Health and Safety

General Shelving Safety

A recent incident within the School involved the sudden collapse of wall supported shelving. Although no staff were injured, the incident highlighted the need to be aware of the proper use and limitations of this type of shelving.

Loading Capacity

It is not possible to set definitive guidance on maximum weights that wall supported shelving will support. The strength of the shelving will depend upon the type of wall material, fixings, number of vertical supports, shelf material and the eventual load applied.

Types of Shelving

Shelving can be divided into three types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelving Type</th>
<th>Recommended Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1  Wall supported</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Floor standing bookcase*</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Floor supported racking*</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* may require additional wall bracing depending upon the height of the unit.
Where a maximum loading capacity is not known a common sense approach is required.

**Low:** ornaments, plants, small number of lightweight files or books  
**Medium:** journals, A4 files, books  
**High:** boxes, box files, heavy or bulky equipment

**Deciding on the appropriate shelving**

Shelving requirements should be discussed with Estate Management staff who will advise on any restrictions such as asbestos or plasterboard that may affect the type of shelving that can be used.

Staff are encouraged to use floor-standing bookcase, as they are portable and do not damage the wall when staff are relocated. Large bookcases and racking units will need to be secured to the wall so as to prevent them toppling over.

Storerooms used to store heavy or large quantities of material should be fitted with purpose made racking. Maximum load bearing capacities for this type of shelving is generally available in catalogues. Scales are available from the Health and Safety Officer for identifying weights of unknown items or estimating the potential loading capacity.

**Safe access arrangements and use of step ladders**

Shelving should not be too high. Where high level access is required, kick stools or stepladders must be provided. A register of all ladders should be kept and regular safety checks undertaken. Stepladders should have a hand support and the safe height (normally two rungs from the top) not exceeded. There must be sufficient space to manoeuvre and erect the ladder. Stepladders should not be used sideways onto the shelving as they are inherently unstable. Large stepladders may require someone to support the base of the ladder, as well as to provide assistance in transferring loads.

**Storage of items**

Large, heavy or bulky items should not be stored above waist level. The Manual Handling Regulations apply to the lifting or moving of loads. A manual handling risk assessment may be required for certain activities. Further guidance can be found in the Staff GSA Intranet at [http://intranet.gsa.ac.uk](http://intranet.gsa.ac.uk) or VLE Website at [http://VLE.gsa.ac.uk](http://VLE.gsa.ac.uk) and from your line manager/supervisor. Shelving should be fitted with bookends. No shelving supports or stored item should come into contact with light fittings or smoke detectors. Storerooms should have suitable and sufficient lighting and kept clear of clutter.

**Inspecting and checking shelving**

Shelving should be checked by Departments/Schools in the first instance using the Checklist guide (see below) The inspection of shelving should form
part of the regular safety inspection programme undertaken by Departments and Schools Health and Safety Champion or designated Staff.

All staff have a responsibility to report any defective shelving and not to misuse equipment provided.

Any defects or concerns should be reported to your line manager/supervisor immediately.

Following an inspection where defects or deficiencies are identified and cannot be resolved locally, you should seek further advice from the Health and Safety Officer (ext. 1424).

**Further Guidance**

HSE Website: [http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/experience/storing.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/experience/storing.htm)

and for Manual Handling: [http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf)
# Departmental/School Shelving Checklist

**ROOM:** …………………………………..  **BUILDING:** ……………………………

**DEPT/SCHOOL:** ……………………………………………..  **TYPE:** ……………………………

**COMPLETED BY:** …………………………………......  **DATE:** ……………………………

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tick as appropriate</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Is the type of shelving appropriate for its use?
- Are the access arrangements satisfactory?
- Are the wall supports securely fixed?
- Are large/heavy items stored properly at low level?
- Are bookends fitted?
- Are high level bookcases or racking units securely fixed to the wall?
- Have step ladders/kick stools been checked regularly?
- Is the shelving showing signs of bowing?
- Do any light fittings/smoke detectors come into contact with the shelving or any of the stored items?
- Does the room have sufficient lighting?
- Is a manual handling risk assessment required?

---

**FURTHER COMMENTS/ACTIONS REQUIRED**