

Good handling techniques for lifting

Here are some practical tips, suitable for use in training people in safe manual handling. In the following section a basic lifting operation is taken as an example.

Think before lifting/handling. Plan the lift. Can handling aids be used? Where is the load going to be placed? Will help be needed with the load? Remove obstructions such as discarded wrapping materials. For a long lift, consider resting the load midway on a table or bench to change grip.

Keep the load close to the waist. Keep the load close to the body for as long as possible while lifting. Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the body. If a close approach to the load is not possible, try to slide it towards the body before attempting to lift it.



Adopt a stable position. The feet should be apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance (alongside the load, if it is on the ground). The worker should be prepared to move their feet during the lift to maintain their stability. Avoid tight clothing or unsuitable footwear, which may make this difficult.



Get a good hold. Where possible the load should be hugged as close as possible to the body. This may be better than gripping it tightly with hands only.



Start in a good posture. At the start of the lift, slight bending of the back, hips and knees is preferable to fully flexing the back (stooping) or fully flexing the hips and knees (squatting).¹

Don't flex the back any further while lifting. This can happen if the legs begin to straighten before starting to raise the load.



Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways, especially while the back is bent. Shoulders should be kept level and facing in the same direction as the hips. Turning by moving the feet is better than twisting and lifting at the same time.

Keep the head up when handling. Look ahead, not down at the load, once it has been held securely.



Move smoothly. The load should not be jerked or snatched as this can make it harder to keep control and can increase the risk of injury.

Don't lift or handle more than can be easily managed. There is a difference between what people can lift and what they can safely lift. If in doubt, seek advice or get help.



Put down, then adjust. If precise positioning of the load is necessary, put it down first, then slide it into the desired position

Team lifts and equipment. If you feel an object is too heavy or cumbersome for one person to manage, ask for assistance. When going for team lifts try to choose someone of a similar height and build. One person should call the signals and once upright you should move in unison. Or if you have been trained and subject to availability use a mechanical aid (trolley, sack truck etc).

Manual Handling

It is essential that you adopt a good technique when lifting heavy objects. Here are a few important points to remember, but these are only the basics. Always adopt the following as a basic lifting technique:

- Think before lifting/handling. Plan the lift. Can handling aids be used? Where is the load to be placed? Will help be needed with the load? Remove obstructions such as discarded wrapping materials. For a long lift, consider resting the load midway on a table or bench to change grip.
- Keep the load close to the waist. Keep the load close to the body for as long as possible while lifting. Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the body. If a close approach to the load is not possible, try slide it towards the body before attempting to lift it.
- Adopt a stable position. The feet should be apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance (alongside the load if it is on the ground). You should be prepared to move your feet during the lift to maintain their stability. Avoid tight clothing or unsuitable footwear, which may make this difficult
- Get a good hold. Where possible the load should be hugged as close as possible to the body. This may



- be better than gripping it tightly with hands only.
 - Start in a good posture. At the start of the lift, slight bending of the back, hips and knees is preferable to fully flexing the back (stooping) or fully flexing the hips and knees (squatting).
 - Don't flex the back any further while lifting. This can happen if the legs begin to straighten before starting to raise the load.
 - Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways, especially while the back is bent. Shoulders should be kept level and facing in the same direction as the hips. Turning by moving the feet is better than twisting and lifting at the same time.
- Keep the head up when handling. Look ahead, not down at the load. Once it has been held securely.
- Move smoothly. The load should not be jerked or snatched as this can make it harder to keep control and can increase the risk of injury
- Don't lift or handle more than can easily be managed. There is a difference between what people can lift and what they can safely lift. If in doubt, seek advice or get help.
- Avoid lifting above your head wherever possible.
- Put down, then adjust. If precise positioning of the load is necessary, put it down first, then slide it into the desired position.