# A Guide to Safer Manual Handling, Lifting, and Lowering (including lifting dogs)

This document has been produced to provide you with an overview of best practice guidance to assist you in undertaking manual handling activities safely.

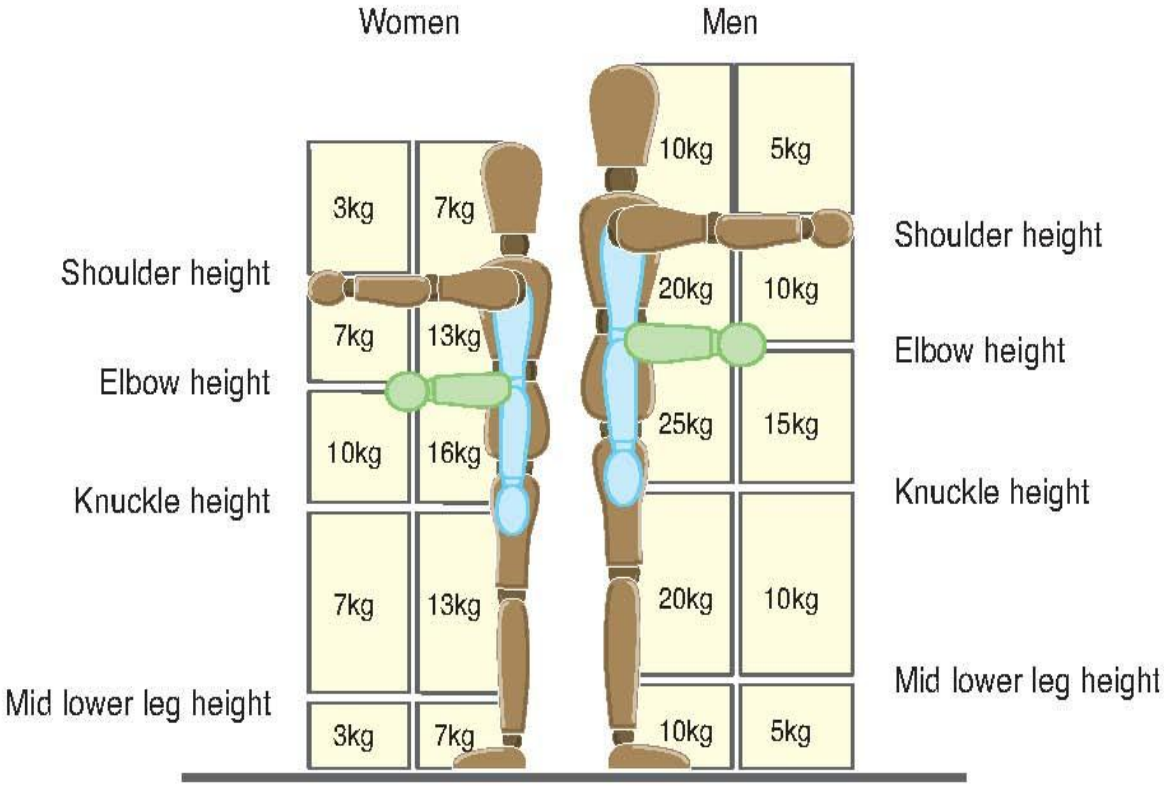
## Definition of manual handling

The transportation or supporting of a load by hand or bodily force including, lifting and lowering, holding and carrying, pushing and pulling, throwing.

## Guidance weights

There is no such thing as a "completely safe" manual handling operation, but the health and safety executive (HSE)

has issued the following guidelines on levels of loads that are unlikely to pose hazards for most people.




These weights are **NOT** what HSE say people must lift, but loads which are unlikely to cause the average person harm. These figures assume that the load can be gripped with both hands, lifting is infrequent, the person is in

good health and of average strength and build and there is no twisting.

## Think about it before you undertake manual handling

Before you undertake any manual handling you should first think about the operation to make sure that you are physically capable and the load is suitable to be moved. Do not undertake any manual handling if you have an existing muscular-skeletal problem i.e. bad back, shoulder, arm etc.

**Always remember that you should be in charge of the load and never the load in charge of you.**

## Good handling technique for lifting

### Stop and think – plan the lift

- Where is the load to be placed?

- Do you need help with the load?
- Use appropriate handling aids if possible
- Remove obstructions from your route
- Is there a long distance to travel? Consider resting the load mid-way on a table or bench in order to change grip

The following descriptions are represented by drawings on the left.

**Position the feet**

Adopt a stable position with feet apart and one leg slightly forward to maintain balance

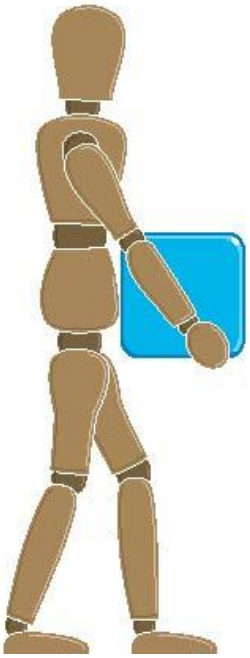
**Adopt a good posture**

At the start of the lift, slight bending of the

back, hips and knees is preferable to fully flexing the back (stooping) or fully flexing the hips and knees (squatting)

**Get a firm grip**

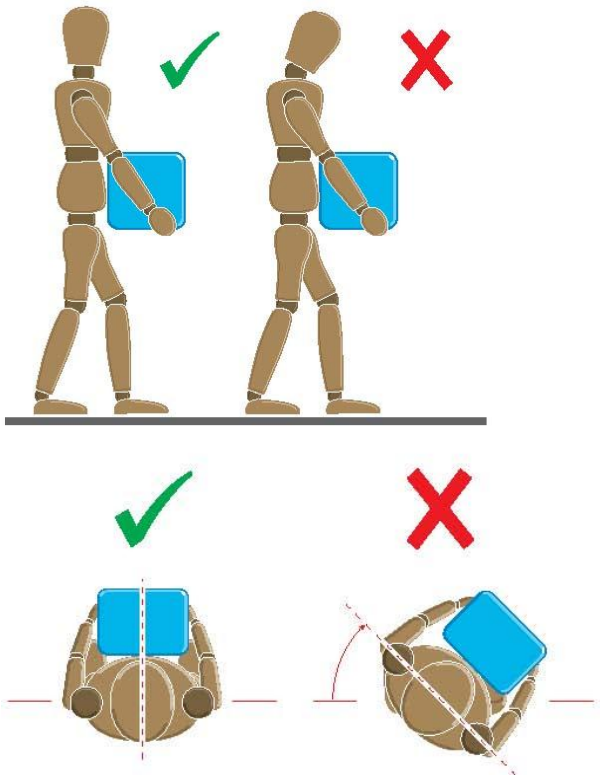
Try to keep the arms within the boundary formed by the legs. The best position and type of grip depends on the circumstances and individual preference; but it must be secure. A hook grip is less tiring than keeping the fingers straight. If you need to vary the grip



as the lift proceeds, do it as smoothly as possible

## Lifting and moving

- Try not to flex the back any further while lifting
- Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideway
- Shoulders should be kept level and facing in the same direction as the hips
- Turn by moving the feet not the body
- Keep your head up when handling
- Move smoothly, try

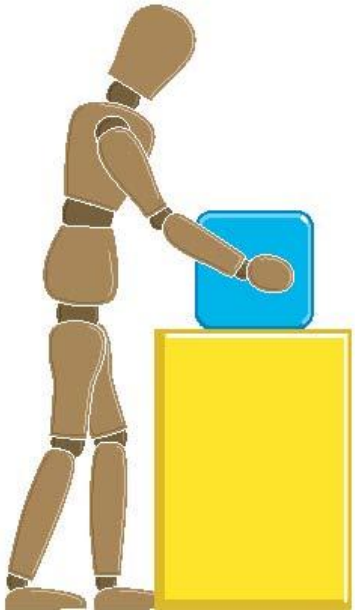


not to jerk

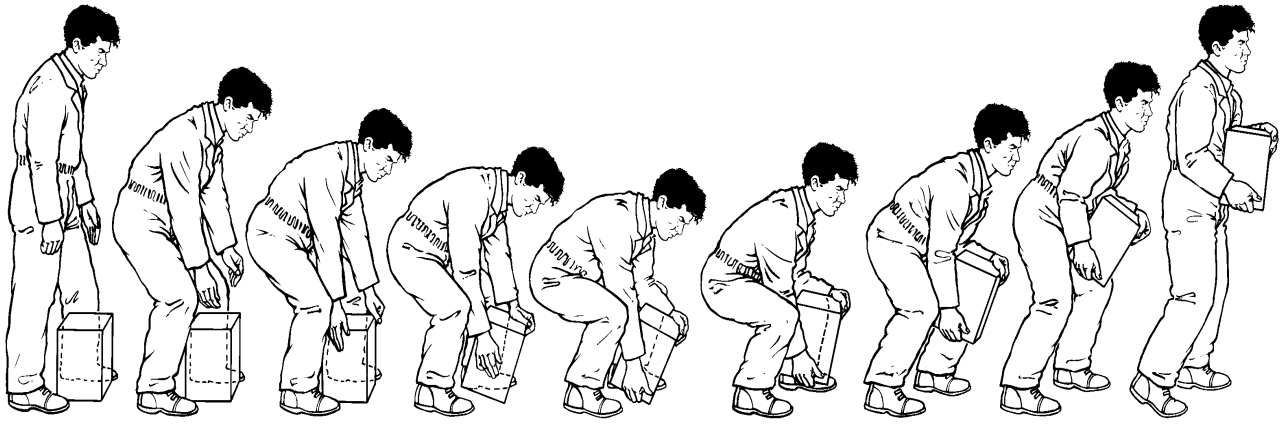
- Keep the load close to the trunk of your body for as long as possible. Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the trunk. If a close approach to the load is not possible, slide it towards you before trying to lift.

**Put down and then adjust**

If precise positioning of the load is necessary, put it down first then slide it into the desired position.



## Good lifting movement



## Good handling technique for pushing and pulling

To make it easier to push or pull, you should keep your feet well away from the load and go no faster than walking speed.

Lifting may be replaced by controlled pushing or pulling in certain cases, such as sliding or rolling an object along. However uncontrolled sliding or

rolling, particularly of large or heavy loads, may introduce additional risks thus increasing the risk of injury.

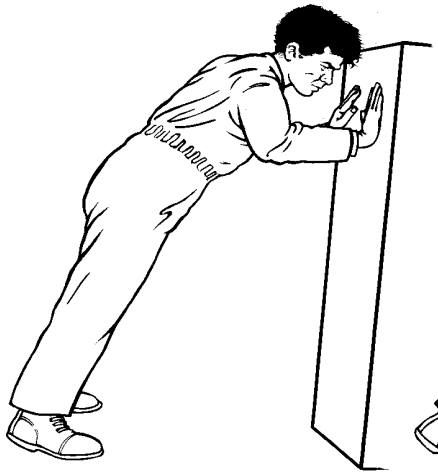
For both pulling and pushing a secure footing is necessary and the hands need to be applied to the load between waist and shoulder height wherever possible.

## Pulling

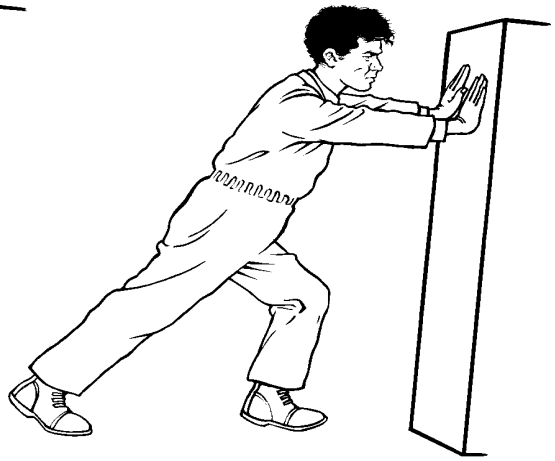
**Wrong**

**Right**

## Pushing



**Wrong**



**Right**

## Mechanical handling

Mechanical assistance involves the use of handling aids – an element of manual handling is retained but bodily forces are

applied more efficiently, reducing the risk of injury.

A trolley, sack truck or roll conveyor can greatly reduce the effort required to move a load horizontally.

Handling devices such as hand-held hooks or suction pads can simplify the problem of handling a load that is difficult to grasp.

Aids such as barrows and trolleys should have handle heights that are between the shoulder and waist. Devices should be well-maintained and comply with any relevant standards, with wheels that run smoothly.

## Lifting dogs

Before handling or lifting a dog it is essential to assess the task and consider the following:

- The reasons for/against lifting, handling, or carrying
- The size and weight of the dog/puppy and the nature of its medical needs
- The distance and ground to be covered
- The capabilities of yourself and/or your helpers
- Any form of transport available.

You may have to lift a dog for a number of reasons but, if you do, there is a real risk of hurting the dog and/or injuring yourself. Ensuring the safety of

yourself and the dog must be your first concern:

- Do not endanger yourself
- Do not move a dog on your own if help is available
- Do use the correct lifting technique (below)
- Do give verbal commands to your helpers and work in unison.

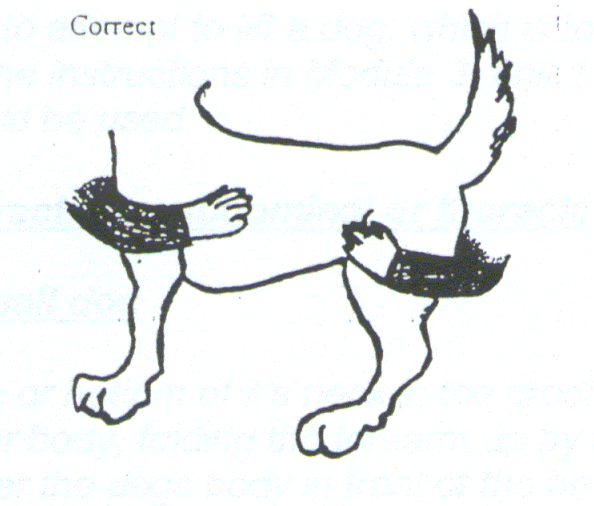
Whenever you lift anything (not just a dog) it is important to think of your own safety, and be particularly careful to avoid hurting your back.

## Lifting methods

It is important not to attempt to lift a dog which is too heavy for you, so the following methods should be used.

### 1. In cases where fractures, abdominal or thoracic injuries are not suspected

### 1a. One person – small dog




Place one arm around the dog's neck or shoulder, folding the forearm by flexing the elbow. Pull the upper part of the dog's body firmly against your chest.

Place the opposite arm under the dog's body, behind the back legs, by pulling the elbow inwards, holding the

dog's stifle/knee area. Firmly hold the dog's body against yours.

**1b. Two or more people**

One person stands at the dog's shoulder with one arm curled around the front of the chest/shoulder, holding the dog's/pup's head against the handler's shoulder to give additional control. The second arm is passed under or over the chest.
The second person stands at the hindquarters and holds the dog's/pup's stifles (knees) or supports the pelvis.
Communication between the two lifters is important for a safe and comfortable lift.

## 2. In cases of suspect spinal injury, fractures, abdominal or thoracic injuries

### 2a. Two or more people

The spine of the dog should always be kept as straight as possible. Grasp the skin along the back – above the scapula, midway along the back and above the pelvis. The dog can then be pulled onto a board or stretcher.

This is useful for fractures, as the body and limbs are not twisted.