

Manual Handling Procedure

SOP · UK · Updated 2026-07-11 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

A manual handling procedure is the written process your team follows for any task that involves lifting, lowering, carrying, pushing or pulling a load by hand or bodily force — how tasks are assessed, when to use aids or team lifts, and the technique that protects backs and shoulders.

Handling injuries rarely come from one dramatic lift; they build from hundreds of routine ones done badly. A written procedure moves technique from "common sense" — which varies wildly by person — to a trained standard you can induct, observe and correct.

This template gives you the complete procedure: the avoid-assess-reduce hierarchy, the TILE assessment factors, step-by-step lifting technique, rules for team lifts and mechanical aids, and the training records that evidence it all.

Purpose and scope

This procedure sets out how [Your company] manages manual handling risk at [site(s)/locations]. It applies to every task involving lifting, lowering, carrying, pushing or pulling loads by hand, and to everyone who performs one, including temporary and agency staff.

It does not cover moving or assisting people — [care and support settings use our separate people-handling arrangements].

When this procedure applies

- Receiving, unpacking and putting away deliveries.
- Moving stock, equipment, furniture, or waste: [list your regular handling tasks].
- Any load that is awkward even if light — unstable, hot, sharp, hard to grip, or bulky enough to block your view.
- Repetitive or sustained handling, even of small items, where frequency does the damage.
- One-off moves ([deliveries of new equipment, events, refits]) — these need a fresh look, not habit.

Roles and responsibilities

- Procedure owner ([name/role]): keeps manual handling assessments current, owns the training programme, and reviews injury and near-miss reports.
- Managers and supervisors: plan work so hazardous handling is avoided where possible, ensure aids are available and working, and correct poor technique when they see it.
- All staff: follow this procedure and their training, use the aids provided, ask for help with loads beyond their capability, and report pain or strain early.

Avoid, assess, reduce

Before anyone lifts, [Your company] applies the legal hierarchy. First, avoid: can the handling be eliminated — deliveries taken to the point of use, smaller pack sizes ordered, a mechanical aid used instead? Second, assess: tasks that cannot be avoided are assessed using the TILE factors below and recorded in [system/location]. Third, reduce: change the task, the load, or the environment, provide aids, and train the technique — in that order of preference.

Assessing a task: TILE

- Task: does it involve twisting, stooping, reaching up, long carries, or frequent repetition? Can the flow be redesigned to remove them?
- Individual: does the person have the strength, stature, training or health for this task? Consider [new and expectant mothers, young workers, anyone returning from injury].
- Load: how heavy, bulky, unstable or hard to grip is it? Is the weight marked? Could the contents shift?
- Environment: floor condition, steps and slopes, lighting, temperature, and space to move — a good lift in a cramped wet corridor is still a bad task.

Safe lifting steps

1. Plan the lift: know where the load is going, clear the route, and check the set-down point is ready.
2. Test the load before committing — rock it to judge weight and stability. If in doubt, get help or an aid.
3. Stand close to the load with feet apart, one foot slightly forward for balance.
4. Bend the knees and hips, not the back, and keep the back's natural curve as you take the grip.
5. Grip firmly and hold the load close to your waist, heaviest side against your body.
6. Lift smoothly using your legs — no jerking, no twisting. Turn by moving your feet.
7. Keep your view clear over or around the load for the whole carry.
8. Set the load down first, then slide it into its final position.

Team lifts and mechanical aids

- Use an aid whenever one is available for the task: [trolleys, sack trucks, pallet truck, conveyor — list yours and where they live].
- Check aids before use — wheels, brakes, platform condition — and report defects to [role]; a defective aid is taken out of use immediately.
- Use a team lift when the assessment says so: agree the route first, match handlers by height where possible, and have one person lead and call the lift.
- Never stack loads on a trolley above [height/line of sight], and never overload an aid beyond its marked capacity.

If something goes wrong

Report any pain, strain or discomfort on the day it starts — to your manager, recorded via our accident and incident reporting procedure. Early reporting is the difference between a few adjusted shifts and a long-term injury, and it is never treated as a fuss.

Any task connected to a report is re-assessed before it is done the same way again.

Records, training and review

Everyone who handles loads completes manual handling training before doing the task unsupervised, with refresher at [frequency]. Training records, task assessments and injury reports are kept in [system/location].

This procedure and the task assessments are reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually], after any handling injury or near miss, and when loads, layout or equipment change. Owner: [name/role]. Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. List your real handling tasks first — walk the delivery-to-shelf (or goods-in-to-workshop) flow and note every lift, carry, push and pull.
2. Attack the avoid step hardest: changing where deliveries land or the pack sizes you order removes risk that no amount of technique training can.
3. Fill in the aids list in section 7 with what you actually own and where it is kept — a trolley nobody can find is not a control.
4. Assess your highest-risk tasks with TILE before publishing, so the procedure references real assessments from day one.
5. Train the lifting steps practically, with real loads in the real space — a slideshow does not change how anyone lifts.
6. Set the review date and owner, and add handling injuries and near misses to your incident trend review.

Official guidance

- › [HSE — Manual handling at work](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/manual-handling-procedure> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.