

Can you avoid working at height in the first place?

Do as much work as possible from the ground. Some practical examples include:

- using extendable tools from ground level to remove the need to climb a ladder
- installing cables at ground level
- lowering a lighting mast to ground level
- ground level assembly of edge protection

Can you prevent a fall from occurring?

You can do this by:

- using an existing place of work that is already safe, e.g. a non-fragile roof with a permanent perimeter guardrail or, if not
- using work equipment to prevent people from falling

Some practical examples of collective protection when using an existing place of work:

- a concrete flat roof with existing edge protection, or guarded mezzanine floor, or plant or machinery with fixed guard rails around it

Some practical examples of collective protection using work equipment to prevent a fall:

- mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs) such as scissor lifts
- tower scaffolds
- scaffolds
- mobile step tower; also known as podiums or pulpits

An example of personal protection using work equipment to prevent a fall:

- using a work restraint (travel restriction) system that prevents a worker getting into a fall position

Can you minimise the distance and/or consequences of a fall?

If the risk of a person falling remains, you must take sufficient measures to minimise the distance and/or consequences of a fall.

Practical examples of collective protection using work equipment to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall:

- safety nets and soft landing systems, e.g. air bags, installed close to the level of the work

An example of personal protection used to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall:

- industrial rope access, e.g. working on a building façade
- fall arrest system using a high anchor point

Using ladders and stepladders

For tasks of low risk and short duration, ladders and stepladders can be a sensible and practical option.

If your risk assessment determines it is correct to use a ladder, you should further minimise the risk by making sure workers:

- use the right type of ladder for the job
- are competent (you can provide adequate training and/or supervision to help)
- use the equipment provided safely and follow a safe system of work
- are fully aware of the risks and measures to help control them

Follow HSE guidance on [safe use of ladders and stepladders](#).

For each step, consider what is reasonably practicable and use ‘collective protection’ before ‘personal protection’

More information at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/index.htm>