

Digging: Do's & Don'ts



Shoveling can be backbreaking labour. To avoid undue injury to yourself or the shovel, follow these digging tips to learn how to use a shovel correctly.

Digging In Do



DO bend at the knees, keeping your back straight, and tighten your stomach muscles as you lift with your legs, all to avoid straining your back. Use the momentum generated by the upward thrust of your legs to propel the shovel's contents into a wheelbarrow or onto a tarpaulin.

Digging In Don't



DON'T overextend your arms—the closer the load remains to your body, the lighter it feels— or twist your back while shoveling (backbones aren't designed to move that way).

Digging: Do's & Don'ts

Prying Do



DO, with the shovel head well planted and your back straight, pull your arms toward you, pivot the shovel on the head's stout shoulders, and brace your arm on your thigh if necessary.

Prying Don't



DON'T move your hands too far down the handle or you'll be forced to bend over at an uncomfortable angle. Keep in mind that a shovel can dislodge small stones, but it's not a pry bar. For large or stubborn rocks use a pick or digging bar instead.

Lifting and Tossing Do



DO bend at the knees, keeping your back straight, and tighten your stomach muscles as you lift with your legs, all to avoid straining your back. Use the momentum generated by the upward thrust of your legs to propel the shovel's contents into a wheelbarrow or onto a tarpaulin.

Lifting and Tossing Don't



DON'T overextend your arms—the closer the load remains to your body, the lighter it feels— or twist your back while shoveling (backbones aren't designed to move that way).

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Chopping Do



DO flip a long-handled, round-point shovel around so the head faces you to cut roots or clean up the sides of a hole. This orients the back of the shovel parallel to the sides of the hole, allowing you to chop downward with great force.

Chopping Don't



DON'T move your hands too far down the handle or you'll be forced to bend over at an uncomfortable angle. Keep in mind that a shovel can dislodge small stones, but it's not a pry bar. For large or stubborn rocks use a pick or digging bar instead.