

Wheelchair Glossary

Every wheelchair users' needs are different, and a wheelchair means different things to different people. To assist in your wheelchair selection process, please review the following list of wheelchair definitions.

Manual Wheelchairs

- **Standard Wheelchair** – The first “modern” wheelchair. This was the first wheelchair design to incorporate metal tubing and a single cross brace. Vastly different from wheelchairs of that era, it was invented, patented, and mass-produced by The Everest and Jennings Company in 1932. Now the common perception of a wheelchair, it has big wheels for propulsion by the user and folds in one dimension. This style of wheelchair is still widely used today.
- **Manual Wheelchair** – A wheelchair that cannot be propelled under power is a manual wheelchair.
- **Transport Wheelchair** – A “no frills” wheelchair used for transporting a patient from A to B. Transport Wheelchairs are not intended for long-term use.
- **Transit Wheelchair** – A wheelchair that is approved for use in a moving vehicle. Transit wheelchairs have red tie down anchors and meet Transit Wheelchair Standard-ANSI/RESNA WC-19.
- **Lightweight Wheelchair** – Usually in the 20-25lb ranges. Any style of wheelchair can be considered a lightweight wheelchair, but the added weight of a motor and battery exclude Power Wheelchairs from this wheelchair category.
- **Ultra Lightweight Wheelchair** – Usually made of Titanium or a composite material, these wheelchairs average in the 13 to 15 pound range. Ultra Lightweight wheelchairs do not fold and are usually very expensive.
- **Travel Wheelchair** – A lightweight wheelchair intended for travel. Should fold compact and be comfortable enough for all day use.
- **Sports Wheelchair** – Although any wheelchair can be considered a sports wheelchair, the most common is a low back, low to the ground wheelchair design.
- **Bariatric Wheelchair** – Structurally similar to a standard wheelchair. The seat

is extra wide and frame is reinforced for extra weight capacity. Bariatric wheelchairs are available in a variety of widths, depending on the size of the wheelchair user.

- **Heavy Duty Wheelchair** – There is no difference between a Heavy Duty Wheelchair and a Bariatric Wheelchair. They are both wheelchairs designed for obese people.
- **Companion Wheelchair** – This is a general term used to describe any wheelchair that cannot be propelled by the occupant. Companion wheelchairs have small wheels and must be pushed by a companion.
- **Pediatric Wheelchair** – Wheelchairs designed for children. This wheelchair category includes mini versions of adult wheelchairs and specially configured stroller designs.
- **Custom Wheelchair** – Any wheelchair can be customized. Custom wheelchairs vary from those with minor alterations to completely unique wheelchair styles. Customized wheelchairs are usually very expensive. Most wheelchair manufacturers offer customizations.
- **Positioning Wheelchair** – Any wheelchair that has options available for keeping the occupant positioned correctly. A health care professional is best suited to prescribe these wheelchair options
- **Recliner Wheelchair** – A wheelchair designed with a reclining back. Ideal if the wheelchair occupant wants to sleep or needs to recline for medical reasons.
- **Tilt Wheelchair** – Not to be confused with a wheelchair that reclines, the seat to back dimension remain fixed as they tilt up to 45 degrees. Many wheelchair users rely on tilting wheelchairs for their therapeutic advantages.
- **Evacuation Wheelchair** – Used in high-rise buildings to evacuate a disabled person when elevators are not functioning. Sometimes Evacuation Wheelchairs have no wheels at all.
- **Shower Wheelchair** – Made of plastic or stainless steel, this wheelchair enables people to sit comfortably in the shower without fear of slipping.
- **Commode Wheelchair** – Also known as a Bathroom Wheelchair, this is a wheelchair designed for in home use. A plastic pan can be removed for cleaning.
- **Airline Wheelchair** – A wheelchair made extra narrow to fit down the isles of a commercial airplane. Most airlines keep one of these wheelchairs available at every gate. Airline wheelchairs are too narrow for normal use.

Power Wheelchairs

- **Electric Wheelchair** – Also known as Power Wheelchairs, any wheelchair that can be propelled with a motor by the occupant. Electric wheelchairs have a battery-operated motor and must be re-charged after use.
- **[Travel Power](#) Wheelchair** – Similar to a scooter, these four-wheel power wheelchairs are lighter than a standard Power Wheelchair and partially fold.
- **Scooter Style Wheelchair** – See Electric Wheelchair or Power Wheelchair
- **Transportable Power Wheelchair** – Generally weighing less than 100 lbs, these wheelchairs can be folded or disassembled for storage in a car trunk.
- **Power Assist Wheelchair** – This is a hybrid wheelchair. Essentially a companion wheelchair equipped with a small motor that can be used to assist the caregiver while pushing the wheelchair up an incline.