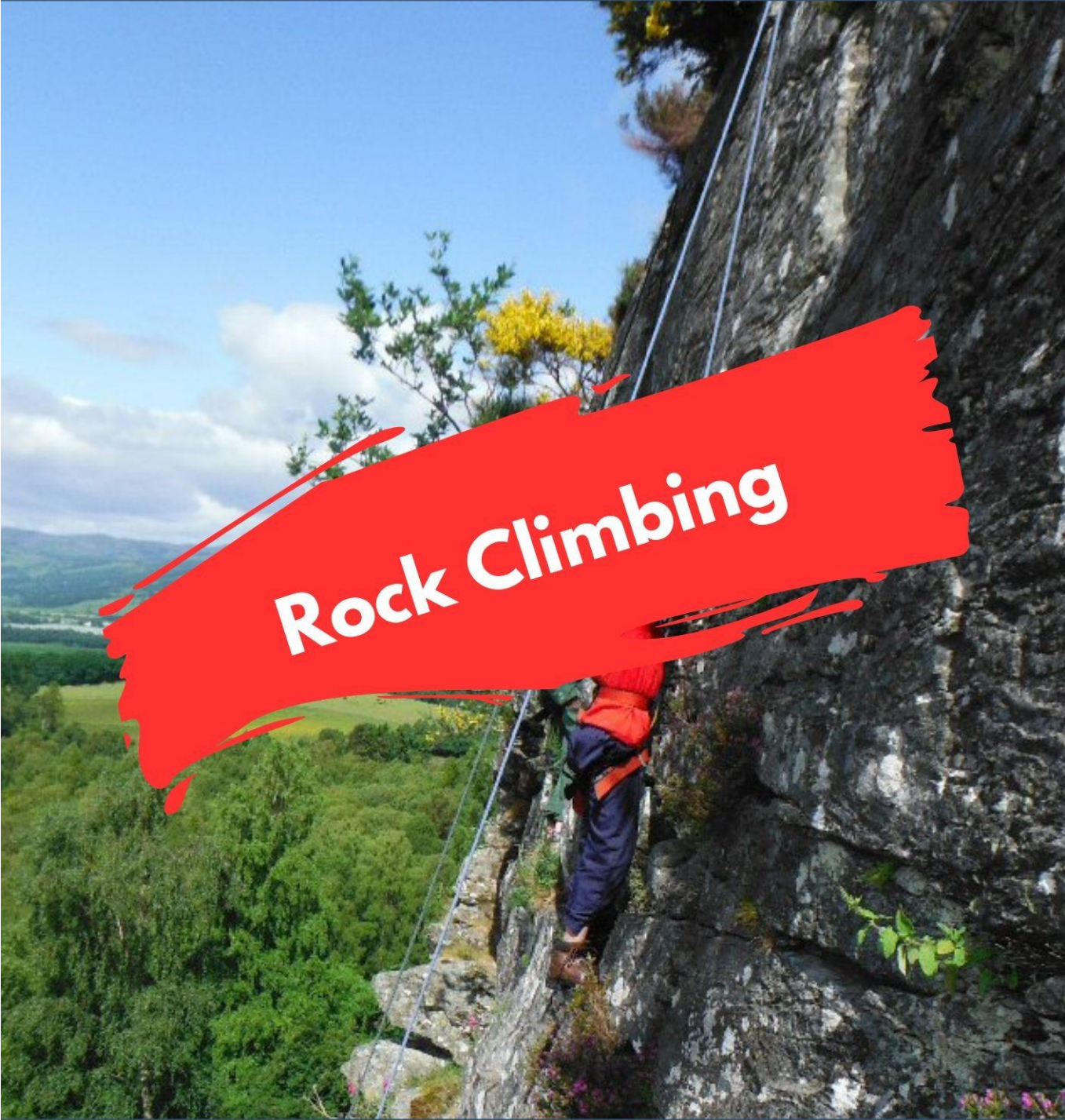


Outdoor Education Standard Operating Procedures



Rock Climbing

Standard Operating Procedures: Rock Climbing

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

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

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

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

Tuition Ratios

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

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

Equipment - Participants

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

Equipment – Group Safety

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

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 / alpine 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: CL

Activity: Generic Rock climbing and Abseil (single pitch)

Location: Various

Assessor: DS, JL

Hazard	Who might be harmed?				Existing controls What makes the hazard less risky? What makes these controls effective?	Risk			Further actions Avoid Control at source Take advantage of technology Protect all 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				

RISK ASSESSMENT

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Activity: Generic Rock climbing and Abseil (single pitch)

Location: Various

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Hazard	Who might be harmed?				Existing controls What makes the hazard less risky? What makes these controls effective?	Risk			Further actions Avoid Control at source Take advantage of technology Protect all Make what you have more effective	Target date dd-mm-yy	Responsibility	Completion Date	New Residual Risk
	Public	Client	Leader			Probability	Severity	Rating					
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. Leaders to use judgement of competency before removing backup systems or remotely supervising.	3	5	15	Continued CPD				

Further actions approved by: Derek Napier

Signature: D Napier

Date: 9th April, 2026

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

Review Date: April 2027

Ancrum Outdoor Centre, 10 Ancrum Road, Dundee DD2 2HZ Tel: 01382 435911
Web: www.ancrum.com Email: ancrum.centre@leisureandculturaldundee.com

