# A screen shot of a computer  Description automatically generatedback safety

We have all been told to avoid back injury by bending our knees when we lift, keeping the load close and avoiding twisting motions. These safety rules may be appropriate for simple, direct lifting of materials, but what about back care when you are working in awkward positions?

*What are some work situations that may put you in “awkward” positions?*

* *Jobs that require you to bend and reach into bins or containers to retrieve or place material*
* Overhead work, such as stocking or retrieving material
* Floor or ground level jobs
* Jobs on step ladders
* Pulling loads, instead of pushing them, when removing equipment or other materials
* Repetitive tasks that require twisting of the back such as loading or handling material 90°to 180° from the starting point

*How can you avoid injury when working in awkward positions?*

* Raise bins and containers off the floor or tilt them to reduce bending and over-reaching
* When working overhead, stand on a steady surface; keep your back posture in its natural curve to avoid uneven spinal loading
* If working on the floor, avoid bending over; squat down using your legs and wear cushioned knee pads if you must kneel at work
* Do not hold an awkward position for too long; pause often to stretch and straighten out
* When leaning forward to work, support the weight of your upper body on your free hand and arm, whenever possible; this greatly relieves pressure on your lower back
* Never lift heavy loads that are far from your body’s center of gravity
* Position your work below the shoulder and above the knees to minimize overreaching
* Push, rather than pull, loads to help maintain the spine’s natural curve

*What specific awkward positions do you face in your work?* *How can you “work smarter instead of harder” to prevent injuries?*

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