



## Choosing and Using Ladders

*When you're in a hurry to reach a high place, climbing on a chair, table, or anything handy to get there is tempting. But is it worth the risk? This year, thousands of people will be disabled by falls involving ladders and ladder substitutes. A major cause of ladder injuries is improper set-up. The good news is that most ladder accidents are preventable. Ensure your ladder is in good working condition and placed properly before use. Ladder safety training is available for employees at the University of California Learning Center (UCLC).*

### Choosing the Right Ladder for the Job

There are four key elements you should consider when selecting a ladder:

1. **Style:** Which kind of ladder is suitable for the job?
  - Step, extension, multi-purpose, etc.
2. **Size:** How high do you need to reach?
  - What size ladder to buy?
3. **Duty Rating:** How much weight will be on the ladder?
4. **Material:** (Fiberglass, Aluminum, Wood) Where will the ladder be used?

Use a fiberglass (non-conductive) ladder if you work around electrical wires. Several accidents occur yearly because power lines and equipment wires contact metal ladders. Do not use wood ladders. They are not as durable as other ladder types.

### Inspect the Ladder Before You Use It

Inspect all ladders before use. Be sure that the spreaders can be locked in place when open. Also, be sure that straight ladders have safety feet. Metal ladders, either straight or step, should have rubber or plastic feet and step coverings. Be certain that the ladder steps are wide enough to spread your feet for balance.

Check for loose or bent rungs. A loose rung may seem solid, but you could lose your balance and fall if it twists unexpectedly under your weight. Also, check for cracked side rails on fiberglass ladders and bent parts on metal ladders. Replace any missing parts and tighten loose hardware, but don't try to repair significant structural damage. Instead, invest in a new ladder.

**Safety Tip:** When you select a ladder, make sure it is strong enough and long enough for the job. Ladders are labeled with duty ratings. Check the ladder's rating and do not exceed the weight limit (including the tools or equipment that will be carried).

### Set Up Your Ladder Carefully

Place your ladder on a firm, level surface with its feet parallel to the wall it rests against. If you must use the ladder in a busy area, use a barricade to prevent collisions and lock any nearby door that opens toward you.

Use the four-to-one ladder rule: Set the base of your ladder one foot away from the wall for every four feet of ladder height. This ratio is important because you can fall backward if the angle is too steep, and the ladder can slip out from under you if it is too horizontal.

### Climb Cautiously

When you climb up or down a ladder, be sure to face it. Hold on to the side rails with both hands. Carry only the necessary tools on your belt. Use a rope to raise heavy equipment. If you use power equipment, make sure the ladder is securely tied.

One of the most dangerous ladder hazards is overreach. Use the "belt buckle" rule: Always keep your body centered between the rails.

Allow only one person on a ladder at a time. Wear shoes with nonskid soles, and make sure your shoes and hands are clean and dry. Remember never to use the top two rungs of a ladder.

Safety Moment:

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I have reviewed and understand the contents of this Safety Moment document.

Name (print)	UCInetID	Signature	Date