

By definition a stepladder is self-supporting, portable, non-adjustable in length, having flat steps and a hinged back. Stepladders are useful, versatile and at times hazardous. Falls from stepladders are very common. Knowledge of safety guidelines can prevent stepladder incidents from happening.

What should you do when using a stepladder?

- Use a stepladder that is about 1 metre shorter than the highest point you have to reach. This gives a wider, more stable base and places the shelf at a convenient working height.
- Open the stepladder spreaders and shelf fully.
- Check stability. Ensure that all ladder feet are on a firm, level and non-slippery surface.
- Place a stepladder at right angles to the work, with either the front or back of the steps facing the work.
- Keep the stepladder close to the work.
- Ensure safety labels and load ratings are present and undamaged.
- Do not push or pull stepladders from the side.
- Face the stepladder when climbing up or down. Keep your body centred between side rails. You have climbed too high if your knees are above the top of the stepladder or if you cannot maintain a handhold on the ladder.
- Maintain a firm grip. Use both hands when climbing.
- Do not carry tools and materials when climbing the ladder. Use a tool belt or hoist system instead.

What should you avoid when using a stepladder?

- Do not overreach. Move a stepladder when needed.
- Do not "shift" or "walk" a stepladder when on it.
- Do not stand, climb, or sit on the top or pail shelf.
- Do not overload. They are meant for one person.
- Do not use a stepladder as a brace or as a support for a work platform or plank.
- Do not climb a stepladder that is leaning against a wall. Use an extension ladder instead.
- Do not use stepladders on slippery surfaces.
- Do not use stepladders on soft ground where one leg may sink farther into the ground than others.
- Do not place stepladders on boxes, unstable bases or scaffolds to gain additional height.
- Do not climb the back of a stepladder.

- Do not use ladders in passageways, doorways, driveways or other locations where a person or vehicle can hit it. If unavoidable, ensure barricades and signage are put into place before use.

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations State:

Portable ladders

16-6

- (1) In this section "portable ladder" means any ladder that is not fixed in place, and includes a stepladder.
- (2) An employer or contractor shall ensure that:
 - (a) a portable ladder is equipped with non-slip feet;
 - (b) a portable ladder is secured against accidental movement during use;
 - (c) a metal or wire-bound portable ladder is not used where the ladder or a worker handling or using the ladder may come into contact with an exposed energized electrical conductor; and
 - (d) a portable ladder extends at least one metre above any platform, roof or other landing to which the ladder is used as a means of access.
- (3) An employer or contractor shall ensure that each worker who handles or uses a portable ladder is instructed in the requirements of this section.
- (4) An employer or contractor shall ensure that a stepladder:
 - (a) is not more than six metres high when set for use;
 - (b) has legs that are securely held in position by means of metal braces or an equivalent rigid support; and
 - (c) when in use, has a front section slope at an angle of one horizontal to six vertical.
- (5) An employer or contractor shall ensure that:
 - (a) an extension ladder is equipped with locks that securely hold the sections of the ladder in the extended position;
 - (b) if a section of an extension ladder is extended, the section that is extended overlaps another section for at least 1 metre;
 - (a) an extension ladder consisting of 2 sections does not exceed 14.6 metres in length; and
 - (b) an extension ladder consisting of more than 2 sections does not exceed 20 metres in length.
- (6) An employer or contractor shall ensure that no single portable ladder and no section of an extension ladder exceeds nine metres in length.