HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

LADDER SAFETY

Setting up, using and taking down your ladder

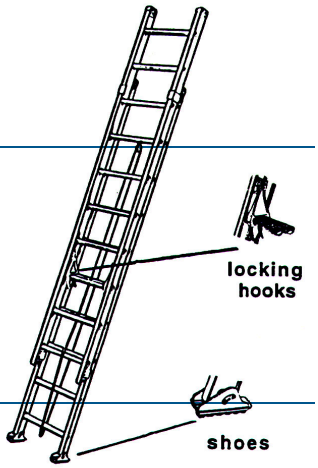
When you pull out that ladder to work around your home, a few precautions will help ensure a safe experience.

INSPECT THE LADDER

Every time you use a ladder, look it over before you set it up. Make sure the **hooks** that lock the top section in place are secure. Check that the **shoes** (the rubber pads at the base of the ladder) are firmly attached. Make sure the **rope** is securely fastened.

CHECK THE WORK AREA

Next, look at the area where you'll be using the ladder. Look for tree branches in the way. Look for adequate room to raise the ladder. Look at what might be in your path if the ladder accidentally falls, and move it out of the way.



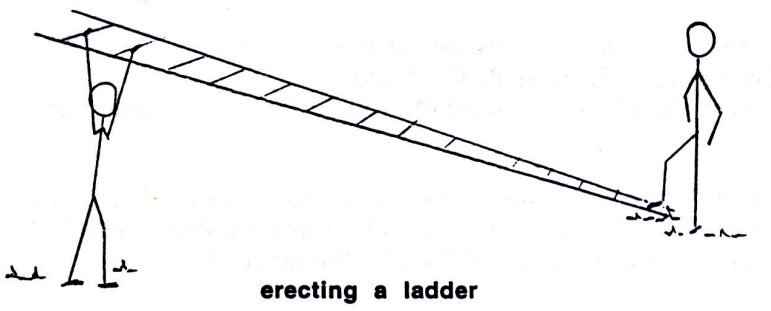
Locking hooks and shoes

LOOK FOR POWER LINES

And most importantly, LOOK FOR POWER LINES. An aluminum ladder that contacts overhead power lines can give you a deadly shock.

RAISING THE LADDER

To erect a ladder, place the base near where you want the ladder to stand. Then, have a helper hold down the base or, if you're working alone, place the base against a house wall. Now, move to the opposite end, lift the top of the ladder above your head, and walk toward the base, moving your hands from rung to rung as you go until you have the ladder standing straight up *(see illustration)*.



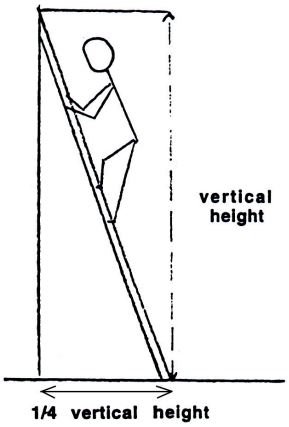
Erecting a ladder

To move the ladder into place, keep it balanced upright while lifting it slightly off the ground. If the ladder is too heavy for you to lift in this way, hold the ladder in a “bear hug,” put each foot alongside a ladder shoe, and “walk” the ladder into position. If the ladder becomes off-balance while you're moving it, set it down and start again.

SETTING THE ANGLE

Once you have the ladder where you want it, lean it against the building. Then, bring the base out from the wall a distance equal to 1/4 the height of the ladder. (For instance, position the base of a 40 foot ladder 10 feet away from the house – *see illustration*.) This is the strongest and most secure angle from which to work.

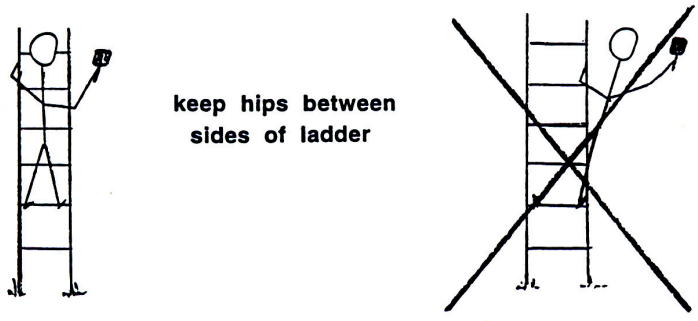
> **THE 1-IN-4 RULE**
> Ladder height ÷ 4 = distance of the base from the wall.
> Example: 40 ft. ladder → base 10 ft. from the house.



Base at 1/4 the vertical height

OTHER SAFETY TIPS

1. Make sure the ladder you will be using will support your weight. Read the side label to determine its rating and capacity. Ladder types range from light duty (supports 200 pounds) to extra-heavy duty (supports 300 pounds).
2. If you will be working on a roof, extend the ladder at least 3 feet above the roof, so you can transfer safely from the ladder to the roof and back.
3. Never stand on the top three rungs of a ladder, or on the top platform of a stepladder; it will be too top-heavy and likely to tip over.
4. Check that the ladder you are using is locked open (if a stepladder) or latched together (if an extension ladder).
5. Make sure the base is firmly planted. If the base of the ladder will stand on concrete or other hard and/or smooth material, place the ladder shoes down, so the rubber grips the surface. If you are using a ladder on grass or other soft surface, tip the shoes up and stick their pointed edges into the ground.
6. Keep your hips between the two side rails as you work *(see illustration)*. Trying to reach too far to one side or the other can cause the ladder to become unstable and fall. It's wiser to move the ladder instead.

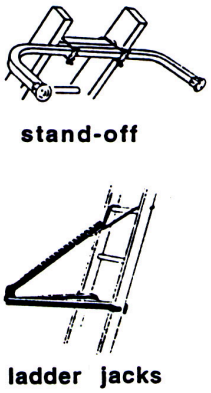


Right: hips between the rails. Wrong: reaching too far to the side.

LADDER ACCESSORIES

There are accessories that, in certain situations, can make your ladder more secure. A **“stand-off”** *(see illustration)* is a U-shaped device that, when bolted to an extension ladder, helps to stabilize the ladder and make it less likely to tip. (It can also allow you to bridge windows or work on gutters without damaging them from the weight of the ladder leaning against them.)

If you’re working on a wide area, you can run a **scaffold board** between two ladders using **“ladder jacks”** *(see illustration)*. You can also lay the plank upon a pipe framework for alternate or additional access to larger work areas.



Stand-off and ladder jacks

LOWERING THE LADDER

When it’s time to lower your extension ladder, again secure the base, and then reverse the actions you used to raise it. Grab the ladder near its base and, holding it overhead, walk toward the top, lowering the ladder as you go.

If parts of your house are not accessible using conventional ladders, you will have to look at other possibilities. For most home repair projects, however, following the above tips will be enough to keep you out of the emergency room.

Home Repair Resource center

Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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