

Alpine Scrambling

Application

This standard applies to club-sponsored trips with summit destinations and off-trail travel, known in the club as Alpine Scrambles. These trips may involve travel on steep snow and rock routes, or travel on steep natural surfaces, but alpine scramble routes are chosen so participants who meet the prerequisites for the trip will not normally need to use roped climbing techniques. This standard applies to any committee sponsoring an alpine scramble, including, but not limited to Alpine Scrambling Committees.

Trips

Alpine Scrambling trips will be rated using a 1-5 scale for both strenuousness and technical difficulty, with a rating of 5 representing the most strenuous or most technically difficult routes. Both ratings must be available to participants when they sign up.

Alpine Scrambling trips will be posted using one of the following trip templates:

- **Alpine Scramble:** The route, not scheduled in winter conditions, includes travel on rock, snow slopes, or has sections of steep off-trail terrain that is not easily categorized (such as scree, dirt, heather, etc).
- **Winter Scramble:** Involves scrambling during times of year that could potentially involve avalanche risks, with conditions such as recent heavy snowfall, high winds, weather (snow, rain, sun, warming, freezing), unconsolidated snow, depth hoar, wind slabs, other avalanche-related risks, heavier packs, etc. Also involves colder temperatures, higher risk of cold-related illnesses, more extreme weather, higher consequence of injury/illness, more difficulty in treatment of injury/illness, heavier packs, shorter hours of daylight, and other winter-related risks. In the Pacific Northwest, scheduled from approximately November through April (note this includes not only winter, but also fall and spring). Note snowpack conditions vary greatly from year to year – trips in May and October of some years may need to be considered as winter scrambles if conditions are essentially equivalent to the winter season.
- In certain terrain and conditions, Alpine Scramble trips may involve non-technical¹ Glacier Travel at the discretion of the leader. Discretion involves judging whether glaciers have crevasses that participants could fall / plunge into without technical climbing skills and equipment. (Examples of glaciers that would be best candidates for travel are those that are flat / straight / dormant / in compression [i.e. whether they have significant crevasses]. Example conditions include deep / hard enough snowpack to preclude punching through snow bridges). Some glaciers are unsuitable for scrambling trips any time of year and should not be scheduled. If a trip with glacier travel is in progress and the leader determines the route would require technical roped travel, the

¹ Non-technical climbing encompasses activities like hiking, trekking, and scrambling, which do not require specialized equipment

leader is advised to turn back. Leaders of such trips shall be graduates of Basic Climbing or Glacier Travel courses to make these judgments.

Participants are expected to adhere to the Climbing Code, as described in *Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills*, current edition, as it applies to alpine scrambling terrain.

Equipment

In general, each participant must carry an ice axe and use it on snow slopes when judged necessary for personal safety or as directed by the leader. Exceptions are at the discretion of the leader.

In general, each participant must carry a helmet and use it on snow slopes and rock when judged necessary for personal safety or as directed by the leader. Exceptions are at the discretion of the leader.

Participants are expected to carry a downclimb kit on all scrambles where the leader carries a rope. A downclimb kit consists of at a minimum: materials to create a hasty harness or commercial climbing harness, locking carabiner, and hero loop (prusik loop).

Leaders are expected to bring a rope except in cases where in their best judgment, the lack of technical difficulty of the trip and nature of the terrain would reasonably preclude its use. Use of the rope is intended to be limited to those circumstances where it provides a margin of safety, aid, or comfort on the trip on appropriate scrambling terrain and is most commonly used during descent.

Leaders may require additional safety equipment including, but not limited to:

- Crampons
- Snowshoes
- Snow shovel
- Avalanche beacon
- Avalanche probe
- Weather appropriate emergency bivy gear

If the leader requires a beacon, all participants must have Avalanche Rescue (or higher) Badge.

Leaders

Leaders must be approved to lead trips by an Alpine Scrambling committee.

Sponsoring committees must be satisfied that leaders of alpine scrambles have competence in:

- Rock and snow scrambling with training in rope and anchor techniques that might be used on scrambling terrain
- Group leadership, including trip planning and group dynamics
- Wilderness navigation or equivalency

- Mountain safety, including identification of hazards such as exposure, rockfall, avalanches, and changing weather; and actions to minimize risk
- Wilderness First Aid or equivalent
- Emergency preparedness (including emergency bivouacs and how to summon help should it be needed)

Competence may be demonstrated by participation in courses or seminars, experience instructing at alpine scrambling field trips, leading a trip with a mentor, or other means acceptable to the committee.

In addition to the above requirements, primary leaders of winter scrambles must:

- Have competence in winter travel using crampons and snowshoes
- Be graduates of a Level I Avalanche Course (AIARE 1) compliant with the American Avalanche Association standards
- Have competence in risk management in winter conditions

Leaders must demonstrate skill maintenance by satisfactorily leading at least one trip every three years for the committee(s) for which they are approved as leaders.

Party Size

Field Trips must follow The Mountaineers [Outdoor Ethics Policy](#) guidelines.

On scrambles, the minimum party size for a scramble, per Mountaineers standards, is 3 and the maximum party size is 12, unless other party size limits apply (such as by land management agencies).

Participants

The following prerequisites apply to participants on alpine scrambles:

- Graduation (or Equivalency) from the Alpine Scrambling or Basic Climbing Course, or
- Student-status in the Alpine Scrambling Course or Basic Climbing Course upon satisfactory demonstration at field trips of climbing skills needed for the trip
- Participants in Winter Scrambles shall be Alpine Scramble Graduates or Basic Climbing Graduates, and be an Avalanche Rescue (or equivalent) or Level 1 Avalanche (AIARE 1) courses graduates if a beacon is required on the trip. The leader may make an exception to allow participation for an active Scramble Student, if the leader deems their abilities to be adequate for that particular winter scramble. Leaders may require additional prerequisites on Winter Scramble trips.

Participants are responsible for signing up only for trips that are within their capabilities, wearing suitable clothing, and carrying appropriate equipment including the ten essentials.

Courses

The content of an Alpine Scrambling Course shall include:

- Equipment and clothing selection, including the ten essentials
- Mountain safety, including identification of hazards such as exposure, rockfall, avalanches, and changing weather; and actions to minimize risk
- Use of navigation skills
- Travel on steep snow, including step-kicking, plunge stepping, self-belay and self arrest
- Rock scrambling on non-technical terrain
- Emergency harness & downclimbing, including the use of safety lines
- Emergency preparedness (including emergency bivouacs and how to summon help should it be needed)
- Avalanche awareness
- Low impact recreation principles & skills

Alpine Scrambling Course graduates must demonstrate competence in the course content and satisfactorily complete at least three alpine scrambles, including at least one snow scramble and one rock scramble (trips with sufficient snow or rock scrambling to count for graduation purposes as judged by the leader).

Corequisites to Graduate:

- Wilderness First Aid Badge or equivalent
- Basic Navigation Badge
- Avalanche Awareness Badge or equivalent
- Stewardship Credit Badge

Committees may grant course equivalency for applicants who complete:

1. An application including resume of scrambling experience
2. Practical Exam (in-field skill evaluation)
 - a. Eg: teaching at a field trip
 - b. Participating on a trip with an evaluator
 - c. Specific equivalency field trip
3. One Mountaineers-sponsored scramble (more may be required based on experience as determined by the committee), Low Impact Recreation, Navigation, and Wilderness First Aid.

An exceptional person may be approved by the committee (not just by a single person)

Instructors

Instructor qualifications are:

- Graduation (or equivalency) from the Alpine Scrambling Course or Basic Climbing Course, or
- Approved Alpine Scrambling leaders, or
- Approval from the sponsoring Alpine Scrambling Committee to instruct

Related Standards

- Board Policy - Clubwide Activity Standards
- Board Policy - [Participation in Activities](#)
- Board Policy - [Activities](#)
- Board Policy - [Club Standards](#)
- UIAA - Mountain Educator Standard