



Manual Handling

Why do we do manual handling training?

1. We don't want you to hurt yourself
2. It is financially prudent to do so
3. We have to

Safe Manual Handling techniques will not make you stronger or able to lift greater weights – they are to help you do your day-to-day jobs without hurting yourself. Two out of every five workplace injuries reported to the HSE are due to manual handling. Injuries range from cuts and bruises up to skeletal damage and even bone breakages.

The HSE has calculated that over 2 million sick-days are taken because of back pain – two thirds of which could have been avoided using safe manual handling techniques, both at work and at home.

Legally speaking, your employer also *has* to train you in manual handling techniques – we have an obligation under the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992, to provide you with this training, and to ensure safe systems of working are in place, and the correct equipment is available. However, as employees, you *also* have obligations under these regulations:

1. You must follow safe systems of working
2. You must make proper use of manual handling equipment provided
3. You must co-operate with your employer on health and safety matters
4. Inform your employer of hazards you have identified.
5. Make sure your activities pose no risk to others

What is manual handling?

Manual handling can be described as the lifting, carrying, holding or pushing and pulling of any discrete object or load. This description covers a wide range of activities – not all of which occur in the workplace. We undertake manual handling training tasks at home too and safe manual handling techniques apply equally everywhere.

The load doesn't have to be very large or heavy – if you must lift something to, or lower something from a high shelf, for example, you will be stretching quite a bit, and the object doesn't have to be very big to cause a problem!

Injuries can occur in several ways:

Heavy work
Awkward postures
Existing injury or condition
Repeated work

There are three steps we should take to reduce the risk of manual handling injury.

1. AVOID

Does the object have to be moved? Can the task be completed without the object moving? Can it be moved later, when there are more people to help?

2. ASSESS

Assess the task carefully, considering the:

1. load itself (is it heavy or awkward to hold),
2. task (the movement you need to undertake with the load)
3. environment (the area you will be moving in)

3. REDUCE

Seek to reduce the risks, perhaps by using lifting equipment, or enlisting the aid of a colleague to move the item with you.

TECHNIQUES

Always **THINK** and assess before commencing a manual handling operation, ask yourself some of these questions:

1. Can I avoid the need to lift, push, pull, carry or lower the load?
1. Are there workplace precautions and a safe system already agreed?
2. Can I use a handling aid and protective equipment?
3. Do I need help from someone?
4. Is there an easier and safer way of handling the load?
5. What is the weight and centre of gravity of the load?
6. What are the contents of the load, will they shift or are they harmful?
7. Are there handles I can use to gain a good grip?
8. What route will I take and is it clear?

Get the **POSTURE** correct

At the start of a lifting operation try and relax the body and muscles before handling and try to avoid:

1. Deep stooping postures with the feet parallel and the back bent – this will apply big forces on the low back and may overstretch muscles putting them at risk
2. Squatting right down so that your legs are completely flexed – you will have to use a lot of effort to lift your body and the load and maintain a good balanced posture

Do try to:

1. Grip the load securely or use the handles
2. Raise the head as you lift to lock the back in an upright posture

3. Put some smooth movement and momentum into operation

Adopt a STABLE position

1. A good stable posture is essential to protect your balance and yourself from risk of injury.
2. Feet should be hip width apart with one foot slightly in front of the other, not parallel.
3. This will provide a stable base to lift from safely.
4. Ensure that clothing is not too tight and restricts free flowing movement
5. Keep the load CLOSE to the body

At the point of lifting and while carrying the load, keep it close and tight into the body, with the heaviest side closest to the body. This will reduce the risk of injury from the load exerting forces on the back and muscles.

Avoid flexing the back once the load has been lifted. This could be as a result of the load being too heavy and a result of a wrong assessment. This flexing action places harmful forces on the structure of the back and muscles.

Avoid twisting while lifting, lowering, pushing and pulling the load at any height. Twisting places shearing forces on the structure of the back and can overload muscles increasing the risk of injury.

Attempt to keep the shoulders and trunk of the body parallel with the pelvis and hips, remembering this will reduce the risk of injury.

Attempt to use your feet to change direction when lifting and lowering and placing the load in its resting place.

Don't lift or handle more than you can manage

As part of your assessment you will know not to lift, lower, push or pull a load you cannot manage. To achieve an improved grip on the load and get the load close enough, try re-positioning it to a better position.

This can be done by lifting it onto its edge or breaking the operation into a series of smaller movements to get it into a good position to move.

Getting help is often a good solution but this has risks as well.

1. The operation has been talked through with your partner(s)
2. You are both aware that the weight of the load may not be shared evenly
3. One person oversees the lift and coordinates the operation
4. Both workers lift together by counting down '3-2-1 lift'
5. The area is clear as one worker may be walking backwards
6. You are aware that twisting of the low back can occur if both workers are facing the same direction

Handling aids assist risk reduction and can include pallet trucks, barrows, trolleys, cages, skates and sack trucks.

To make it easier to push or pull, ensure: That your feet are well away from the That you walk no faster than a reasonable walking speed, this will stop you from becoming tired.

Moving a load over soft or uneven surfaces will require higher force. On an uneven surface, the force needed to start the load moving could increase to 10% of the load weight. The use of larger wheels can offset this value, however soft ground may increase the required force.

For example a weight of 400kg would require a force of 40kg, which would need two or more persons to move safely

There is no such thing as a safe weight limit for manual handling – it depends on the person, the shape of the load and environmental factors etc. However, the table above gives a rough guide to what is reasonable under normal conditions. NOTE: The larger figure is for an easily-held object close to the body – the smaller figure is for an awkward item or if the item is held away from the body. The weights also vary according to what height the lift will begin and end at – the lowest figure found at the heights used during the lift is the guideline comfortable lifting limit but everybody will be different.

Once again, reading this handbook won't make you stronger or able to lift heavier weights! However, if you follow the principles described, you will significantly reduce your risk of manual handling injuries – at work, and at home. Keep this document safe somewhere, and refer to it if you are unsure. Above all, don't be afraid to ask for help, if you think you need it – nobody will think the worse of you if you do.

I confirm I have read and understood this manual handling guide:

Name: (Print)	
Signature:	
Date:	