

# The Stepladder User's Guide

## Introduction

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

This Guide gathers together expert advice and guidance. Please follow it and lessen the risks to yourself and to others.

## 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 that can be converted into extending ladders.

The type bought most often is the 4 to 7 step folding version. 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 ever reaching 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 used 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 -Maximum vertical static load 175kg
- **Class 3 (Domestic)** Duty Rating 95kg -Maximum vertical static load 125kg

European standard stepladders to BE/EN 131 (All types)

- **(Previous Class 2)** Duty Rating 115kg - 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. 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 safely in position? Before you use the stepladder, any missing ones must be replaced - you can usually get these from the manufacturer.
- Make sure that the steps are all clean and dry.

**Get Set - Avoid falls and injuries from equipment by following the points below for every job.**

## Getting Ready

- Wear flat firm soled shoes. Never work in high heels, bare feet or slippers.
- Check that there are no overhead hazards near where you are going to work.

## Setting Up

- Check that the stepladder is locked into the correct position. If it is a multi-way design make sure that it's in the right configuration for the job you're doing. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Rest it on a firm and level base if you're working outside. Place a large flat board on any soft ground to make a stable base.
- Place it **front-on** to the work.
- **Never work sideways.**



## On the Stepladder

- Keep a secure grip at all times.
- Never have more than one person on the stepladder at any one time.
- Don't put loose tools where they could move or fall and cause an injury. Use a fixed-on work tray, if necessary.
- Always have both your feet on a step. Never stand on the top platform to gain extra height.
- **Never over-reach** (get down and move the steps).

## When the Job's Done

- Keep your stepladder protected from the weather in a covered, ventilated area.
- Never hang it vertically from one of its steps.
- Keep it out of the way of children.

### The Right Way



### The Wrong Way

Over-reaching, Wearing slippers, Slippery steps, Damaged steps, Non-slip foot missing, Overhead hazard, Wrong height stepladder for the job, No grip on ladder, Standing on top handrail, Uneven soft ground, Damaged stiles