Ladder Safety Toolbox Talk

Key points, do's and don'ts, and questions with answers. The attendance sign-off sheet is on the last page.

Asked to show your toolbox talk records? The Site Book keeps each talk and its signatures with the job, on Pro: **thesitebook.co.uk/features/toolbox-talks**

Key points to cover

- Ladders should only be used for short-duration, low-risk work where a more suitable means of access is not reasonably practicable
- The 1-in-4 rule: for every 4 metres of height, the base must be 1 metre out from the wall
- Ladders must extend at least 1 metre above the landing point when used for access
- Always maintain three points of contact when climbing
- Stepladders must be fully opened and locked before use — never use a closed stepladder leaned against a wall
- Ladders must be inspected before each use and formally inspected at regular intervals

Do's and don'ts

Do

- Follow the 1-in-4 rule for leaning ladders (75° angle)
- Secure the ladder at the top where possible, or have someone foot it at the base
- Keep both feet on the rungs and maintain three points of contact
- Face the ladder when climbing up and down
- Only carry light tools and materials that allow three-point contact

Don't

- Never stand on the top three rungs of a leaning ladder
- Never use a ladder in high winds or on soft, uneven ground without levelling
- Never over-reach — move the ladder instead
- Never use a damaged, painted, or home-made ladder on site
- Never use a metal ladder near live electrical equipment

Questions to check understanding

Ask each question and let the crew answer before you read out the answer.

Q1. What is the 1-in-4 rule for leaning ladders?

Answer: For every 4 units of height, the base of the ladder should be 1 unit out from the structure. This gives the correct angle of approximately 75 degrees and prevents the ladder slipping outward at the base or toppling backward.

Q2. When is it acceptable to use a ladder on a construction site?

Answer: Only when a risk assessment shows the work is low-risk and short duration (typically up to 30 minutes in one position), and where a more stable form of access such as a scaffold, podium, or MEWP is not reasonably practicable.

Q3. How should you secure a leaning ladder?

Answer: Ideally tie the ladder at the top to a suitable anchor point. If this is not possible, use a proprietary ladder stability device at the base, or have a second person foot the ladder throughout the work. The base must be on firm, level ground.

Q4. What pre-use checks should you carry out on a ladder?

Answer: Check that the stiles are straight and not cracked or bent, all rungs are secure and undamaged, rubber feet are present and not worn smooth, and any locking mechanisms (on stepladders) engage fully. Reject any ladder that shows defects.

Attendance sign-off sheet: Ladder Safety Toolbox Talk

Everyone who attended prints their name and signs to confirm they received this talk.

Date _____ **Time** _____

Site or location _____ **Presented by** _____

No.	Name (print)	Company	Signature
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Presenter's signature _____

This is general guidance for UK construction sites. Check it against your own risk assessment, method statement and the site before you deliver it. Toolbox talk from The Site Book, reviewed 26 October 2026. Read it online at thesitebook.co.uk/toolbox-talks/ladder-safety.