

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

# ROCK CLIMBING

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STANDARD  
OPERATING  
PROCEDURES

April 2021

## Standard Operating Procedures: Rock Climbing

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### Definition and Scope of Activities

Locations range from mountains, quarries, sea cliffs to roadside crags which can be either accessed by road or are located remotely.

The major activities covered within this section are as follows:

- Rock climbing (open or artificial).
- Bouldering
- Abseiling
- Multi pitch rock climbing
- Traversing

### Precautions to Minimise Hazards

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It is essential that the Standard Operating Procedures are followed and that personnel leading the Group fully brief the group to pay attention to hazard warning information and remain in control of the activity.

The specific hazards identified are not exhaustive and additional hazards or combinations may arise during the course of an activity necessitating ongoing attention to minimise or control the risk(s) to a manageable level.

### Seasonal Constraints

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Climbing activities can take place all year. The normal accepted season for climbing is where summer conditions are present but the presence of snow/ice on a route deems the classification of risk to be winter. A slight 'dusting' of snow or occasional patches of snow is acceptable providing the snow conditions are not worsening. Furthermore where underfoot conditions may lead to a slip resulting in a downhill slide, conditions may be deemed as winter and winter qualifications would be required to lead a group in this terrain.

### Location Constraints

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Use of remote high mountain plateaus in winter conditions should be avoided with participants under 16 years of age.

### Tuition Ratios

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The tuition ratios are:

- 1 Leader to 8 participants

**Note:** The above ratio can be increased to 1:12 where the participants are deemed competent: for example hold N.I.C.A.S 2 award, where the leader is in a supervising role.

**Note:** the above ratio should also be decreased when working with very young children or with participants of additional support needs. Consult the technical advisor where necessary.

- 1 Leader to 3 participants where multi-pitch rock/snow/ice climbing is involved

## Tuition Leader Qualifications

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All leaders must hold valid first aid certificate and work within the remit of their qualifications

Minimum qualifications

Indoor climbing Climbing Wall Instructor CWI

Outdoor climbing (single pitch) Rock Climbing Instructor RCI

Outdoor climbing (multi pitch) Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor MCI

Winter climbing Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor WMCI

The National Governing Bodies contact data relevant to this section are as follows:

- Mountain Leader Training – [www.mltuk.org](http://www.mltuk.org)

## Equipment - Participants

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All participants must have access to clothing appropriate to conditions and relevant PPE dependent on the activity and location.

## Equipment – Group Safety

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Additional equipment to be considered depending on location / conditions:

- First aid supplies
- OS map (1:50000 scale)/compass
- Hot drink or means of making one
- Emergency rations
- Group emergency shelter or tent
- Torch

## Access / Environment

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As locations are mountain based there may be access restrictions due to land use. Access permission should follow national access codes of practice

Mountains and coastal cliffs often provide an important habitat for nesting birds and species of moss / alpines not normally found at lower levels. Groups should exercise care to reduce unnecessary disturbance and damage from overuse of specific sites.

# RISK ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT REF NO: Climbing 1

**Activity: Generic Rock climbing and Abseil (single pitch)**

**Location: Various**

**Assessor: DS, JL**

| Hazard                                             | Who might be harmed? |        |        | Existing controls<br>What makes the hazard less risky?<br>What makes these controls effective?                              | Risk        |          |        | Further actions<br>Avoid<br>Control at source<br>Take advantage of technology<br>Protect all<br>Make what you have more effective | Target date dd-mm-yy | Responsibility | Completion Date | New Residual Risk |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
|                                                    | Public               | Client | Leader |                                                                                                                             | Probability | Severity | Rating |                                                                                                                                   |                      |                |                 |                   |
| Slip / trip / fall from height                     | x                    | x      | x      | Robust safety brief / appropriate equipment / use of designated 'safe zones' if needed / Adequate supervision of group      | 2           | 3        | 6      | None                                                                                                                              |                      |                |                 |                   |
| Falling rock / objects                             | x                    | x      | x      | Helmets to be worn when required, area to be checked for loose objects, items secured at top of cliff                       | 2           | 5        | 10     | None                                                                                                                              |                      |                |                 |                   |
| Anchor failure                                     |                      | x      | x      | Qualified staff using sound judgement to select suitable anchors and rope systems which do not amplify pressure on anchors. | 1           | 5        | 5      | Staff to use 'info log' to pass information about changes to venue                                                                |                      |                |                 |                   |
| Falling from top while setting up                  |                      |        | x      | Instructor to use appropriate safety systems                                                                                | 1           | 5        | 5      | Continued CPD and peer appraisals to avoid complacency and skill fade                                                             |                      |                |                 |                   |
| Hair / clothing or body part catching on equipment |                      | x      | x      | All loose clothing and accessories are put away, tied or removed                                                            | 2           | 2        | 4      | None                                                                                                                              |                      |                |                 |                   |
| Crag fast climber/stuck climber                    |                      | x      | x      | Appropriate route choice                                                                                                    | 2           | 1        | 3      | Instructor to use skills to rescue if needed                                                                                      |                      |                |                 |                   |

|                                                  |   |   |   |  |                                                                                                                                                            |   |   |    |               |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|----|---------------|--|--|--|--|
| Loss of group control in hazardous area          | x | x | x |  | Use of support staff / designated 'safe zones' etc                                                                                                         | 1 | 5 | 5  | None          |  |  |  |  |
| Body part / equipment / clothing trapped in rock |   | x | x |  | Clothes and equipment checked for snag hazards / robust safety brief on climbing techniques, appropriate route choice                                      | 1 | 4 | 4  | None          |  |  |  |  |
| Poor student belaying                            |   | x | x |  | Use of suitable back-up systems for novice belayers.<br><br>Leaders to use judgement of competency before removing backup systems or remotely supervising. | 3 | 5 | 15 | Continued CPD |  |  |  |  |

|                                     |                   |              |
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| <b>Further actions approved by:</b> | <b>Signature:</b> | <b>Date:</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|

**Urgency of Action** = (20+ Very High) (16-20 High) (9-15 Moderate) (4-8 Low) (1-3 Very Low)

**Severity** = 1. Damage 2. Minor Injury 3. +3 Days/Hospitalised 4. Major Injury/Permanent Disability 5. Fatality

**Probability** = 1. Very Unlikely 2. Unlikely 3. Fairly Likely 4. Likely 5. Very Likely

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| <b>Review Date: April 2022</b> |
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