

Folding step ladders are an extremely convenient way of accessing work, which is out of reach, but familiarity can lead to carelessness. Falling off a step ladder is no less serious than off an ordinary ladder so equal care is called for. (The floor is just as hard)

Step ladders are covered by the same regulations as ordinary ladders regarding construction and materials and this is even more critical because of the extra parts required to make them foldable. (Construction/Working Places) Regulations and Work Equipment Regulations).

Establishing a habit of checking off a mental list each time a pair of steps is used, will lead to safe working. Steps are probably the most **'borrowed'** item of all site equipment and although this may be frowned upon, it is unlikely that it can be stopped. Always check **'borrowed'** steps doubly well as it is still your responsibility to ensure your own safety.

Step Ladders Rules

1. Steps must be suitable. 'Domestic' weight steps are not normally up to 'trade' use.
2. Check anti-spread device (cords, clips brackets etc.). Remember, if it's defective it's illegal!
3. Check folding mechanism (hinges, pin, rivets, etc).

Remember

4. Always spread the ladder to its fullest extent, so that it can't suddenly jerk while you are on it.
5. Ensure that all four stiles are on firm, level ground. This is specifically mentioned in the Regulations (Reg. 32.7) so use of an unsteady step ladder is an offence!
6. You must always have a secure handhold not less than 1.06m above the highest level reached by your feet. Clearly this means you cannot stand on the top steps unless there is some other handhold e.g. an extension.
7. Place the ladder at right angles to the work so that twisting the body is not necessary. Try to visualise where the centre of gravity of you, any tools or materials, and the ladder, lies so that it stays within the base area of the ladder.
8. An assistant standing on the bottom step lowers the centre of gravity very effectively, but make sure they understand and so do not step off suddenly.

Report any defective step ladder immediately and prevent its use by others.

