wheelchair can carry your bag for you if it is really light.

The key is to plan ahead and organise yourself



What do you do if the fire alarm goes off?



Every person using a wheelchair in school will have an **individual fire risk assessment**, that means there will be a plan as to what happens in the event of the alarm going off

- Find out what is on the risk assessment, if you don't know, ask.

Normally you would go straight to the nearest exit; why might that be more difficult if you are a person in a wheelchair?

NEVER PANIC, take your time and think about what to do.

More accidents happen when people panic than when they spend time thinking about the best thing to do next.

- Make sure you know which doors have ramped exits
- Make sure you know what to do if you are up-stairs
- Wait until everyone else has finished evacuating if they will be in your way and then go to the nearest exit
- Make sure an adult knows where you are likely to be so they can check you have evacuated.

It can be useful to have a map of the school or a timetable that explains where you evacuate to.

How to say, "No".

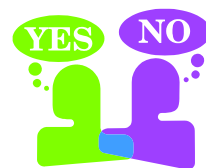


There may be times when you don't feel like pushing your friend in their wheelchair. This is ok, try to let your friend or the adult organising the friends know as early as you can. That way you don't leave your friend stranded.

There may be times when the person you are pushing in the wheelchair wants you to do something you think is unsafe or you don't feel comfortable doing....it is ok to politely say, 'No'.

There may be times an adult expects you to do something that you think is unsafe, for example, they may swap classrooms and ask you to take a route through school you know means pulling the wheelchair over a large step. It is ok to politely say, 'No'. they may not know it is an unsafe thing to ask.

Friends do say no to each other sometimes! It is the way you say it and why you say it that matters!



What do you do if there is an accident?

- DO NOT PANIC
- STOP and THINK

Accidents do happen. We try our best to be as safe as possible but sometimes we can't prevent an accident.

- Ask if anyone is hurt.
- If no one is hurt, ask the person in the wheelchair if they can get themselves back into their wheelchair and what you can do to help.
- Send someone to go and get adult help if you need it, or go and get help yourself. Be clear where you are in the school.
- If you keep calm you can help make a situation better.
- Try to avoid other people coming to stare, politely let them know every thing is under control and you do not need their help.



WARNING; NEVER lift a person in a wheelchair