

Wheelchair Handling

Features of a wheelchair



How to operate a wheelchair

Opening

- Stand in front of the wheelchair
- Push downwards on the sides of the seat with your palms
- Keep your fingers pointing inwards to prevent them from being caught at the sides of the wheelchair



Closing

- If you have a seat cushion remove it
- Stand beside the wheelchair, grasp the front and back of the seat canvas and pull diagonally upwards and towards you



Brakes

- Use the lever on each wheel to lock the wheelchair
- Some wheelchairs have brakes that can be controlled by levers on the arm rest
- For safety, apply brakes whenever the wheelchair is stopped



Footplates

- Most wheelchairs allow the footplates to be folded up and out of the way
- Detachable wheelchairs have footrests that can either swing out, or be removed by using a lever or button located at the top of the footrest



Armrests

- In detachable wheelchairs, armrests can be either swung out of the way or removed completely
- Look for a lever or button towards the front of the armrest and press while pulling the armrest up



Safety tips:

- Always ensure both brakes are locked when stopping and before transferring a person to, or from, a wheelchair
- Wear a seat belt when the wheelchair is in motion and when parked on moving vehicles, such as on the bus and MRT
- Replace a faulty wheelchair as soon as possible to avoid injury due to an unexpected malfunction



Using a Wheelchair in the Community

Going Up a Slope

- Keep your arms near your body and elbows bent while holding the handles of the wheelchair. Push forward using your body weight and leg muscles
- Remember to put on brakes if you need a rest halfway up a slope



Going Down a Slope

- Position yourself with your back facing the slope and the wheelchair in front of you then gently pull the wheelchair backwards down the slope
- Don't place heavy items on the handles as the wheelchair may tip backwards



Going Up a Kerb

- With the front castors touching the kerb, step on the tipping lever and push the wheelchair forward to bring the front castor wheels over the kerb
- With your thigh against the back of the wheelchair seat, use the handles to lift and push the rear wheels over the kerb



Going Down a Kerb

- Position the wheelchair backwards, so the rear wheels are at the kerb
- With your stronger leg supporting the back of the wheelchair, use the wheelchair's handles to pull backwards until the front wheels are off the kerb and on the ground



Contributed by Occupational Therapy, Rehabilitation, Allied Health Services

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