

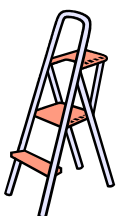
Ladder Safety Tips

Spring and fall are the times when everyone starts thinking about sprucing up the house and yard. Whether it is washing the windows or cleaning the gutters, one of the first tools that homeowners reach for is a ladder.



Ladders are useful tools, but if you do not follow the proper safety tips, you could hurt yourself. In fact, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 547,000 people were treated in hospital emergency rooms, doctors' offices, clinics and other medical settings in 2004 because of injuries related to ladder use. Most injuries are cuts, bruises and fractured bones.

Follow these safety tips and soon, you will be on your way to successfully and safely completing your clean-up chores.



- **Inspect the ladder.** Check the ladder for any loose screws, hinges or rungs that you might not have fixed before you put it away for the winter. Clean off any mud or other liquids that might have accumulated on the ladder.
- **Properly set up the ladder.** Every ladder should be placed on a firm, level surface. The ground may be very bumpy because of the freezing and thawing during the winter. There also could be soft, muddy spots. Never place a ladder on ground that is uneven. The same is true for uneven flooring. And, remember to always engage the ladder locks or braces before you climb.
- **Do not use a ladder as a seat between tasks.** You might want to take a break from your chores, but never use a step ladder's top or pail shelf as a seat. It is not designed to carry your weight.
- **Select the right ladder for the job.** If you're washing windows inside the home, choose a step stool or utility ladder, they're often used when working at low or medium heights. Extension ladders are ideal for use outdoors to reach high places like cleaning the gutters on the roof of a house.
- **Move materials with caution when on the ladder.** When you are cleaning out the garage or closet, be careful pushing or pulling anything from shelves while standing on a ladder. You could lose your balance and fall off.
- **Always reposition the ladder closer to the work.** Over reaching or leaning far to one side when you're on the ladder could make you lose your balance and fall.
- **Be careful when climbing, get help if you need it.** Be safe, ask someone to hold the ladder while you climb. Stay in the center of the ladder as you climb, and always hold the side rails with both hands.



What to do if you fall

- Calmly assess the situation, and determine if you are hurt.
- Get up slowly.
- If you feel that an injury has occurred which prevents standing or walking, don't panic. Call for assistance. If the injury is serious, call 911.
- If you are not injured, rest awhile and regain your composure before climbing again.