



# ERGO BULLETIN

## Ergonomic Tips for Standard Two-Wheeled Hand Truck Use

Standard hand trucks are used in a variety of workplace settings and material handling situations. Selecting the right hand truck can make the task safer and easier than manual handling of the load. Standard two-wheeled hand trucks are ideal for light to moderate loads which need to be moved over short distances. Hand trucks with a third wheel and/or brakes are better suited for heavier loads and for use on ramps and inclines. No matter what the load or task, there is a hand truck for the job! Use our checklist below to insure that your hand truck use is as safe and productive as possible. Remember it is best to work smarter not harder!



- **Hand Truck Inspection:** The frame and wheels should always be inspected for damage prior to use. If the hand truck is damaged, it should be marked and immediately removed from service. Preventive wheel maintenance such as cleaning, lubricating and maintaining proper tire pressure will keep the hand truck working properly without incident.
- **Balance the Load:** The heaviest or largest items should be stacked on the hand truck first followed by smaller and lighter items. This improves stability and ease of movement during use. Use straps or retention devices to further secure the load. Remember to use good lifting techniques when loading your hand truck.
- **Body Mechanics:** You should always maintain a neutral back posture by keeping your shoulders back and your head up. Use your legs to advance the hand truck forward (push) or by backing up (pull). Use a walking pace that is appropriate for the size and weight of the load and the condition of the walking surface(s).  
**ALWAYS KEEP BOTH HANDS ON THE HAND TRUCK AT ALL TIMES** to keep your back from twisting and to minimize stress to the neck and shoulders..
- **Push vs. Pull:** Pushing a hand truck is not only easier and less stressful to the body than pulling but it is safer because you can easily see where you are going. When pushing, the load is able to center on the axle and against the back of the truck for a more balanced load. Reserve pulling for changes in direction or when going up stairs.
- **Stairs - One Step at a Time:** Inspect the stairs prior to travel and always wear appropriate footwear.  
**Ascending** - The safest way to ascend stairs using a hand truck is backwards with legs apart for balance and the load tilted comfortably toward your body while taking one step at a time. Keep your head up and utilize your legs to pull the load.  
**Descending** - A hand truck should always be kept in front of you when going down stairs. Taking one step at a time will maximize the stability of the load and minimize pressure on the lower back. If you frequently use the stairs, consider using a hand truck equipped with stair glides.
- **Remember to Warm Up:** Having your body prepared for physical work will make the job easier and safer. Try Beacon Mutual's Stretch for Safety Program for more ideas and suggestions.



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