

STEPLADDER GUIDE

CHOOSING A STEPLADDER

What to look for when you're buying or borrowing

Many different designs are available, from small 'step-stools' to larger stepladders and combination designs which can be converted into extending ladders.

The type bought most often are the 4 to 7 step folding versions, as illustrated here. These are suited to many jobs around the house, but it's very important never to use any stepladder that's the wrong height for the particular job you're doing. Some are too short for high work, and some – just as dangerous – are too tall for lower work. You must be able to do your work comfortably without overreaching up, down or sideways.

All stepladders should meet the required British or European standards – check this whenever you buy, hire or borrow one.

- BS 1129:1990 (British) applies to wooden ladders
- BS 2037:1994 (British) applies to metal ladders
- BS EN 131:1993 (European) applies to both
- BS 7377:1994 (British) applies to step-stools

Is it strong enough?

New stepladders are generally marked according to their safe working load. This classification, however, can vary slightly in the values given and has caused confusion. The variation is due to the different way in which the values for safe working are expressed. In the British Standard it is 'Duty rating'. These have been arrived at by taking into account the general conditions and probable frequency of use for each type. The European Standard uses 'Maximum static vertical load'. To help clarify this, we have given both sets of figures.

British Standard stepladders to BS 2037 (Aluminium) or BS 1129 (Wood) or BS 7377 (Step-stools):

- **Class 1 (Industrial)** Duty rating 130kg (20 stone)
= Maximum vertical static load 175kg
- **Class 3 (Domestic)** Duty rating 95kg (15 stone)
= Maximum vertical static load 125kg

European Standard stepladders to BS/EN 131 (all types):

- **(Previous Class 2)** Duty rating 115kg (18 stone)
= Maximum vertical static load 150kg

IS IT SAFE?

Most stepladder accidents are caused by human error, not by ladders failing. But any equipment in poor condition is potentially dangerous, so do this quick check before each job.

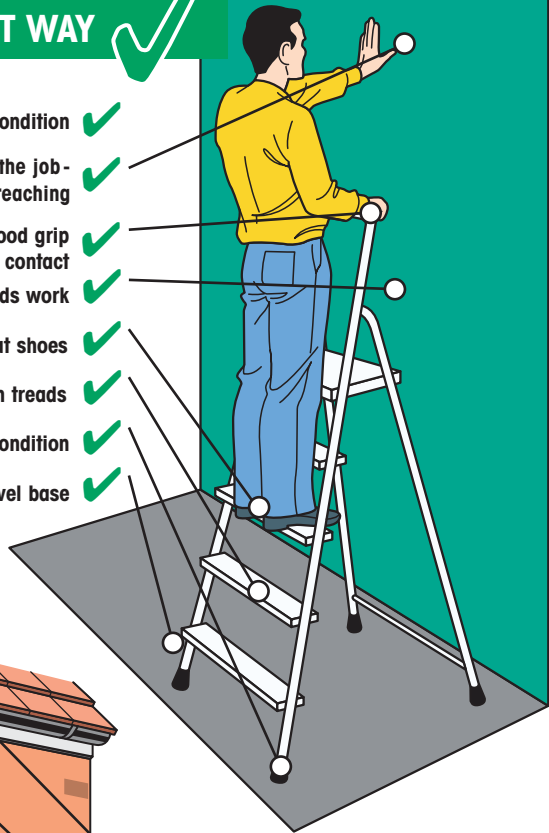
Is the stepladder generally sound? No damage to the stiles (the outside uprights) or steps or top platform? Dents, bends, cracks and splits are all hazards. If you do find any structural damage, don't attempt to repair it – you need a new stepladder.

Are the rubber or plastic non-slip feet all safely in position? Before you use the stepladder, any missing ones must be replaced – you can usually get these from the manufacturer.

Make sure the steps are all clean and tidy.

THE RIGHT WAY

- Step in good condition ✓
- Right height for the job - no overreaching ✓
- Good grip ✓
- 3 points of contact ✓
- Front towards work ✓
- Correct Flat shoes ✓
- Clean treads ✓
- Four feet in good condition ✓
- Firm and level base ✓



THE WRONG WAY

- Overhead hazard
- Wrong height step for the job - overreaching
- No grip on step - only 2 points of contact
- Standing on top handrail
- Slippers - incorrect footwear
- Loose tools
- Working side on
- Slippery treads
- Uneven soft ground, no flat board
- Damaged stiles & treads
- Missing feet



Every month, more than a thousand people need hospital treatment because of accidents at home involving stepladders...

..ABOVE ALL BE CAREFUL

LADDER GUIDE

BEFORE YOU START

Not every job can be done with just a ladder – or by you on your own. So always check:

Are you up to the job?

If you're not completely certain that you can manage everything involved in doing the job properly, get professional help.

Is a ladder up to the job?

Think ahead to what you'll have to do at every stage. If you'll need to move around while you're up there, or carry lots of materials, or use heavy equipment, a ladder may not be sufficient. You might be better off using a mobile tower or scaffolding. You must always be able to extend the ladder by at least 1.1m above any step-off height.

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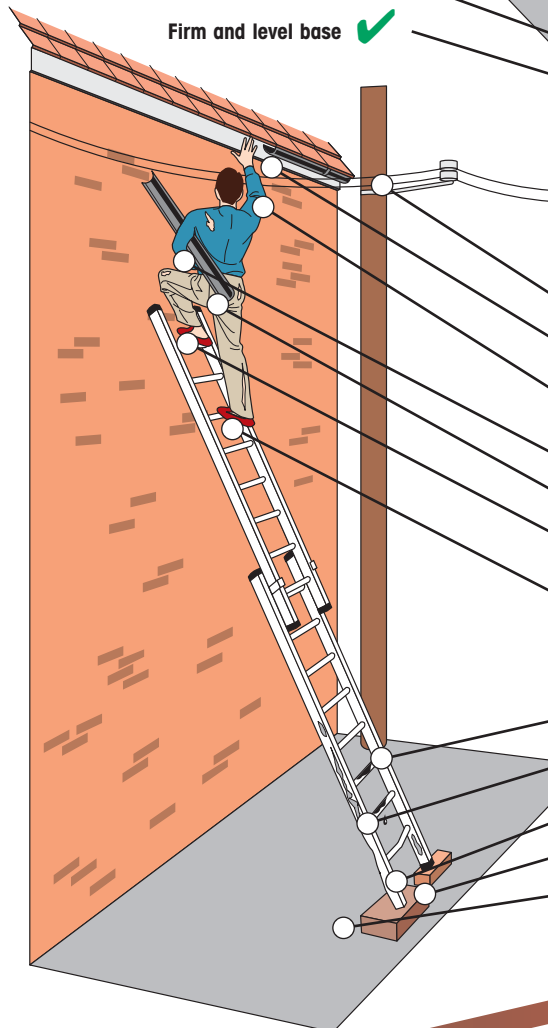
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WORK THE SAFE WAY

THE RIGHT WAY ✓

- Right height for the job – no overreaching ✓
- Good grip ✓
- Correct Flat shoes ✓
- Clean rungs ✓
- Ladder in good condition ✓
- Two non-slip feet in good condition ✓
- Ladder at correct angle 65-75 degrees ✓
- Firm and level base ✓



THE WRONG WAY ✗

- ✗ Electrical hazard
- ✗ Overhead hazard
- ✗ Wrong height for the job – overreaching
- ✗ Not holding on – only 2 points of contact
- ✗ Overloaded with material
- ✗ Standing on top 3 rungs
- ✗ Slippers – incorrect footwear
- ✗ Mud on rungs
- ✗ Damaged ladder
- ✗ Foot missing or damaged
- ✗ Unstable surface
- ✗ Base too far from wall

It's likely that this week someone in Britain will die from an accident with a ladder, and more than a hundred will be injured. Most of these accidents occur during household maintenance and DIY, when someone falls from a ladder or the ladder itself falls because it's being used wrongly...

..ABOVE ALL BE CAREFUL