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# Choosing your ladder

One of the most common mistakes made by ladder users is choosing the wrong ladder for the job. Here are some things to consider:

- **Take into account your work environment when choosing your ladder.**

For example, if you're working near sources of electricity, do not use a metal/aluminum ladder. Evaluate the surface on which the ladder will be resting. Is it uneven? Consider if there are any obstructions in the path of the climb. Your environment will also help you determine the type of ladder you need for the task — self-supporting stepladder or non-self-supporting single or extension ladder.

- **Consider the length of ladder you need.**

It is unsafe to use a ladder that is too long or too short. When using a step ladder, for example, it is unsafe to stand on the top cap as it increases the likelihood of losing your balance. Likewise, when using an extension ladder, the top three rungs are not to be used for climbing. An extension ladder is too long if it extends more than 3 feet beyond the upper support point, as it can act like a lever and cause the base of the ladder to move or slide out.



**Remember:** The advertised height of the ladder is the total length of the side rails. This does not take into account the reduced height due to the set up angles, or steps or rungs not suitable for standing or working from, and in the case of an extension ladder, the overlap between the sections.

- **Pay attention to the Duty Rating of your ladder.**

The Duty Rating is the total amount of weight your ladder will support. A taller ladder does not equate to a higher weight rating.

Here is the simple calculation for determining the Duty Rating needed for the job at hand:

$$\text{Your weight} + \text{Weight of your protective clothing \& equipment} + \text{Weight of your tools \& supplies being used} = \text{Duty Rating}$$



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