

Manual handling

Manual handling means lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling stock. It is one of the most common tasks in retail and one of the riskiest, often leading to back injuries and strains.

Managing the risk

- Store heavy stock at waist height.
- Provide equipment such as trolleys or pallet jacks in good condition.
- Plan deliveries to avoid time pressure and solo heavy lifts.
- Break down heavy loads into smaller units.
- Train workers in safe lifting techniques.

Do

- Store heavy items at waist height.
- Provide safe lifting equipment.
- Train workers in correct lifting methods.
- Rotate tasks to reduce strain.
- Encourage workers to speak up if the load is too heavy.

Environment and planning

- Keep storerooms and aisles clear.
- Schedule deliveries when enough workers are available.
- Unload in safe areas away from customers.

Don't

- Allow unsafe solo lifting of heavy loads.
- Overlook worn or unsafe equipment.
- Ignore fatigue risks in manual tasks.
- Assume lifting training once is enough.
- Design tasks without considering manual handling risks.

Good practice

- Rotate tasks to reduce fatigue.
- Encourage workers to ask for help with heavy loads.
- Review manual handling risks regularly.
- Design tasks to minimise lifting altogether where possible.

Employee checklist

- Safe lifting training completed.
- Trolleys and jacks available and maintained.
- Heavy stock stored safely.
- Task rotation in place.
- Manual handling risks reviewed regularly.