

Identifying different class ladders

All ladders manufactured and supplied within the United Kingdom and the European Union should be manufactured to specified standards and correctly classified. These requirements apply to all portable ladder types and include both step ladders, platform steps and extension ladders. Specialist single use ladders, (eg. pole ladders, loft ladders), and fixed access ladders, (eg. static roof access ladders), are not intended for classification under these standards.




There are three main classifications of ladder – Class 1, Class EN131 and Class III. Each classification indicates the safe working load that a ladder is designed to support.

The value of the safe working load is intended to cover the weight of a single person and their equipment and is also referred to as the 'Maximum Static Vertical Load'.

These classifications can be broadly categorised into the type of use that a ladder is designed to support ie. Heavy Duty Industrial Use, Commercial Light Trade Use and Light Domestic Use.

Ladders have also been previously classified under their 'Duty Rating'. These values, based upon the frequency of use and type of environment in which a ladder is used, were originally determined by the British Standards organisation.

With the introduction of the European Ladder Certification Standard and Class BS EN131, (which replaced the original British Standards Class II specification), the UK Department of Trade and Industry, (now known as the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform), issued a table to clarify the differences between the British Standards Duty Ratings and the more recent European Ladder Certification Standard which specified a Maximum Static Vertical Load...

Classification	Duty Rating	Maximum Static Vertical Load	Application	Symbol
Class 1	130kg	175kg	Industrial	
Class EN131	115kg	150kg	Commercial	
Class III	95kg	125kg	Domestic	

Within the three main ladder classifications described above, there are a number of British Standards which relate directly to the particular ladder type. Relevant classifications include BS 1129:1990 (British) which applies to Timber Ladders and Steps; BS 2037:1994 (British) which applies to Metal and Aluminium Ladders and Steps and BS EN 131:1993 (European) which applies to both Timber and Aluminium Ladders and Steps. These standards detail factors such as dimensions, markings and testing requirements such as deflection, torsion, rigidity, straightness, loading and performance.

Ladders should be colour coded to provide a simple visual indication of their classification - Class 1 Ladders are commonly marked in blue, Class EN131 Ladders in green, (or yellow), and Class III Ladders are usually identified by the colour red. Colour identification is often used on the rubber feet of ladders and steps and/or attached user instructions and warning labels.



Class 1 Ladders are the highest rated ladders in terms of strength and quality. These ladders are suitable for use in heavy duty industrial applications and environments.



The European Standard EN131 is a Europe wide classification and it replaced the old British Class II Ladder Standard. Within the UK this classification is known as BS EN131. Ladders of this type are most suitable for commercial light trade work and heavy duty DIY use.



Class III Ladders are only suited to occasional light domestic tasks and are definitely not suitable for use within any commercial or trade environment.

Be aware that Ladder Certifications and Classifications indicate minimum acceptable standards - good quality Ladders and Steps will always exceed these standards.