

Get wise to buying safely



When you buy the equipment that is right for you, it can make a real difference to your quality of life, giving you freedom and independence. Whatever you need, this step-by-step guide is designed to help you make that right choice.

You need to be sure about **what** you need. There may well be so much choice “out there” that the right product for you may not be obvious. So take advice and if you can try before you buy. If you need professional help, contact your doctor, who may refer you an occupational therapist, or for certain equipment recommend a physiotherapist or speech therapist.

You need to know **where** to buy. Again, you’ll be spoilt for choice! You can find products in shops, stores and supermarkets as well as via mail order and the internet. If you are buying from the internet or via mail order, remember that whilst the prices may be keen, you can’t try before you buy, or discuss your requirements face to face. There are two useful website links which can spell out your rights on distance selling, and these are shown on the next page.

Many shops are members of the BHTA, specialists in what they do, which means that you can buy with confidence because they are governed by the **Code of Practice**, the only one in this industry to be approved by The Trading Standards Institute. To see/download a copy of the code, please visit the BHTA website at www.bhta.com

Wherever you choose, try to have someone with you, like a friend or relative and do test and try the equipment before committing yourself.

There are consumer exhibitions and shows throughout the year like Naidex, Kidz and Mobility Matters, where you can see and compare new products, and get the information you need to make an informed choice. They are listed on the Disabled Living Foundation website (www.dlf.org.uk)

You need to know **how** much to pay. It makes sense to spend some time whether you need something as straightforward as a walking stick or a mobility scooter, spending a few pounds or investing thousands. You need real value for money: price is obviously part of it, but so are the quality of service, the assessment of your needs, the guarantees and warranties. Make sure that you understand the Terms and Conditions and the cooling-off period (if there is one), should you change your mind or have second thoughts.

If you are disabled, you may not have to pay VAT, so check when you are buying. You may even get equipment **free** from your local council if you are eligible. A scheme runs in some parts of the country, where you can get a voucher or prescription to redeem at an accredited retailer. It could also be worth your while contacting your local council or Primary Health Trust (NHS) as they might have schemes to help.



What to do if things go wrong

Unfortunately sometimes things do go wrong. Hopefully, with common sense and goodwill, matters can be sorted out amicably to everyone's satisfaction before resorting to the law.

If you have bought from a British Healthcare Trades Association company – and there are more than 400 member companies in the UK – you have the reassurance of the Code of Practice. All companies adhere to the Code, which rigorously upholds your interests. It is the only one in the industry to be approved by The Trading Standards Institute. Contact us for a copy of the “**Get wise to making a complaint**” leaflet which explains the steps that are involved, if you are dissatisfied with a product or service.

If the company involved is not a BHTA member, you should contact Consumer Direct (www.consumerdirect.gov.uk or phone 08454 040506) or find your local Citizen Advice Bureau (www.citizensadvice.org.uk).

Help is at hand

These are some of the organisations who provide information and advice.

All About Equipment

Quick and easy link to information about equipment for older and disabled people.
www.allaboutequipment.org.uk

Assist UK

National network of locally-based Disabled Living Centres each with a permanent exhibition of products and equipment. Especially useful to carers, older people, healthcare workers and students.
Telephone: 0161 236 8776
www.assist-uk.org

Consumer Association

Impartial advice and in-depth reviews.
Telephone: 01992 822800
www.which.co.uk

Disability Facility Grants

A local council grant to help towards the cost of adapting your home to enable you to continue to live there. A grant is paid when the council considers that changes are necessary to meet your needs, and that the work is reasonable and practical.
www.directgov.co.uk

Disabled Living Foundation

National charity providing independent advice on mobility aids, disability aids, daily living equipment. Certified as a producer of reliable health and social care information.
Telephone: 0845 130 9177
www.dlf.org.uk

Enabled by Design

Information about well designed everyday products.
www.enabledbydesign.org

Foundation for Assistive Technology (FAST)

Information on products or services designed to enable independence for disabled and older people.
Telephone: 0207 264 8955
www.fast.org

Living made easy

Offering clear, practical advice, this is a website that let's you read reviews of products and add your own comments.
www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk

Ricability

An independent consumer research charity providing free, practical and unbiased reports for older and disabled people.
Telephone: 020 7427 2460
www.ricability.org.uk

The BHTA represents nearly 400 companies, all of whom adhere to the BHTA Code of Practice, the only one in this industry to be approved by The Trading Standards Institute. BHTA member companies operate to higher standards of customer protection than the law requires.



Seen in all the best places

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