

Back Up Wheelchair Challenge

Thank you for signing up to Back Up's Wheelchair Challenge! By taking part you will help raise awareness and funds to support people affected by spinal cord injury. We know that using a wheelchair for a day will never give a full insight into life as a wheelchair user, but we do know that it opens up discussions about the challenges wheelchair users face and what people can do to make positive changes in terms of accessibility. It's also a powerful way to get people involved and supportive of our work.



Back Up's wheelchair skills trainers give people with a spinal cord injury the skills they need to use their chair confidently and independently.

Top tips and safety considerations from our trainers

Safety tips

If at any point during the challenge you feel uncomfortable or scared, stop pushing, apply the brakes and step out of the chair – your safety comes first. We recommend that you have a friend/colleague/family member to accompany you if you are pushing the chair outside. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you are struggling with something, or failing that, step out of the chair as advised above. Don't attempt any difficult terrain or steep slopes unless you are confident in your ability.

Chairs supplied by Back Up will come from a specialist wheelchair hire company and will be fitted with anti-tip bars as standard which prevent the chair from tipping over backwards. If you are sourcing your own chair, please ensure that anti-tip bars are fitted or that you have an assistant accompanying you at all times.

Seating position:

Make sure you are sitting upright, with your bum in the back of the seat.

Pushing forwards:

Start with your hands at 11 o'clock on the wheel - don't push too hard at the beginning as this could tip the chair back. Increase the power through the push so you finish with a flick of the wrist to try and carry some speed/momentum.

After the push, let go of the rim and let your arm drop to neutral before you push again - a circular motion (sort of mimicking the way a child would demonstrate a train). This is to let your shoulders rest even just for a fraction of a second.

Pushing backwards:

Be conscious to lean forward slightly, if you bump into anything there is a greater risk of falling out if going backwards. Always try and look behind you by either turning your head, zig zagging or looking under your arm.

Up slopes and down slopes:

Up slopes: Lean forward. Short sharp pushes. If you stop, turn the wheelchair so you are side on. Down slopes: Slowly, lean back, avoid any bumps in case they catch the front casters.

Uneven surfaces:

These are tricky as you will find the front casters can catch and stop you suddenly. Move slowly and keep your eyes on the path ahead to avoid obstacles.

Opening Doors:

If you are opening a door towards you, you will have two options:

1. Either, put your brakes on whilst you are in a position to avoid the door when opening whilst pulling it open.
2. You can turn the wheelchair side on and open it without using the brakes. You may find you have to merge both techniques.

If the door is a push door you will find you will need to push with one hand and push the door with the other, this will be particularly difficult if the door is heavy and, if so, it is recommended you ask someone to hold the door open for you.

If you have any questions about taking on the challenge or would like more tips, please call 020 8875 1805 or email fundraising@backuptrust.org.uk

Disclaimer: The wheelchairs Back Up will be supplying are from a registered wheelchair hire company and will come with instructions about how to unpack and use the chair. They will also be fitted with anti-tip bars, please ensure that you have these in place when you take on the challenge. If you are sourcing your own chair, please ensure that it has anti-tip bars fitted. Any participants under the 18 years old will need to have written parental consent to take part in the challenge.