

# Proper Lifting Techniques - How to Lift Safely

Before lifting, take a moment to think about what you are about to do.

- Examine the object for sharp corners, slippery spots or other potential hazards.
- Know your limit and do not try to exceed it. Never lift beyond your own lifting capacity.
- Ask for help if needed, or if possible, divide the load to make it lighter.
- Clear the path you intend to take.
- Whenever possible, use mechanical help, such as carts, hand trucks or forklifts
- Know where you are going to set the item down and make sure it and your path are free of obstructions.
- When lifting with another person, give verbal instructions clearly - say: "lift", "walk" or "unload".

Follow these steps.



1. Stand close to the load with your feet spread apart about shoulder width, with one foot slightly in front of the other for balance.



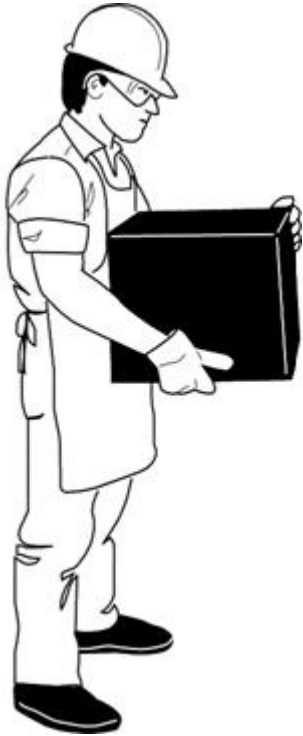
2. Squat down bending at the knees (not your waist). Tuck your chin while keeping your back as vertical as possible.



3. Get a firm grasp of the object before beginning the lift.



4. Begin slowly lifting with your LEGS by straightening them. Never twist your body during this step.



5. Once the lift is complete, keep the object as close to the body as possible. As the load's center of gravity moves away from the body, there is a dramatic increase in stress to the lumbar region of the back.

If you must turn while carrying the load, turn using your feet-not your torso.

To place the object below the level of your waist, follow the same procedures in reverse order. Remember, keep your back as vertical as possible and bend at the knees.

Using proper lifting techniques can help prevent downtime due to avoidable back injuries. With a little practice, precautionary methods such as these can become good daily habits that could help prevent back injuries-both on and off the job.

## Sources

*"Facts About Backs,"* Bureau of Business Practice, 1994.

*"Back Injuries-Nation's #1 Workplace Safety Problem,"* Fact sheet No. OSHA 89-09, U.S. Department of Labor.

*"Watch Your Back,"* Mine Safety and Health Administration.