

How *fast* is your wheelchair?



Before Reading Activity

Section 1

Twenty-one year old Ben from Paw Paw, Michigan, USA has muscular dystrophy. To get around his local town he uses a wheelchair.

One day last July, Ben was crossing a road at a junction. At the same time, a giant truck was pulling out of a gas station.

The driver didn't see Ben. His driver's cab was very high up. Ben, of course, was very lowdown on the road. And the driver was not expecting to see a wheelchair.

Section 2

The truck continued to pull out into the road. A moment later it bumped into the back of Ben's wheelchair. The chair tipped forward. Somehow, the handles became stuck in the truck's radiator grill.

The driver could only see clear road ahead. He put his foot down on the accelerator. The truck pulled away – with Ben, in his wheelchair, stuck to the front. Soon it reached a speed of 80 kph. The driver still knew nothing about the man in the wheelchair.

The next town was 100 kilometers away.

Section 3

Meanwhile, cars travelling in the opposite direction could see Ben in his wheelchair. Many thought they were dreaming. Others phoned the police.

“A truck just came by with a gentleman in a wheelchair on the front,” a woman told the emergency operator. “The truck is pushing the chair down the road.”

Luckily, a police car was travelling down the same highway in the opposite direction. The police car did a U-turn and finally managed to get the truck to stop.

Section 4

The driver climbed down from his cab. When he saw Ben he nearly fainted. Surprisingly, the young 'passenger' was quite relaxed.

"Mr Carpenter spilled his can of cola," said the police officer. "And he lost his hat. But he wasn't upset.' And the wheelchair? It needed new tyres but was back on the road in a week."

Later Mr Carpenter said, "I tried to call for help but nobody could hear me."

Understanding

1. How old is Ben?
 2. What become stuck?
 3. How far is the next town?
 4. Who is drinking?
 5. Who spills his soda?
 6. Who nearly faints?
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Vocabulary *Find words/phrases to match these definitions in the text*

1. Medical condition that can require wheelchair *section 1*
2. Where two road meet *section 1*
3. Place where driver of truck sits *section 1*
4. Unable to move *section 2*
5. Pedal to increase speed *section 2*
6. Turn car to face in opposite direction *section 3*
7. Fall down because of lack oxygen to head *section 4*
8. Traveller in vehicle *section 4*



British v American English. Complete the gaps with the words below.

1. The American word for motorway is -----
2. The British word for a large truck -----
- 3.---- is used in the US to mean any carbonated drink.
4. All English-speaking countries use the word ----- to measure distance.
5. In American English the word ---- is used for what the British call petrol.

*soda * lorry * highway * miles * gas*

Writing

1. You are local news reporter. Write a short report on this story. 25-75 words.