



Manual Tasks – Assisting students with physical impairments

Hoist and sling compatibility guideline

Advice regarding matching and non matching hoist and sling combinations to be read in conjunction with the procedure - Manual Tasks – Assisting Students with Physical Impairments

Hoists and slings are routinely used in schools to move students who are unable to move themselves because of a physical impairment. Hoists and slings are used to minimise the physical effort required by staff to assist movement and to minimise risks to staff and students. Ideally, hoists and slings are prescribed by a treating therapist, alternatively advice on the selection and use of the hoist and sling is to be sought from a therapist or other specialist with skills in the selection and use of hoists and slings.

Matching hoist and sling combinations

A safety alert on [Patient lifting slings](#) released by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ), Department of Justice and Attorney-General stipulates that users of hoists and slings should “check the selected sling has the appropriate safe work load for the patient and is *compatible* with the hoist being used.”

Compatibility of hoists and slings (matching combinations) can be assured if:

- slings used with hoists are the same brand and model; and
 - users comply with the manufacturer’s recommendations about the type of sling used with each hoist
- or**
- written manufacturer endorsement is available for hoist/sling combinations where slings used are not of the same brand as the hoist.

Information regarding matching hoist and sling combinations is available from manufacturers and suppliers.

A [risk assessment](#) is to be completed for activities involving use of this equipment.

Non-matching hoist and sling combinations

The use of non-matching hoist and sling combinations poses risks to both the student being lifted and the staff member/s operating the equipment. This is because the components may not perform in the way that they should, as they are not designed or manufactured to be used together.

In exceptional circumstances the use of a non-matching hoist and sling combination (where there is no endorsement from the manufacturer) may be required to meet the highly specialised needs of a student. In these circumstances the school principal will need to approve the purchase, or continued use of, a non-matching sling and hoist combination. To make this decision the principal must ensure completion of documentation that provides the following information:

- clear clinical justification from specialist support staff such as occupational therapists or physiotherapists; and
- completion of the [Non-matching Hoist and Sling Checklist](#).

Non-matching hoist and sling combinations with **pivot slings** are **not recommended** as a general rule. These should only be considered in extremely extenuating circumstances with the necessary procedures and documentation described above completed.

In general looped slings are matched with hoists with a yoke or spreader bar (refer Image A below). Pivot frame hoists require a matching pivot (or banana) sling with shaped nylon or metal clips (refer Image B).



Image A: Loop sling

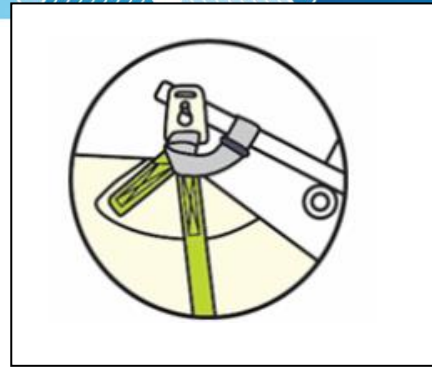


Image B: Pivot Sling

Manual handling equipment should also be compliant with relevant Australian Standards including *AS ISO 10535-2002 Hoists for the Transfer of Disabled Persons – Requirements and Test Methods*

All equipment in schools and departmental workplaces is to be used in accordance with manufacturers' instructions. This is both good practice and a legislative requirement according to the objectives of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and the Code of Practice for Plant 2005.

General hoist and sling information

Full text for WHSQ Slings Safety Alert refer to

<https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/news-and-events/alerts/workplace-health-and-safety-alerts/2013/patient-lifting-slings>

Student assessment

- Assess the student to determine the appropriate sling, hoist and transfer method to use.
- Reassess the student on a regular basis or when there is a notable change to their physical and/or mental status to ensure that the appropriate sling, hoist and transfer method is used.
- For transfers that rate a high risk of injury which cannot be adequately controlled, eliminate the risk by providing an alternate plan
- Communicate any changes in the transfer requirements to all staff who are responsible for the care of the student e.g. document in plans and update at staff changeover.

Proper sling selection

- Selecting the type and size of sling should be based on the student assessment and their transfer requirements.
- Use slings of the correct size that provide sufficient support and comfort for the student and prevent slippage or injury.
- Check the selected sling has the appropriate Safe Work Load (SWL) for the student and is matching with the hoist being used.
- **Note:** Sling sizes are not consistent across manufacturers. This variation in sizing/fit results in different student positioning.

Sling availability and integrity/condition

- Follow manufacturer's specifications regarding checking sling and hoist integrity and condition. As a minimum:
 - Inspect the condition of the sling and hoist to ensure good working order prior to each use. A sling is unsafe to use if the sling (particularly the attachment points, seams and other fragile areas) is frayed or torn, has holes, broken clips or failing components.
 - Implement a proactive maintenance program for slings and hoists.

Training in correct sling selection and use

Workers should be trained in:

- how to check slings to ensure appropriate sling type, size and weight limits are used as prescribed
- understanding the consequences of incorrect sling use
- inspection prior to use
- infection control, hygiene, laundering and maintenance.

Other risk controls

- Do not lift students higher than is necessary during the transfer.
- Ensure a clear path between the two transfer surfaces.
- Provide adequate number of staff to safely perform hoist transfers.