

# Manual Handling



## Workbook

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## Introduction

This workbook will help and encourage you to lift and handle loads safer in the future. As with other hazards and risks in the workplace, prevention is best. Being aware of the cause of injuries to your back, neck and upper body is vital to you and a continued healthy working life.

Lifting and handling is something we do every day, most of the time we don't actually think about the risks and the damage that we could bring to ourselves.

Damage, injury and pain due to poor manual handling techniques is only a lift away – even in the safety of your own home you are at risk.

Manual handling is not just about lifting heavy loads. You can increase the risk of injury from lifting, pulling and pushing by manual handling tasks being repetitive or regular parts of your job.

To make matter worse, it is a common fact that a high percentage of people who regularly move loads during the working day have poor manual handling techniques. They are not aware of possible injuries that can occur through manual handling.

Put all of these facts together and you will have found reasons why manual handling injuries are the single biggest loss of working days in this country.

## The Occupational Health and Safety Act

This is the basis of all health and safety legislation, and sets out the general duties which employers have towards employees and members of the public, and employees have to themselves and to each other.

### The Employer's Duties

- To ensure as far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety and welfare of employees.

### The Employee's Duties:

- To take reasonable care of their own and others health and safety.
- To co-operate with their employers to enable them to perform their duties.

## Codes of Conduct

The regulations (codes of conduct) apply wherever things or people are moved by hand or bodily force.

### The Employer's Duties

- **Avoid** the need for hazardous manual handling as far as is reasonably practicable.
- **Assess** the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling that can't be avoided.
- **Reduce** the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling, as far as reasonably practicable.

### The Employee's Duties

- **Follow** appropriate systems of work load down for their safety.
- **Make proper use** of equipment provided to minimise the risk of injury.
- **Co-operate** with the employer on health and safety matters.
- **Apply** the duties of employers, as appropriate, to their own manual handling activities.
- Taking care to **ensure** that their activities do not put others at risk.

## Know Your Limits

It is very important when faced with a manual handling task that you stop, take time to think and assess what you are about to do. This can be remembered using the acronym LITE, which stands for:

- Load
- Individual
- Task
- Environment

There are some key questions that we should ask:

### LOAD

- If it is heavy – consider breaking it up or ordering smaller packages.
- If it is difficult to grasp or could shift during carrying – consider using a mechanical aid.
- If it is awkward – consider using another person to help or a mechanical aid.
- Sharp or otherwise potentially damaging.
- Unstable.
- Bulky.

### INDIVIDUAL

- Consider those who are pregnant, have back problems or a disability etc.
- Does it require unusual strength, height etc.
- Require special information or has training been provided.
- Is movement or posture impacted.

### TASK

- Holding or manipulating loads at a distance from the body.
- Unsatisfactory body movement or posture:
  - Twisting the trunk
  - Stooping
  - Reaching upwards
  - Excessive lifting or lowering distances
  - Excessive carrying distances
  - Risk of sudden movement of loads
  - Insufficient rest or recovery periods
  - Frequent or prolonged physical effort
  - The use of stepladders for higher shelves

### ENVIRONMENT

- Uneven slippery or unstable floors.
- Variations of levels of floors or work surface.
- Extremes of temperature or humidity.
- Conditions causing ventilation problems or gusts of wind.
- Poor lighting conditions.
- Removal of any obstructions.
- Space constraints preventing good posture.

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Problems to look for when making an assessment	Ways of reducing the risk of injury
<p>The tasks, do they involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Holding loads away from the body?</li> <li>■ Twisting, stooping or reaching upwards?</li> <li>■ Large vertical movement?</li> <li>■ Long carrying distances?</li> <li>■ Strenuous pushing or pulling?</li> <li>■ Repetitive handling?</li> <li>■ Insufficient rest or recovery time?</li> <li>■ A work rate imposed by a process?</li> </ul>	<p>Can you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Use a lifting aid?</li> <li>■ Improve workplace layout to improve efficiency?</li> <li>■ Reduce the amount of twisting and stooping?</li> <li>■ Avoid lifting from floor level or above shoulder height, especially heavy loads?</li> <li>■ Reduce carrying distances?</li> <li>■ Avoid repetitive handling?</li> <li>■ Vary the work, allowing one set of muscles to rest while another is used?</li> <li>■ Push rather than pull?</li> </ul>
<p>The loads, are they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Heavy, bulky or unwieldy?</li> <li>■ Difficult to grasp?</li> <li>■ Unstable or likely to move unpredictably?</li> <li>■ Harmful, eg sharp or hot?</li> <li>■ Awkwardly stacked?</li> <li>■ Too large for the handler to see over?</li> </ul>	<p>Can you make the load:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lighter or less bulky?</li> <li>■ Easier to grasp?</li> <li>■ More stable?</li> <li>■ Less damaging to hold?</li> </ul> <p>If the load comes in from elsewhere, have you asked the supplier to help, eg provide handles or smaller packages.</p>

## The Six Point Lift

The six point lift is illustrated by a set of 'base movements'. Using this technique, balance is maintained by relaxation and natural positioning of the body weight.

### 1. Look at the load

Inspect the load for size, shape, potential instability, and possible areas to grip. Note if there is any writing on the load indicating the nature of the contents, the weight, or any special properties which the load may have (such as; fragile, offset centre of gravity etc.) If you think you can't manage to move the load, get help.



1) Look at the load

### 2. Foot position

The best foot position is placing the feet hip width apart with one foot ahead of the other – which gives stability. Place the foot forward, which feels most comfortable.

Approach the load and adopt this foot position. The leading foot should be alongside the load if possible, facing the direction you intend to travel.

This position allows you to get your centre of balance as close as possible to the load. Your stance and position should be adjusted according to the size and shape of the load.



2) Foot position

### 3. Bend knees/back straight (in its natural position)

The relaxation of the knees and the adjustment of the body weight through the feet completes this movement. In this position the front foot is flat on the floor, and the heel of the rear foot is raised.

It is impossible to keep the back perfectly straight when lifting in this way. During the lift it is better to maintain the natural curvature of the lower back. Until you feel confident with the posture, there may be a tendency to lean excessively forward for extra balance.

There are only two ways to get down to a low load: by bending the back or bending the knees. Attempts to keep the back perfectly straight can lead to over-flexing the knees, possibly resulting in pain and injury. It can also lead to a jerky lifting pattern, which contributes to a cumulative injury.



3) Bend knees / back straight

#### 4. Test the load/take a firm grip

With the knees bent, the head can now fall forward to view the load and the hands can reach down to touch the load. The hands and forearms should fall on the inside of the thighs and from here the load can be tested by a gentle rocking to assess if it is within your capability.



4) Test the load / take a firm grip

Take hold of the load using the 'diagonal' grip. This involves placing your hands at diagonally opposite corners of the load, matched to the positions of the feet. If standing with the left foot forwards, then the left hand is placed at top upper corner of the box, and the right hand under the right rear corner.

The diagonal grip provides support for the load from below and draws it towards the body. The correct positioning of hand and foot position helps to reduce the amount of twisting during the lifting process.

#### 5. Lift with legs/load close

The upward move starts by gently raising the head and tucking in the chin. This movement straightens the neck, raises the chest and shoulders, and encourages a straight spine throughout the lift.



5) Lift with the legs and keep the load close

The load-bearing arm remains relatively straight during the lifting process, with the load being brought close to the body as it clears the knees.

As the body is raised, the rear foot thrusts the body forward. This use of body weight uses the minimum amount of energy, and reduces the risk of tiredness. Keep the arms as close to the body as possible, to reduce the leverage.

#### 6. Put down with care

The load should be kept close to the body during the lowering manoeuvre. When access is limited, approaching the destination surface at an angle using the staggered foot position helps keep the load close until its weight is supported.



6) Put down with care

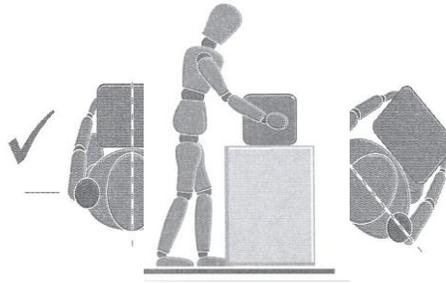
**With practice these six steps can be performed as a smooth process placing the minimum of effort, stress and tension on the body and helping to reduce the likelihood of a cumulative injury.**

## **Extra Information about Manual Handling Techniques**

### **Don't flex the back any further while lifting**

This can happen if the legs begin to straighten before starting to raise the load.

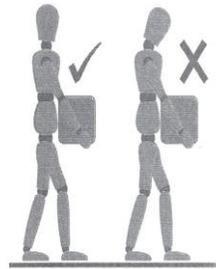
**Avoid twisting the back** while the back is bent. and facing in the same by moving the feet is the same time.



**or leaning sideways** especially Shoulders should be kept level direction as the hips. Turning better than twisting and lifting at

### **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, and then slide it into the desired position.