



# Ladder Safety

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

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Every year in the U.S., more than 100 people die in ladder-related accidents, and thousands suffer disabling injuries.<sup>1</sup> According to the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#), falls from portable ladders (step, straight, combination, and extension) are among the leading causes of workplace injuries and fatalities. However, these falls are preventable when employees know how to inspect, use, and maintain ladders.



## Inspect Ladders

Inspect ladders at intervals determined by the employer and document the inspection in writing. Documentation is easily achieved by dating and initialing an inspection sticker on one of the ladder's side rails.

Before using any ladder, check for:

- loose, worn, or missing rungs, cleats, bracing, or side rails;
- loose nails, bolts, or screws;
- wood splinters;
- corroded metal parts;
- broken or partially broken welds where rungs meet the side rails;
- damaged or missing foot pads; and
- water, oil, grease, mud, or other slippery substances on the ladder or your shoes.

Do not use a ladder in poor condition. Instead:

- report it to a supervisor;
- mark it with a "Do Not Use" tag immediately; and
- have it repaired, removed, or destroyed.

<sup>1</sup> American Ladder Institute. National Ladder Safety Month. Website. <https://www.laddersafetymonth.com/About/National-Ladder-Safety-Month#:~:text=Every%20year%20100%20people,and%20thousands%20suffer%20disabling%20injuries>. Accessed December 8, 2020.

## Choose the Right Ladder

Do not use a ladder when stairs, ramps, or runways are available. If using a ladder, choose the right type and size for the task.

- Select a ladder that can hold at least four times the maximum load. Do not go over the load rating. Always include your weight plus the weight of all tools, materials, and equipment when calculating the maximum load. (See Table 1.) If the load rating sticker on a ladder is missing or unreadable, replace it, or get a new ladder.

Ladder Type	Weight Limit	Description
Type 1-AA	375 pounds	Special Duty
Type 1-A	300 pounds	Heavy Duty Industrial
Type I	250 pounds	Heavy Duty
Type II	225 pounds	Medium Duty
Type III	200 pounds	Light Duty

- Never increase a ladder's height by standing it on top of boxes, barrels, or other objects.
- Never splice two ladders together.
- Never use ladders as a platform, runway, or scaffold.
- Do not use a self-supporting ladder (such as a stepladder) as a straight ladder.
- Read and follow all ladder labels, instructions, and warnings.
- Use ladders only as designed. If you need a ladder that does something else, [choose a specialty ladder](#). A smartphone application developed by the [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health](#) can assist you in ladder selection, ladder angle, and other useful safety tips. The mobile phone app is available through the [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

## Set Up Ladder Properly

Prevent ladder accidents by setting up the ladder properly.

- Allow ample room to step off the ladder safely.
- Keep the area around the ladder clear of tools and equipment.
- Set the base of the ladder, so the bottom rests securely, evenly supporting both side rails.
- Ensure the ladder sits on solid footing against firm support.
- Use a long enough ladder for the side rails to extend above the top support point by at least three feet.
- Set leaning ladders at an angle of one foot of distance from the wall for every four feet of vertical height. A quick way to check this is to face the ladder with your feet between the side rails.

## Set Up Ladder Properly

When at the correct angle, you can reach straight, and grasp the runners with outstretched arms.

- Tie in, block, or secure the top of the straight ladder to keep it from moving.
- Unless protective barriers are in place, never set up ladders in doorways or walkways where people can run into them.
- Never use metal ladders near power lines or exposed, energized electrical equipment. Keep wood or fiberglass ladders at least ten feet from power lines, if possible.
- Do not run hoses, extension cords, or ropes on a ladder, which may cause the ladder to move unexpectedly or create trip or fall hazards.

## Climb Safely

- Never stand on a stepladder's cross braces unless they are designed as a second set of steps.
- Never stand above a ladder's topmost safe step (the top step or the top shelf), as indicated on the ladder's label.
- Keep your body near the middle of the step, and always face the ladder.
- Maintain three points of contact with the ladder (using two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand).
- Do not try to carry tools or materials up with you if you cannot do so while maintaining three contact points with the ladder.
- Face the ladder when climbing and keep the body inside the side rails.
- Avoid tipping the ladder by over-reaching. If something is out of reach, get down and move the ladder closer to the item you are trying to reach.



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