

Manual Handling Considerations

The following principles apply for most manual handling tasks (adapted from Manual Handling Code of Practice).

Plan

As one way of avoiding overexertion injuries, the employee undertaking the manual handling should assess the load, determine where it will be placed and decide how it will be handled. By first assessing the situation, the employee can decide if mechanical assistance/aids or another person is needed to move the object, animal or person.

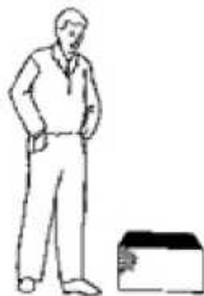


Figure 54 - Plan the lift

Determine the best technique

All factors to be taken into account when determining the best technique. The best handling technique involves suitable balance and avoidance of unnecessary bending, twisting and reaching. A person undertaking a lift should lift efficiently and rhythmically, minimising bending of the lower back. The knees should be bent, but preferably not at a right angle. When applying force, the principles in Section 5.25-5.33 of the Manual Handling Code of Practice are also relevant.

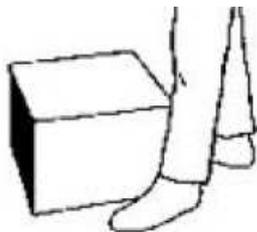


Figure 65 - Determine the best lifting technique

Take a Secure Grip on the Load being Handled

The grip helps to determine how safe the task will be. Whenever possible, a comfortable power grip (with the whole hand) should be used rather than a hook or precision grip (with fingers only).

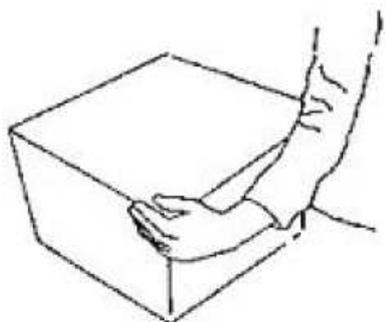


Figure 66 - Get a secure grip

Pull the load in close to the body

For lifting in particular, it is important to have the centre of gravity of the load close to the body to prevent excessive stress on the back and to use the strongest muscles of the arms to hold the load. It is important to minimise the effects of acceleration by lifting slowly, smoothly and without jerking.

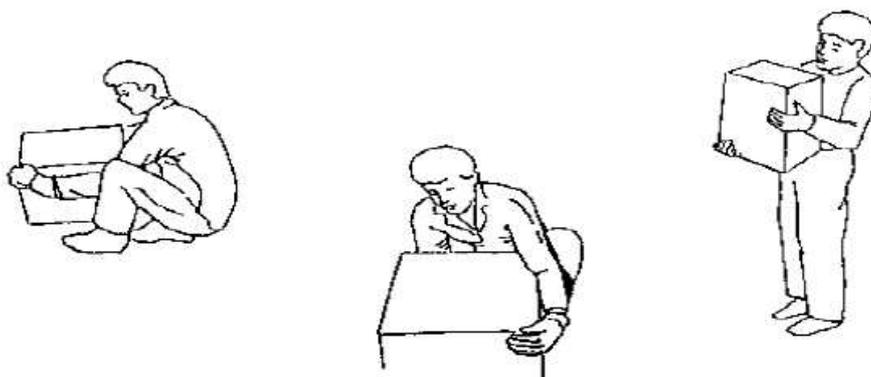


Figure 67 - Pull the load in close to your body

Vary heavy handling tasks with lighter work

The job/task should be designed so as to provide alternative tasks that do not heavily stress the same muscles. Throughout the work shift, heavier handling tasks should be alternated with lighter tasks which allow the active muscles to recover.

Team lifting

To enable load sharing, lifting partners should be of similar height and build and should be trained in lifting techniques. There should be a person nominated as team leader to coordinate the lift. Team lifting should not be used as a first option in risk control.

Manual Lifting

It is difficult to generalise about the optimum or maximum weight of a load to be lifted, because there are so many factors involved besides the actual weight to be lifted.

The following points should be considered:

- (a)** Lifting aids should be used if possible.
- (b)** There should be sufficient space for lifting to be done in the right position and with correct posture and body movements.
- (c)** There should be no obstructions when moving objects.
- (d)** The start and finish height of the load should be a suitable level above the floor, that is, between mid thigh to shoulder height, preferably at about waist height.
- (e)** The centre of gravity of the load should be as close to the body as possible. A load is more difficult (heavier) to lift or carry if it is not close to the body. For example, 10 kg held at a distance of 80 cm imposes the same load as 50 kg right next to the body.
- (f)** The back should not be twisted or bent sideways.
- (g)** Lifting with one hand should be avoided.
- (h)** If lifting has to be performed frequently or for prolonged time periods, then the acceptable weight of the load rapidly diminishes.

Moving Loads When Travelling:

- Plan ahead where possible. Can items be sent ahead? Pre activity planning is not always practical; so employees must make additional 'on the spot' decisions when travelling, based on recommended manual handling techniques. A specific detailed risk assessment should be carried out in conjunction with OHS Site Officer where because of weight or other factors increased risks are identified e.g. existing medical conditions.

- Take every opportunity to avoid and minimise any lifting and carrying e.g. parking close to location, using trolleys, rucksacks and aids, sharing the load with a second person, minimising what is carried to essentials, using lifts not stairs etc.
- Use information / labelling on loads given - all equipment weighing more than 15kgs are marked with weight and centre of gravity. Request assistance for loads exceeding 15kg.
- Use the manual handling aids available e.g. wheeled cases, backpack.
- Get help from colleagues, porters etc.
- Utilise correct manual handling techniques e.g. get close to the load, plan where it is going, bend the knees and lift with the load close to your body, avoid twisting the back when carrying or placing the load.

Moving Loads in Car Boots

- Hire/select cars with good access to boot.
- Park as close to drop off point as possible or consider dropping off kit before parking.
- Avoid twisting and bending.
- When loading and unloading items you need to be able to stand close to the load and avoid over-stretching and twisting.
- When loading the car, place the item in the boot close to you and then slide or rock it to the rear if necessary.
- If possible secure items in the boot near to you so you don't have to stretch to reach them.
- When unloading always slide a load towards you before attempting to lift it. Again, avoid twisting the spine while lifting.