

# Your guide to adaptations



**Motability**

The leading car scheme for disabled people



# Contents

Around 6% of Motability customers have adaptations fitted to their cars to help make driving, or travelling, easier or more comfortable.

This guide introduces the most popular types of adaptations and answers some of your most common questions. You'll find more information about adaptations, including full pricing and movie clips of adaptations in action, at [www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)

1

What are adaptations?

Page 4

2

What kind of adaptation would best suit my needs?

Page 6

3

Getting adaptations for your Motability car

Page 14

4

Adaptations – your questions answered

Page 16

5

Useful contact details

Page 18

**I can't believe I ever managed without it, Motability have given me my life and my independence back .**

Mary Grace, hand controls user and Motability customer for 10 years.

# 1

# What are adaptations?

Simply put, adaptations cover a range of mechanical and electronic devices that can be fitted to your car to help make travelling easier. They generally either assist with accessing the vehicle, storing equipment or driving.

For many people even a simple adaptation can make motoring more comfortable or safer. In some cases it can even enable a person to drive where it would otherwise not be possible.

## How could an adaptation help me?

This depends on the element of driving or travelling that you find difficult. There are a wide range of different adaptations available that can help improve different areas of your motoring experience, from simple steering wheel balls to more complex equipment – all designed to help make driving easier for you. In most cases the original car controls and features can still be used, so your nominated drivers can still drive.

The key areas where adaptations can really help are:

- **Driving controls**
- **Wheelchair stowage**
- **Seating and access**

**I can drive, it's safe and it's opened up my life again, it's the best thing that's ever happened to me.**

Gillian Abbott,  
wheelchair hoist user and Motability customer  
for 3 years.

## Could I benefit from an adaptation?

Although adaptations can be a helpful solution for some people, in some cases, your motoring experience could be dramatically improved by simply choosing the right car for your needs. Car designs are constantly changing and improving. Features such as automatic transmission, sliding doors, push button ignition, electric handbrake, parking sensors and higher seating positions can all help make driving, or travelling, easier. To find out more about new car models and design features that could make travel more comfortable for you, speak to your local dealer or visit car manufacturer websites. You'll find local dealers in your area and links to all manufacturers who supply Motability cars on our website, [www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk).

This guide is designed to help explain the basics of the various adaptation options and get you on the road to finding the right fit for your mobility needs. We'll take you through the whole process step by step, from getting the right advice from people in the know, to how to order adaptations for your new Motability car.



### Did you know?

You can watch video clips of some of our most popular adaptations in action on the Motability website, visit [www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk) to find out more.

# 2

## What kind of adaptation would best suit my needs?

A good place to start is to think about your current driving experience – which areas have become more difficult or uncomfortable? If you're experiencing difficulties with driving or travelling it's almost certain that there'll be an adaptation available to help improve your experience. Here's an overview to give you an idea:

### Driving controls

#### On the road

If you find basic areas of driving increasingly difficult, such as starting the car or operating a handbrake, there are a number of adaptations available to help.

For example, if turning the key in the ignition is a struggle, there is the option of having a **key turner** fitted. Alternatively, you could benefit from choosing a car with **push button ignition** – this is becoming increasingly common across newer car models, and won't cost you any extra.

If you have difficulty operating a standard handbrake, you could have an **easy release handbrake** fitted. Alternatively an **electric handbrake** could help make the process easier, as it can be operated by a single button. This feature is also becoming more common across new car models, and is often available as standard.

If you struggle to reach the pedals when driving, you could opt to have them extended. Mechanical modification to the original pedals of your car can bring them closer to the driving seat, allowing you to drive more comfortably while controlling the car with ease.

#### Things to think about

- If you have limited movement on your left side, it may be worth choosing a car with an automatic transmission so that you don't have to worry about changing gears.
- Car manufacturers are constantly developing and redesigning vehicles to make driving easier and more comfortable. Speak to your dealer about new features that could help improve your travel experience. You can find your nearest Motability dealer by visiting our website at [www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)



*Easy release handbrake*

**I have arthritis in my hands and it makes it easier to release the handbrake.** Matheson Lang, easy release handbrake user and Motability customer for 7 years.



# 2

## Speed control

If you find using foot pedals for braking or acceleration difficult, you may be better off using a **hand control**, such as a **push/pull device** or a **radial accelerator**. There are various hand controls available from different manufacturers, but the basic function is the same across most models. The foot pedals are controlled by levers connected to the pedals, allowing you to use your hands to push or pull a hand grip to control the speed of the car or when you need to stop. These hand controls can range from more basic mechanical push/pull systems to electronic or air compression systems.

If you have limited mobility in your right leg and find using conventional pedals when driving difficult, you may benefit from having a **left foot accelerator** fitted. This system transfers the original acceleration control of the car to an extra pedal fitted on the left side, while folding the original right hand pedal safely out of the way. In most cases, the existing controls will still be functional so the car can also be driven by any nominated drivers who do not require adaptations. If you've never driven with a left foot accelerator before, it is important to speak to your adaptation installer or a Mobility Centre for advice before you place your order.

## Things to think about

- Depending on how the hand controls are linked to the original car pedals, this may impact the amount of leg room you have. Speak to your adaptation installer to make sure you will have enough leg room for your needs.
- It may be worth considering **pedal guards** if your legs are prone to involuntary spasms or if you are unaware of your foot position. These guards go in front of the car pedals to prevent the pedals being pressed accidentally while driving the car with hand controls. Most pedal guards can be fitted as quick release, meaning they can be easily removed for a driver to use the standard controls.
- When trying out hand controls, it's important to make sure that they feel comfortable. How does it feel in your hands? Are you able to use it with ease? Would you feel confident using it on longer car journeys? If it doesn't feel quite right, speak to your adaptation installer – they may be able to suggest an alternative solution.



Push/pull hand control



Left foot accelerator

## Steering

If you have difficulty using a standard steering wheel, there are a number of solutions that may be able to help. For example, **steering wheel balls** can be fitted to allow for easier control if you are unable to use a standard steering wheel. This allows the steering to be controlled by simply holding the ball and using it to move the wheel in the direction you want to go. If you're having hand controls fitted, then it is often essential to have a steering wheel ball to enable you to steer the car with one hand while operating any hand controls with the other. If you also need assistance using other functions such as indicator switches, you might want to consider an infra-red control, which incorporates a steering wheel ball.

## Things to think about

- If you find using a steering wheel difficult or it makes your arms tired on longer journeys, lightened, power-assisted steering could also help to make driving easier.
- Many new models of cars now come with steering wheel mounted audio controls as standard to give you a more enjoyable driving experience.

**The best thing about my adapted car is the peace of mind. I feel safe and confident knowing if my leg gets tired I can use the hand controls.** Mary Grace, hand controls user and Motability customer for 10 years.



*Steering wheel ball*

# 2

## Signalling

If you struggle to reach or operate your car's standard controls, there are simple attachments available to help make using them easier. If you have mechanical push/pull hand controls fitted to your car, you may find operating the standard **indicator switch** difficult, especially if you also have a steering aid. To enable you to steer safely, you could benefit from having hand controls with a built in indicator switch. Once fitted, you can indicate by simply flicking the switch on top of the hand grip and you won't need to take your hands off of the steering wheel or hand control.

If you have limited movement in your upper body, you could benefit from **infrared controls**. These controls allow for basic car functions, such as the horn, windscreen wipers and lights, to be operated by a single control pad, making it safer and more comfortable to drive. They can also incorporate a steering wheel ball to steering and basic car functions can be operated single handedly.

## Things to think about

- If you find moving your arm or fingers difficult, extended indicator switches could help.
- If you suffer from limited finger dexterity or wrist movement and have difficulty starting the car, simply buying a key turning aid could help, as it allows for more grip and makes using the key easier.



*Indicator switch*



*Infrared controls incorporating steering wheel ball*

## Wheelchair stowage

### Lifting and storage

If you cannot lift your wheelchair into the boot of your car or need your boot space to store other things, there are two different types of wheelchair stowage systems which can easily solve this problem for you:

- a hoist which stores your wheelchair in your car boot
- or
- a hoist which stores a folded wheelchair in a box on the roof of your car.

Both are operated at the touch of a button to lift the wheelchair, with the majority also moving the wheelchair into place within the storage unit, although some still require the user to push the wheelchair into position.

Wheelchair stowage systems can be a great help by taking the weight of the wheelchair and manoeuvring it effortlessly, but it is important to remember that they aren't suitable for every car or wheelchair, and you need to make sure that the combination of the wheelchair, hoist and car are compatible. Adaptation installers can help you with this before you order your car.



*Wheelchair stowage – in car system*

**I knew we needed a hoist, the dealer showed me a car with one fitted. We can now go places as a couple, for over a year we needed a 3rd person with us to lift the chair.** Molly Bickell, wheelchair hoist user and Motability customer for 1 year.

### Things to think about

- The size and weight of your wheelchair or scooter will affect the type of hoist you need, and the type of hoist you need will affect your choice of car. Speak to one of Motability's adaptation installers about which hoist will best suit your needs – details can be found on our website at [www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)
- Consider whether you might need to change your wheelchair over the course of your three or five year lease. If you change your wheelchair, the stowage solution may become unsuitable, so try to plan ahead in terms of size and type.
- Think about the places where you normally park your car, as this could affect the type of wheelchair stowage system you need. Rooftop stowage systems may mean that you are no longer able to park in underground car parks or spaces where there are height restrictions.
- If you are unable to operate a hoist yourself, you may benefit from a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV). WAVs enable a wheelchair user to travel in the vehicle while remaining in their wheelchair. For more information about WAVs download our guide to WAVs from our website or call **0800 093 1000** to request a copy.



*Wheelchair stowage – roof top system*

## Inside the car

### Seating and access

If you're finding getting in and out of your car increasingly difficult or uncomfortable, there are a number of seating solutions that could help. In some cases, you may not need to have an adaptation fitted – a simple **swivel seat cushion** is relatively cheap to buy and can help make the process easier, as it allows you to sit down first and then twist into position. If you require something a bit more sophisticated, you may benefit from having a **swivel seat** fitted inside your car. The way in which they operate varies from model to model, but the basic function allows the whole chair to turn, and in some cases move in and out of the car, lower or tip, to help make getting in and out of the seat easier.

If you have limited mobility and find it difficult to transfer in and out of your wheelchair into a car, it may be worth investing in a **wheelchair swivel seat**. Simply put, a wheelchair swivel seat is made up of two parts – the top half, which is a specially designed car seat, and the bottom half, which acts as a wheelchair. The seat part can be connected to the car to act as a swivel seat to aid entry, allowing for the bottom part to be stored in the back of the car. There are both manual and powered options available depending on your needs. While this can be a very helpful solution, it's worth noting that a wheelchair swivel seat cannot be operated independently – you will need someone to help put the wheelchair base into position and store it once you are in the car.

To find out more or to have a demonstration of the different models available speak to an adaptations installer or visit a Mobility Centre – see page 18 for contact details.

If you need extra leg or back support, you could arrange to have your car seat replaced for one in a different design. However, simply ensuring that your seat is properly adjusted to fit your body may help. Most cars now come with electronic seat adjustments that work at the touch of a button – speak to your Motability dealer for advice or recommendations.

### Things to think about

- Small details such as the shape of seats differ across manufacturers and can make a big difference to your ability to access the car. Make sure you take some time to find one that you find comfortable and that best suits your needs, for example the side of the seat base may be flatter in some models to allow for easier access.
- When trying out a swivel seat, practice getting in and out of it from both road and kerb level. It's important to make sure that you have enough leg room and that you can get in and out with ease.
- Having a swivel or replacement seat will affect your seated height inside the car, so you will need to make sure that you have sufficient headroom. Check with your installer before you order your car.



Swivel seat

If you've never driven with an adaptation before, it may be worth visiting a Mobility Centre for an assessment. These centres offer independent, professional information and advice to individuals and can help determine which adaptation would best suit your particular needs. There are a number of these Mobility Centres across the UK. To find your nearest centre, call **0800 559 3636** or visit **[www.mobility-centres.org.uk](http://www.mobility-centres.org.uk)**

If you do have an assessment, you may have to pay a small charge.

Speaking to an adaptations installer can also be useful. Installers will be able to offer information on the various products available and what would be most suitable for your specific requirements. You'll find details of all our installers on our website.

Adaptations can take a while to get used to at first, as you will need to learn particular areas of driving in a different way and how to operate the equipment. However, once you are used to them and feel confident driving with an adaptation, they can help make travelling in your car much easier and more comfortable.



*Wheelchair swivel seat*



# 3

## Getting adaptations for your Motability car

### Leasing a car through Motability

Anybody who receives either the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance, or the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement can lease a car with adaptations through Motability. It works by simply exchanging your allowance for the vehicle of your choice.

Many of the most popular adaptations are available at no extra cost when fitted at the start of your lease, others will require payment as part of your Advance Payment directly to your car dealer at the start of your lease.

### Adapting your Motability car has never been easier

There are two ways in which Motability can help you adapt your car to fit your needs, depending on whether you are choosing a new car through Motability or if you need to adapt your current car during your lease.

The easiest and most cost effective way of adapting your car is at the start of your Motability lease. Your dealer will work with an appropriate adaptation installer to ensure that your brand new car is delivered with the adaptations you need fitted so that you can drive away when your car is delivered. We call this our Motability Managed Adaptations Programme and have designed this to take away all the hassle. And the best bit is that many of our most popular adaptations can be fitted to your car at no extra cost.

Our Managed Adaptations Programme manages the adaptation process for you from start to finish. If you're about to lease a new car through Motability, our Managed Adaptations Programme means that your dealer can order any adaptations you need at the same time you order your car. Some adaptations are included in the cost of your lease, others will come at an additional cost.

If the adaptation you need is not available through the Motability Managed Adaptations Programme, or you need to add adaptations during your lease, you can contact any Motability accredited adaptation installer to install an approved adaptation to your car. You will need to pay the cost of any such adaptations direct to the adaptation installer. Make sure you contact our Customer Services team on **0845 456 4566** and RSA Motability (RSAM) on **0500 37 37 37** first, to ensure your insurance covers this.

To see a complete list of adaptations available, including contact information for our adaptation installers, visit **[www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)**. Our 'Find a Dealer' search tool allows you to see the adaptation installers in your area by simply entering your postcode. All adaptation installers listed on our website are accredited by Motability to confirm that they have achieved a minimum service standard, so you can be confident of their product's quality and their service levels. Please note that not all accredited installers supply the Motability Managed Adaptations Programme.

**It was very easy, I went to the dealer and told them what I needed, they contacted the adaptations company to arrange it.**

Mary Grace, hand controls user and Motability customer for 10 years.



# 4

## Adaptations – your questions answered

**Q** Can I buy adaptations without involving my dealer?

**A.** Ordering your adaptations through your dealer is the only way to take advantage of the great deals offered through the Motability Managed Adaptations Programme. You can arrange adaptations from elsewhere, however the manufacturer and installer must be Motability accredited. You will also need to contact RSA Motability (RSAM) to ensure that your car is still covered by your Motability insurance policy.

**Q** Am I able to get more than one adaptation through the Motability Managed Adaptations Programme?

**A.** Yes you can. Simply speak to your dealer, and they will be able to talk you through the whole process. Don't forget, you can find a complete list of our current prices at [www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk).

**Q** I need several adaptations to my new car, but I'm worried they won't be done in time.

**A.** The Motability Managed Adaptations Programme is designed to take the worry out of ordering your new car. If there are any delays or issues along the way, your dealer will let you know and you will be able to stay in your old car until your new one is ready.

**Q** Can I transfer an adaptation from my old car?

**A.** In some cases yes, but for some adaptations this may not be possible as they may not fit in your new car. The best way to know for sure is to check with your adaptation installer – they will be able to advise you of cars that might work with your adaptation or of the new adaptation you will require. You must advise RSAM for insurance purposes and remember, all adaptations must be fitted by an accredited installer.

**Q** Can I get any financial help with the cost of adaptations?

**A.** Many of our adaptations are available at no additional cost, but if you are unable to afford essential adaptations Motability may be able to help. Financial help can only be given towards the least expensive solution that meets your mobility needs and your application for assistance must be processed before you place the order for your new car. For more information, call our Customer Services team on **0845 456 4566**.

**Q** I am part way through my current lease. Can I order adaptations for my car?

**A.** If you think you would benefit from an adaptation for your current Motability car you should first call our Customer Services team on **0845 456 4566** and they will advise you on the steps that you need to take. You will also need to inform RSA Motability by calling **0500 37 37 37** to make sure you are covered by your Motability insurance policy. You will have to pay for an adaptation yourself, and payment will need to be paid directly to the installer. Your adaptations installer will inform you of how long the installation process will take. Remember – only a Motability accredited adaptation installer should fit and/or remove adaptations.

**Q** I've never had adaptations before, where do I start?

**A.** Call our Customer Services team on **0845 456 4566** and we'll talk through your options and discuss what you need to do next.



# 5

## Useful contact details

### For enquiries about Motability

Motability Operations  
City Gate House  
22 Southwark Bridge Road  
London SE1 9HB

Telephone: **0800 093 1000**  
(lines open daily, 8am – 8pm)  
**[www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)**

If you are an existing Motability customer, please call our Customer Services team on **0845 456 4566** (lines open daily, 8.30am – 5.30pm)

If you have specialist Minicom equipment, call our text phone: **0845 675 0009**

### For enquiries about the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance

Disability and Carers Service  
Telephone: **08457 123 456**

Disability Living Allowance (NI)  
Telephone: **028 9090 6182**

### For enquiries about the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency  
Telephone: **0800 169 2277**  
**[www.veterans-uk.info](http://www.veterans-uk.info)**

### For independent information and advice

The Forum of Mobility Centres  
Telephone: **0800 559 3636**  
**[www.mobility-centres.org.uk](http://www.mobility-centres.org.uk)**

### To find an installer

Use the 'Find a Dealer' tool at  
**[www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)**



Motability Operations  
City Gate House,  
22 Southwark Bridge Road,  
London SE1 9HB

Telephone: **0800 093 1000**  
Lines are open 8am to 8pm daily.  
If you have specialist Minicom equipment,  
call our textphone number on **0845 675 0009**

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

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