

Ladders

Ladders are part of everyday life in retail, used to reach high shelves, change displays, or carry out maintenance. They are simple tools, but when misused, they can lead to serious falls. Even a fall from a small step ladder can cause broken bones or head injuries.

Can I use a ladder?

- Can the task be done another way? Always consider safer options first (e.g., step platforms, trolleys with steps, or mechanical aids).
- Duration: Ladders should only be used for short tasks (under 30 minutes).
- Weight: Do not carry items while climbing. Stock and equipment should be passed separately.
- Design: Only use ladders designed for standing on the top step if necessary.

What good looks like

- Ladders are included in routine equipment checks.
- Safe ladder use is part of team training and workplace culture.
- Workers understand risks and avoid unsafe shortcuts.
- Ladders are only used when appropriate, with care and confidence.

Choosing and checking equipment

- Only use ladders that are in good condition – no broken rungs, bent frames, or missing feet.
- Place ladders on stable, flat surfaces.
- Do not use makeshift or domestic ladders.
- Incorporate ladders into regular store equipment checks.

Do

- Use ladders for short-duration tasks only.
- Check ladders before each use.
- Ensure ladders are stable and secure.
- Keep three points of contact.
- Pass or lift stock separately instead of carrying it while climbing.

Safe positioning

- Ensure ladders are fully opened and locked before use.
- Place on even flooring – avoid uneven, loose, or slippery surfaces.
- Never overstretch. Keep your body centered between the stiles.
- Always maintain three points of contact.
- Do not stand on the very top unless the ladder is designed for it.

Don't

- Overstretch or lean sideways.
- Use damaged or makeshift ladders.
- Stand on the top step unless designed for it.
- Carry loads while climbing.
- Ignore unsafe conditions or take shortcuts.

Training

- All workers must be trained in ladder inspection and safe positioning.
- Training should include induction, toolbox talks, and refreshers.
- Workers should feel confident to stop work or refuse unsafe practices.

Employee checklist

- Correct ladder chosen.
- Ladder inspected before use.
- Stable, flat surface.
- Three points of contact maintained.
- Loads passed separately.
- Unsafe shortcuts avoided.