

Guidance on Safer Handling for Beekeepers

Take regular exercise so you are fit and flexible enough to cope with beekeeping.

Plan your apiary to make moving hives and equipment easier:

- Consider the size, design and weight of equipment for your individual capabilities.
- Ensure enough space to move and position yourself when working.
- Ensure tidy and even ground to avoid tripping.
- Raise your hive on a stand. Working at waist height is easiest.
- Consider using frame holders on the side of the hive to avoid bending.
- Consider fixing battens to Commercial boxes to improve grip.

Avoid lifting and carrying manually whenever possible. Is there another way? Perhaps use a wheelbarrow to transport boxes. Get help if necessary.

Use clear, agreed instructions if working with a partner. “Ready steady, go!” avoids confusion and allows a smooth, co-ordinated lift.

Lifting above shoulder height or working below knee level adds to the strain on your spine.

Consider getting help if you have you many supers on a hive.

Consider kneeling, preferably with kneepads, if you have to work low down.

Always be aware of your **posture**, not only when lifting but also when lowering.

Avoid prolonged bending , lifting while bent over, twisting your back or reaching out with a load.

Prepare the load, the area, the equipment, yourself and your partner before you lift.

If possible, split the load up so it is more manageable.

Moving a load:

- Warm up and loosen up first.
- Feet apart and one foot slightly forwards for balance.
- Knees relaxed and able to move, not locked straight.
- Keep your back straight – bend at the hips and knees.
- Get a comfortable, secure hold on the load.
- Keep the load in front of, and close to your body.
- Use your bodyweight to balance and move the load.
- Brace your stomach muscles.
- Do not twist your trunk.
- Keep your head up and chin tucked in gently.
- Lift smoothly – do not jerk – using leg power, not your back.
- Final check before moving the load: test the weight and get help if it’s too heavy!