

# 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 150kg (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 130kg (20 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.

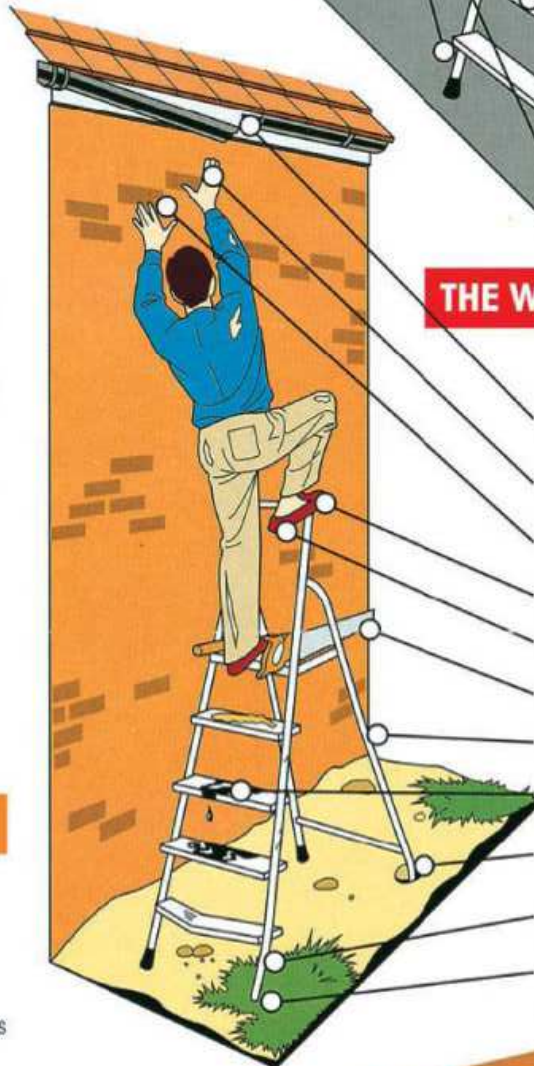
## THE RIGHT WAY

- Ladder undamaged ✓
- Right height for the job – no overreaching ✓
- Good grip ✓
- Front on ✓
- Flat shoes ✓
- Clean steps ✓
- Four non-slip feet ✓
- Firm and level base ✓



## THE WRONG WAY

- ✗ Overhead hazard
- ✗ Wrong height for the job – overreaching
- ✗ No grip on ladder
- ✗ Standing on top handrail
- ✗ Slippers
- ✗ Loose tools
- ✗ Sideways-on
- ✗ Slippery steps
- ✗ Uneven soft ground, no flat board
- ✗ Damaged stiles
- ✗ Non-slip foot missing



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