

Produced by the Access Industry Forum (AIF) and the Ladder Association, and supported by the Home Builders Federation.  
**IMPORTANT NOTE: Toolbox Talks are NOT intended to replace formal training but to supplement it.**

# HOW TO... SELECT THE RIGHT LADDER

## What is the risk?

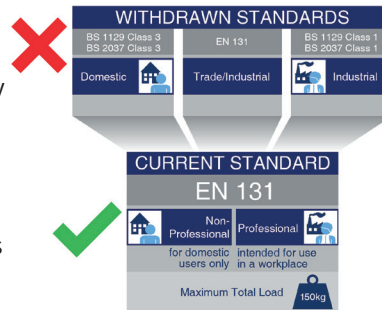
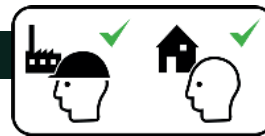
Ladders can be a sensible and practical option for low risk and short duration tasks, but they shouldn't automatically be your first choice. If it's right to use a ladder, make sure you choose the right ladder. Ladders come in all shapes and sizes - it's down to you to find the most suitable one for each task.

## What type of ladder should you choose?

- There are various types of ladders available on the market. Most common are Leaning Ladders, Stepladders, Step Stools, Combination Ladders, Multi Hinge Joint Ladders, Telescopic Ladders, Mobile Ladders with a Platform and Roof Ladders.
- Consider the task you are carrying out to determine the most appropriate type of ladder to use, as certain types of ladders may be more suitable for your task.
- Ask the manufacturer for help if you're unsure.

## Select the right class

- There are two classes of ladder; Professional and Non-Professional.
- Only use 'Professional' ladders at work - they are more durable and are designed to withstand more demanding conditions. Look out for the 'Professional' symbol on the ladder label (see above). Never use 'Non-Professional' or 'Class 3' ladders at work, they are designed only to be used at home.
- To stay safe, use a ladder that meets current standard EN 131 - they are wider, stronger and sturdier. Only buy from a reputable source, as cheaper ladders sold online may be falsely claiming to be compliant and could be unsafe to use.
- If your ladder was compliant to withdrawn standards BS 2037 and BS 1129 (often referred to as Class 1 and Class 3 ladders), you can still use them as long as they are in good condition (pre-use checks and detailed inspections will help you check the ladder is safe to use). When you need to replace them, only buy ladders that meet EN 131.



## Select the right material

Ladders are made of materials including aluminium, steel, wood and fibreglass. Each material has properties that make the ladder suitable for some applications and unsuitable for others.

- Aluminium - lightweight, easy to move and position. Do not use near electricity - they are very good conductors of electricity so increases the risk of electrical shock.
- Steel - heavy, more difficult to move around, but very durable.
- Wood & Fibreglass - keep ladders well clear of live electrical equipment, particularly high voltage overhead cables. If the work is unavoidable and you need to use a ladder, use one made of fibreglass or wood, and keep them clean and dry.

## Select the right height

- Always choose a ladder long enough for the job - don't over reach and never try to gain extra height by standing on your ladder on bricks, boxes etc.
- Leaning ladders - do not stand on the last 3 rungs.
- Stepladders - never use as a leaning ladder in the closed position. On a stepladder without a platform, do not stand on the top tread or the two treads below. Never stand on a hand or knee rail.
- Combination ladders - on three-part combination ladders in stepladder mode, do not stand on the top four rungs.

## 5 KEY POINTS:

1. Decide if a ladder is the right solution
2. Use the most appropriate type of ladder for the task
3. Only use 'Professional' ladders at work
4. Make sure your ladder meets current standard
5. Make sure your ladder is long enough

## Who needs to know:

- Anyone who uses ladders and stepladders on site
- Managers and site supervisors

## Useful references:

- LA455 'Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders: A brief guide'
- Ladder Association Code of Practice

