



Climb On Safely

TRAINING OUTLINE



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

Climb On Safely Training Outline

Introduction

Climb On Safely is the Boy Scouts of America's required procedure for organizing unit climbing and rappelling activities at all levels of the Scouting program: Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, Sea Scouts, and Venturers. For council and district climbing and rappelling activities, the current COPE and climbing standards in the BSA's *National Camp Standards* manual, No. 430-056, must be followed. You can find the manual at www.scouting.org/NCAP. Climb On Safely applies to climbing and rappelling at natural sites and specially designed facilities such as climbing towers and walls, whether fixed or portable.

All unit-sponsored/planned climbing activities, regardless of where they are held, fall under Climb On Safely. This applies to a single unit or multiple units that may be participating in a joint unit climbing activity. Tour and activity plans are required for any unit activities involving climbing and rappelling. Tour leaders are responsible for making sure all points of Climb On Safely are followed. Unit committee chairs and local councils must ensure that an adult on the tour has taken Climb On Safely training.

Purpose

Climb On Safely is designed to help adult leaders organize a climbing and rappelling program for their unit, similar to Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat. **It is not designed to teach leaders how to instruct BSA youth in the skills of climbing and/or rappelling.** Teaching climbing or rappelling requires a trained climbing instructor who meets the criteria under "Qualified Instructors" in Climb On Safely.

Trainer Qualifications

Training in Climb On Safely can be conducted by anyone who has an interest in climbing or rappelling; it does not require a skilled climber or rappeller. **Training for Climb On Safely is not skills training.**

Training Location

This training may be a part of the leader's orientation at a roundtable, summer camp, or university of Scouting. Ideally, every unit leader in summer camp will have an opportunity to attend this orientation under camp leadership. This training may also be conducted in connection with any BSA training program for Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, Sea Scout, or Venturing leaders, and it can be offered in connection with any other supplemental training programs or roundtables.

Training will take about 40 minutes. The training instructor should use the following Climb On Safely text as a resource for review and discussion.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this session, each participant should be able to do the following:

- Explain how each of the eight points of the Climb On Safely program contribute to the objective of assuring safe unit climbing and rappelling.
- Understand why the first and last points—**qualified supervision and discipline**—are crucial and why all other points rely on these two points.
- Understand the process of selecting qualified instructors.
- Organize and carry out a safe unit climbing/rappelling activity, observing the eight points of the Climb On Safely program.
- Review the materials list for a better understanding of the resources available and how these can be used to help plan and safely carry out a climbing/rappelling activity.
- Understand the age-appropriate climbing and rappelling guidelines.

Materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climb On Safely: A Guide to Unit Climbing and Rappelling brochure, one per participant 2. <i>Belay On</i> manual, No. 430-500 3. Parental Informed Consent Agreement 4. Tour and activity plan 5. Annual Health and Medical Record form 6. Principles of Leave No Trace
The Problem	<p>Invite the participants to relate their personal experiences with an accident or close call during a unit climbing/rappelling activity. Supplement their accounts with examples of actual incidents (news items, personal experiences, reports, etc.). Conclude the opening discussion with Scouting's excellent safety record with COPE and climbing/rappelling-related activities.</p>
The Response	<p>Scouting has a responsibility to provide for the safety of those participating in climbing/rappelling activities. The Climb On Safely program is designed to promote safety and help prevent accidents. Accidents may occur when Climb On Safely procedures are not followed.</p>
The Policy	<p>Explain that before any BSA group can engage in any climbing/rappelling activity, adult leaders for the activity must have an appreciation for the potential hazards they might encounter and should ensure steps are taken to reduce risks. Adherence to the eight points of Climb On Safely will help units avoid significant risks.</p> <p>Distribute a copy of the Climb On Safely brochure to each participant. Explain that you will be reviewing each of the eight points in detail.</p> <p>BSA Youth Protection. All adult leaders must comply with Youth Protection policies and procedures before participating in any Scouting event or activity involving youth members. Your local council has materials about this required training.</p>
1. Qualified Supervision	<p>Ask participants to note the first and last points of the plan—qualified supervision and discipline. These are crucial points because all the other points depend upon them. Review the following text material closely with participants before discussing each point in the Climb On Safely brochure. Explain that the qualified supervisor's role is to manage participants not under direction from the qualified instructors.</p> <p>The adult leader must ensure that someone in the group is currently trained in standard first aid and CPR such as offered by the American Red Cross. Wilderness First Aid is recommended for units going to remote areas. This person should assist in planning the climbing/rappelling activity.</p> <p>A course of equivalent length and content from any nationally recognized organization is acceptable. A higher level of certification, such as emergency medical technician (EMT), first responder, licensed practical nurse (LPN), registered nurse (RN), and licensed health-care practitioner, is also acceptable if the person is trained in backcountry medical care.</p>

2. Qualified Instructors

There must be a minimum of two instructors, one at least 21 years of age, for all climbing and rappelling activities (up to 12 participants) and one additional instructor who is at least 18 years of age, for up to each additional six participants, maintaining a 6-to-1 ratio. Qualified climbing and rappelling instructors are current in their training (skills assessment within three years) from one or more of the sources listed below or equivalent:

- BSA Level II climbing instructor or climbing director
- BSA Level II COPE instructor or COPE director (artificial structures only)
- Instructors trained by professional organizations or their accredited providers:
 - American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA)
 - Rock instructor
 - Single pitch instructor
 - Climbing wall instructor (artificial structures only)
 - Professional Climbing Instructors Association (PCIA)
 - Base managed climbing instructor
 - Top managed climbing instructor
 - Single pitch instructor
 - Climbing wall instructor (artificial structures only)
 - Professional Climbing Guide Institute (PCGI)
 - Top rope guide
 - Single pitch guide
 - Lead guide
 - Multipitch guide
 - Climbing Wall Association (CWA)
 - Climbing wall instructor (artificial structures only)
- Professional climbing guide/instructors who are licensed by the state or accredited according to:
 - AMGA, PCIA, or PCGI for natural rock climbing
 - AMGA, PCIA, CWA, PRCA, or ACCT for artificial structures
- University or college climbing/rappelling instructors who are current in their training (assessment within three years) as rock climbing instructors (or climbing wall instructors for artificial structures only)

There are many institutions and/or businesses who offer training for climbing and rappelling. However, most of those do not prepare instructors to lead groups of people on climbing and rappelling outings. Your local council COPE and climbing committee, area COPE and climbing advocates, and region COPE and climbing chairs are good sources to determine if an alternative training experience is equivalent to one of the sources listed above. For guidance or additional information, contact the BSA's Outdoor Programs/Properties Department through your local council office.

3. Physical Fitness

Participants need to have an Annual Health and Medical Record. Point out that accidents frequently are related to unknown physical conditions or are the unexpected result of some known physical problems. The qualified instructors must review any medical issues with the qualified unit leader. Good safety requires an understanding of the risks of any individual health conditions. A fitness regimen is recommended prior to participation in climbing or rappelling. This should include strength and aerobic exercise.

- 4. Safe Area** Emphasize that all climbing/rappelling activities must be conducted using an established climbing/rappelling site or facility including a portable or commercial facility. A qualified climbing instructor checks the site in advance of the activity to evaluate possible hazards and determine if the site is suitable for the intended participants. Explain the boundary of the fall zone. Explain that everyone in the fall zone must wear a helmet, and everyone must be belayed or tethered when within 8 feet of an edge where a fall of more than 6 feet could occur.
- 5. Equipment** The qualified instructor should verify that the proper equipment is available for the size and ability level of the participants. Helmets, rope, and climbing hardware must be approved by the UIAA (Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme) and/or be CE-approved (European Community Norm). All equipment must be acquired new or furnished by the instructor. When using a commercial climbing gym, the climbing facility's procedures apply.
- 6. Planning** A tour and activity plan must be filed and approved. Each youth participant should have written parental consent to participate in any BSA climbing/rappelling activity. The unit must acquire the services of a qualified climbing instructor. In advance, obtain any needed permits or written permissions to climb on private or public property. A leader should know where a nearby medical facility is located and how it can be contacted. The instructor should obtain a current weather report for the area before the group's departure. In the event of severe weather or another problem, share the climbing/rappelling plan and an alternate with parents and the unit committee. It is suggested that at least one of the adult leaders has an electronic means of communication in case of an emergency.
- 7. Environmental Conditions** The instructor, each leader, and each participant assume responsibility for monitoring potentially dangerous environmental conditions such as wet rock, poisonous plants, wildlife, and inclement weather. Check weather forecasts before departure. Participants should be knowledgeable of the principles of Leave No Trace. The adult leader is responsible for making sure the group leaves no trace of its presence at the site. **Use the buddy system** to monitor concerns such as dehydration, hypothermia, or an unusually high degree of fear or apprehension. The buddy system also reinforces the rule that no one climbs alone or without proper supervision.
- 8. Discipline** The first point, qualified supervision, recognizes that youth of Scouting age who are having fun with friends in or around the climbing area may not be concerned about their own health and safety. Even if they are concerned, they usually are not able to protect themselves fully. For this reason, qualified adult supervision is the first and most important element of Climb On Safely.
- Emphasize that for supervision to be effective, there must be discipline. Discipline in this context means all climbing/rappelling participants should know, understand, and follow the BSA's safety rules and procedures. The climbing instructor must ensure that the rules are fairly and impartially applied and followed. Involving Scouts in planning a climb or rappel is a good way to promote cooperation and discipline.
- Review and discuss the text of these two points reemphasizing that qualified supervision and discipline are the basis for all the other Climb On Safely rules.

Frequently Asked Questions

Discuss the following questions and answers with the group. These questions are designed to increase the adult leader's understanding of BSA climbing and rappelling procedures.

Question: A Scout troop would like to conduct a unit-level climbing/rappelling activity at a nearby park. How can troop leaders organize a safe outing?

Answer: They must adhere to the eight points of Climb On Safely. First, the unit must ensure qualified supervision. The unit must complete a tour and activity plan, and the unit must comply with the BSA's two-deep leadership requirements for the outing. All leaders must have completed Climb On Safely training, and at least one member of the group must have first-aid training from a recognized agency. The unit must secure qualified instructors and ensure that each climber is physically fit for the outing. Instructors should ensure a safe area by verifying that only established climbing sites will be used, that all equipment is new or provided by the instructor, and that the equipment is of the proper size and type for the group members. Unit leaders must ensure proper planning by gathering the proper parental consent forms, site permits, and contingency plans. Lastly, while on the outing, leaders must monitor environmental conditions, enforce the buddy system for all members, and maintain discipline while conducting climbing/rappelling activities.

Question: May a non-Scout group use a BSA climbing tower and equipment?

Answer: A non-Scout group desiring to use BSA climbing facilities or equipment must sign a hold-harmless/release agreement and provide a certificate of liability insurance in the amount of at least \$2 million. If the group uses BSA equipment, a BSA climbing Level II instructor must supervise the program in accordance with the BSA's national standards. Consult the BSA's Risk Management Notebook for more information.

Question: May a Cub Scout pack climb at the local climbing gym?

Answer: Yes, as long as the facility has properly sized equipment and the activity is age-appropriate. The facility must have proof of liability insurance. Cub Scouts are not permitted to rappel or belay; they must be lowered by a competent belayer. Webelos Scouts may rappel with a trained belayer. The group must follow the points of Climb On Safely while participating in any climbing activity.

Question: Is lead climbing permitted in BSA situations?

Answer: Yes, lead climbing, sport climbing, ice climbing, canyoneering, mountaineering, caving, and similar activities are allowed for unit climbing activities as long as the points of Climb On Safely are followed. Qualified instructors with specific training and skill in instructing these activities are required. Because all council and district climbing/rappelling activities must be top-roped, lead climbing, ice climbing, and mountaineering are not allowed in council and district activities. However, using a top-rope belay when lead climbing or ice climbing (known as "mock" lead or ice climbing) is allowed as a council or district climbing activity.

Age-Appropriate Climbing and Rappelling Guidelines

CUB SCOUTS

- Bouldering no higher than the climber's shoulder height, with trained adult spotters. (This pertains to climbing on boulders or other steep faces without going more than a few feet off the ground, protected by spotters rather than a rope belay.)
- Climbing in a climbing gym or using a portable wall or other age-appropriate facility with close supervision and age-appropriate instruction and equipment. Climbing is not allowed at natural sites.
- Climbers will be lowered by a belayer. No rappelling by Cub Scouts.

WEBELOS SCOUTS

- Bouldering no higher than the climber's shoulder height, with trained spotters.
- Climbing in a climbing gym or using a portable wall or other age-appropriate facility with close supervision and age-appropriate instruction and equipment.
- Rappelling with a trained belayer.
- Climbers must be belayed by trained belayers.

BOY SCOUTS AGES 11 TO 12

- Bouldering no higher than the climber's shoulder height, with trained spotters.
- Top-rope climbing with trained belayers.
- Rappelling with trained belayers.
- Belaying with supervision and a backup.

OLDER BOY SCOUTS, VARSITY SCOUTS, AND VENTURERS

- Bouldering no higher than the climber's shoulder height, with trained spotters.
- Top-rope climbing with trained belayers.
- Belaying with supervision.
- Rappelling with trained belayers.
- All council and district climbing must be top-roped.
- Practice lead climbing with a top-rope belay.
- Units with youth who are at least 13 years of age may elect to participate in lead climbing and/or snow and ice climbing with training from a nationally recognized organization that trains climbing instructors. BSA climbing directors and instructors are not trained in lead climbing or snow and ice climbing.

Conclusion

Conclude the session by restating the importance of protecting youth and adults during climbing/rappelling activities. Request individual commitment to the *Guide to Safe Scouting* and Climb On Safely, and thank the participants for their interest and attention.

