

Produced by the Access Industry Forum (AIF) and the Ladder Association, and supported by the Home Builders Federation.
IMPORTANT NOTE: Toolbox Talks are NOT intended to replace formal training but to supplement it.

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

What is '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.

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.

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

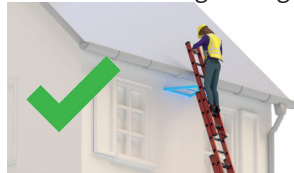
Who needs to know:

- 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

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



INCORRECT - overreaching and not maintaining three points of contact.

