

Tips on lifting heavy objects safely

It is sometimes necessary to load and unload awkward or heavy objects into a van by hand. In this situation great care must be taken to avoid any chance of injury to your back, legs and arms. The following guide advises on how to minimise the risks involved and how the correct lifting technique can help you avoid any problems.



Assess the situation

Before lifting or carrying a heavy object, plan ahead and consider the following:

- Test the weight of a large object by lifting a corner, can you lift the load safely by yourself or do you need help?
 - If the load is too heavy or an awkward shape is it possible break-down into smaller parts?
 - Check how far you have to carry the load and if the path is clear of anything which may cause you to trip. Check that all doors have been opened in advance.
 - Once the load is lifted, will it block your view?
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Correct lifting techniques for heavy items

- Before you lift a heavy object make sure you have a firm footing.
 - Stand close to the object and centre yourself over it with your feet shoulder width apart, squat down to the ground.
 - Before starting to lift make sure you have a good handhold.
 - To lift, straighten your knees and raise from the ground in a smooth, steady motion. Concentrate on keeping your back straight and let your legs do the lifting. Tightening your stomach muscles will help to support your back.
 - **Never bend your back to pick something up.**
 - Once upright do not twist or turn your body, keep your head up and look straight ahead. Focusing upwards will help to keep your back straight.
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Carrying the load

- Hold the object close to your body and keep it steady with your arms bent, the farther the object is from your body the heavier it will feel.
 - Keep your feet about shoulder width apart, take short steps and move slowly.
 - Change direction by turning your feet and once facing in the right direction continue to move forward.
 - If you are straining or feel tired set the load down and rest for a few minutes.
 - To lower the object, once again position your feet shoulder width apart, tighten stomach muscles and lower to the ground by bending your knees in a smooth and steady action. Only release your grip when the load is securely set down upon a firm surface.
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General lifting advice

- Wear gloves to protect your hands and provide better grip.
- Use a mechanical aid whenever possible and control using both hands.
- When using a lifting aid or trolley always push rather than pull, use your body weight to assist and help control the load.
- Use tie-downs where necessary to secure the load.