

STONEHILL COLLEGE

Guidelines for Manual Lifting

The intent of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to describe the safest method for lifting objects. This SOP is intended to be read and understood prior to moving an object. This SOP is intended for use by all personnel that enter animal, laboratories, or receiving facilities. Any exemption must be approved by the IACUC prior to its application.

1. **Assess the lifting environment.** This is a mental process that takes just seconds before you begin the lift. Look at the surrounding area to become aware of possible hazards. Is the floor or ground level and dry? If not, you will need to take extra precautions during the lift. Do you know where you will place the object you are about to lift? If not, you may need to clear a place for the object before the lift. Is the pathway needed to perform the lift and/or carry the object clear? If not, you need to either take extra precautions or clear the pathway.
2. **Assess the weight and size of the object.** Nudge the object to assess the approximate weight of the object. This will help you determine whether you can lift the object yourself or whether you need additional help from another person or a mechanical lifting device. Also, assess the size of the object. Often, bulky items are not heavy, but require additional help to maintain proper body mechanics during lifting, carrying, and lowering. Know your limitations and get additional help when necessary. If possible, reduce the weight of heavy loads prior to moving them, e.g., by splitting the load in half.
3. **Get close to the object to be lifted.** Move other objects out of the way or move yourself to a position where you can be close to the object you are about to lift. The further the object is from your body, the greater the stress will be to your back when lifting.
4. **Assume a stable stance.** Your feet should be approximately shoulder width apart with feet staggered slightly.
5. **Bend your knees.** Bend your knees as far as you can and still be able to come to an upright position using your thigh muscles. If you have weak thighs, you may only be able to bend your knees slightly.
6. **Grip the object firmly.** Starting positions that are at a level between the knee and waist are the least stressful to the back.
7. **Keep your back a straight, stable unit.**
8. **Initiate the lift with your legs and buttock muscles.**
9. **Lift with controlled speed.** The faster you accelerate or decelerate an object, the greater the stress will be to your back.
10. **Continue to keep your back a straight, stable unit.**
11. **Come to an upright position using your leg and buttock muscles.**
12. **Pivot, using your feet; do not twist.**
13. **To lower, use the same precautions noted above.**