

HOW TO... KNOW WHEN TO USE A LADDER

What is the risk?

Ladders can be a sensible and practical option for low risk and short duration tasks, but they shouldn't automatically be your first choice.

Use a ladder when your risk assessment has shown that other equipment (offering a higher level of fall protection) is not justified, and that a ladder can be used safely.



Low-risk



& Short duration

As a guide, 'short duration' is a task that requires you to be working from a ladder for no more than 30 minutes at a time. If the task will take longer, it's recommended to use alternative work at height equipment.

Things to consider

- Can you maintain a grip? Keep at least one hand on the ladder when climbing and working.
- Do you need to take other measures to prevent a fall, or reduce injury if you do fall?
- Maintain three points of contact with the ladder wherever possible.
- What will the ladder lean against? You need somewhere stable, do not rest a leaning ladder on gutters, tiles and trees as these might give way.
- Will you be able to position the ladder close enough to the task to avoid you having to over reach?
- Avoid side-on working as that force could cause the ladder to topple. Face the task and never work facing backwards.

Know your environment

Only use ladders in situations where they can be used safely. Ensure the ground conditions are suitable, the surface should be:

- Dry - not slippery, free from mud, leaves, oil or any other substance that could reduce the grip of the ladder's feet.
- Flat - without bumps, as differences in level or gaps could cause the ladder to become unstable.
- Level - do not use a ladder on a slope and do not stand the feet on bricks, small pieces of wood etc. in an attempt to level the ground.
- Firm - do not use on soft ground, as the ladder could sink or slide when in use. Use a large board on soft ground to create a firm surface to stand the ladder on.
- Strong - make sure the ground can support the weight of the ladder, yourself and your tools/materials.

CORRECT - use of a stand-off device to ensure a strong resting point.



INCORRECT - overreaching and not maintaining three points of contact.



5 KEY POINTS:

1. Carry out a risk assessment to decide if a ladder is the right solution
2. Only use ladders for low risk and short duration tasks
3. Maintain three points of contact
4. Know your environment
5. Get trained to use your ladder safely

Who needs to know:

- Anyone who uses ladders and stepladders on site
- Managers and site supervisors

Useful references:

- LA455 'Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders: A brief guide'
- Ladder Association Code of Practice



What else do I need to know?

- Choose the right ladder for the task. Every task is different, so what was right for one, might not be right for another.
- Get a grip on ladder safety by getting trained. Learn when to use a ladder - and when not to use a ladder - how to use it safely, how and when to inspect the ladder, storage and maintenance.

HOW TO...KNOW WHEN TO USE A LADDER GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

How to use this guidance

This additional guidance has been created for Managers, Supervisors, Safety Leads or any person responsible for delivering the Toolbox Talks on site. It is designed to be used alongside the Toolbox Talk and offers additional, more specific information to help you add value to the topic covered. **The Ladder Association Code of Practice serves as a supporting document for users, supervisors and managers who have completed a Ladder Association course, and is not intended to be a substitute for training.**

What is 'short duration'?

It's important to emphasise that 'short duration' is not the deciding factor in establishing if it's right to use a ladder – a competent person must first complete a detailed risk assessment. Your risk assessment should consider **Site, Task, Equipment and People** (just remember the short acronym 'STEP'). **See Ladder Association Code of Practice Section 8.**

Things to consider

Maintain a firm grip on the ladder, maintain three points of contact and avoid over reaching. For additional guidance on climbing, descending and working safely from a ladder **see Ladder Association Code of Practice Sections 19 and 20.**

Know your environment

CORRECT - use of a stand-off device to ensure a strong resting point. Do not rest a ladder against weak upper surfaces such as glazing or plastic gutters. Follow the user instructions.

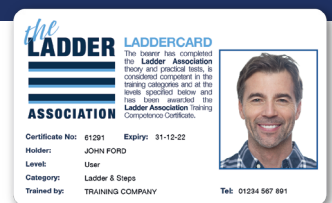


INCORRECT - overreaching and not maintaining three points of contact.



What else do I need to know?

- More detailed guidance on choosing the right ladder for the task is found in the **Ladder Association Code of Practice Section 10**. Or, refer to the **AIF Toolbox Talk 'How to...Select the Right Ladder'**.
- The Ladder Association, through a network of approved training centres, offers a full range of training courses for users, managers and those responsible for inspecting ladders at work. All trained delegates will receive an industry-recognised LadderCard, valid for 5 years. Training can help demonstrate competence, as required by the Work at Height Regulations. **See LA455 Section 4.**



Useful references:

- **LA455 'Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders: A brief guide'** (available to download free from ladderassociation.org.uk)
- **Ladder Association Code of Practice** (available from ladderassociation.org.uk or via our mobile app)
- You can find a **full list of Ladder Association Training Courses** and use a simple postcode search to **find your nearest approved training centre**, on the Ladder Association website: ladderassociation.org.uk/training