Manual Handling 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

- Avoid manual handling where reasonably practicable — use mechanical aids (trolleys, hoists, telehandlers)
- Assess the load before lifting: weight, shape, grip points, and destination
- For a basic lift, start with your back, hips and knees slightly bent, hold the load close, and lift smoothly without bending your back further or twisting
- Plan the route — clear obstacles, check for trip hazards, and make sure doors are open
- Get help or split the load if it is too heavy, awkward, or you cannot see over it
- Repetitive handling is just as dangerous as heavy lifts — rotate tasks where possible

Do's and don'ts

Do

- Warm up before heavy or repetitive lifting tasks
- Keep the load close to your body at waist height
- Turn your feet, not your spine, when changing direction
- Use a wheelbarrow, sack truck, or pallet truck for heavy or bulky items
- Ask for help with awkward loads

Don't

- Never twist your body while lifting
- Never carry a load that blocks your view of the path ahead
- Never lift from ground level with straight legs and a bent back
- Never rush a lift — take your time and plan the move
- Never ignore early signs of back or shoulder pain

Questions to check understanding

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

Q1. What is the first step you should take before lifting any load?

Answer: Assess the load — check its weight, shape, grip points, where it needs to go, and whether you can use a mechanical aid instead.

Q2. Name two mechanical aids commonly available on a construction site.

Answer: Sack trucks/trolleys, pallet trucks, wheelbarrows, telehandlers, and hoists are all common examples.

Q3. Why is twisting while lifting dangerous?

Answer: Twisting puts uneven pressure on the spinal discs and surrounding muscles, greatly increasing the risk of a herniated disc or muscle tear. Always turn your feet instead of your spine.

Q4. What is the correct posture for lifting a load from the ground?

Answer: First consider whether hazardous manual handling can reasonably be avoided. If it cannot, assess the risks and reduce them as far as reasonably practicable, including through suitable handling aids. Plan the lift. Stand close with your feet apart and one foot slightly forward. Get a secure hold, start with your back, hips and knees slightly bent, then raise the load smoothly without bending your back further. Keep the load close and turn by moving your feet instead of twisting.

Attendance sign-off sheet: Manual Handling 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 30 October 2026. Read it online at thesitebook.co.uk/toolbox-talks/manual-handling.