Clubwide Activity Standards – Climbing

Contents

Overview

The Mountaineers offers Climbing programs ranging from introductory to advanced. Mountaineers Climbing Activity Standards are designed to establish program consistency and designate authority and process for changing or adopting new standards.

Authority & Process

Clubwide Activity Standards are ratified by the summit group, which includes all branches that host that activity. Upon ratification by the summit group, Clubwide Activity Standards are submitted to Branch Leadership Committee, who approve the new or revised standards on behalf of the Board of Directors, at which point they become Board Policy.

When new or revised standards are proposed to the summit group, three outcomes are possible:

1. *Consensus* - All branches (and nearly all participants at the Summit) agree on a single decision.
2. *Agreement* - While not all branches or Summit participants agree on an ideal decision, an inclusive and well-facilitated conversation singles-out the one decision that does the most good for the most people, and that causes the fewest problems for those who disagree with the decision. All branches (and nearly all participants at the Summit) agree to support the decision.
3. *Need for further information* - One or more of the following supports further investigation, and the Summit Group agrees on an appropriate period of time for the investigation, including a plan for a follow-up conversation and decision action.
    a. Summit participants request a period of time to gather input from their constituents in their committees
    b. A focus group is established to provide further investigation and a recommendation to the Summit Group
    c. Specific information is requested from staff, members, or other climbing organizations, to help inform the decision

Note that “majority vote” is not a possible outcome because Summit Groups do not necessarily have equal representation by branch, nor do they have proportional representation by branch.

Climbing Activity Standards reference documentation and recommendations put forth by organization wide committees, including Climbing Curriculum Committee, Climbing Technical Advisory Committee, Climbing Leadership Development Committee, Climbing Access & Stewardship Committee, and Safety Committee. Recommendations from these committees will be adopted as appendices through the same process, but do not need to be approved by the Branch Leadership Committee.

Definitions

All climb types are dependent upon current conditions. Weather and other hazards may change a climbs difficulty rating.

<u>Basic Climbs</u> are summit routes with a difficulty rating of Grade I and occasionally Grade II.

BR (Basic Rock): The route will include two or more pitches of low 5th class rock

BA (Basic Alpine): The route will include at least one of these challenges:

- Steep or hard snow
- Class 3-4 rock (usually with no more than one roped pitch)
- Glacier travel (less than one hour during the ascent)

BG (Basic Glacier): The route will include one hour or more of glacier travel during the ascent

Intermediate Climbs are routes with a difficulty rating of Grade II or higher, generally with a summit as the destination.

IR (Int. Rock): The route will include multiple pitches of 5th class rock
II (Int. Ice): The route will include multiple pitches of alpine or waterfall ice
IM (Int. Mountaineering): The route may include rock, snow, or ice; but not enough to be rated IR or II; some basic climbs may be considered IM-rated climbs in winter conditions

Class refers to a rating for rock climbing difficulty using the Yosemite Decimal System as described in the most recent edition of *Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills*. Ratings for specific routes may be found in *Cascade Alpine Guide, Volumes I, II, and III*,other climbing guidebooks, and on The Mountaineers website

Crag Climbs are 5th class rock climbs on routes located within a short distance from a parking area.

Grade refers to a rating of a climb's overall difficulty using the National Climbing Classification System. Ratings for specific routes may be found in *Cascade Alpine Guide, Volumes I, II, and III,*other climbing guidebooks, and on The Mountaineers website.

Trips
Climbing trips will be rated with the above categories, and the rating must be available to participants when they sign up. Ratings are documented on The Mountaineers' website's route description, and participant prerequisite badges are assigned accordingly. Participants must have the prerequisite skills as defined by the prerequisite badges, and are responsible for signing up only for trips that are within their physical and technical capabilities, wearing suitable clothing, and carrying appropriate equipment.

Equipment
Each participant must carry a UIAA-approved climbing helmet and wear it during all roped climbing and in any terrain with significant objective hazards.

On routes with significant or steep snow, each participant must carry an ice ax and use it for self-belay on snow slopes. On alpine climbs that will encounter minimal or no snow, the leader may determine that ice axes do not need to be carried.

Leaders will advise participants about required climbing equipment for the trip, such as snow anchors, rock protection, crampons, ice tools, etc.

Leaders
Leaders must be approved to lead climbs by the sponsoring committee, and must be vetted according to the standards developed by the Climbing Leadership Development Committee (appendix B).

Leaders are expected to lead climbs within their ability, to maintain their leadership and technical skills through regular practice and training, and to be up to date in current climbing skills & techniques taught by The Mountaineers.

Participants

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

Basic Climbs

The following prerequisites apply to all participants on basic climbs:

- Graduation (or Equivalency) from the Basic Climbing Course, or
- Student-status in the Basic Climbing Course or Completed a Basic-level course module(upon satisfactory demonstration at field trips of the rock, snow, and glacier climbing skills needed for the trip)
- At a minimum, students will have demonstrated the ability to travel 3 miles in 2 hours, gaining an average of 800'/mile, carrying at least 30 lbs. Additionally, students will have a practical understanding of the fitness expectations of participating in a Mountaineers climb. Most climbs require a higher level of fitness. Climb leaders are responsible for communicating fitness expectations to participants.

The following prerequisites apply to Rock Rope Leaders on Basic Climbs:

- Mountaineers Basic Graduate or Equivalency
- Single Pitch Trad and Multi Pitch Trad Climbing
- Outdoor Leadership
- First Aid
- Navigation
- Becoming A Mountaineers Leader eLearning Course
- 1 year of alpine climbing experience.
- 2 alpine rock climbs (one must be with The Mountaineers)
- 1 multi-pitch climb with leader experience (swing or block lead)

The following prerequisites apply to Glacier Rope Leaders on Basic Climbs:

- Mountaineers Basic Graduate or Equivalency
- Outdoor Leadership
- First Aid
- Navigation
- Avalanche Awareness
- Becoming A Mountaineers Leader eLearning Course
- 1 year of alpine climbing experience
- 2 glacier climbs (one must be with The Mountaineers)

Exception: With leader permission a Basic Graduate or Basic Equivalent can be a rope leader.

Intermediate Climbs

The following prerequisites apply to participants on intermediate climbs:

- Graduation (or Equivalency) from the Intermediate Climbing Course, or
- Student-status in the Intermediate Climbing Course (upon satisfactory demonstration at field trips of rescue methods and the rock, snow, and/or ice climbing skills needed for the trip)

Crag Climbs

The following prerequisites apply to all rope leaders on crag climbs:

- Graduation (or Equivalency) from a relevant course or
- Student-status in the a relevant course upon satisfactory demonstration at field trips of the rock climbing skills needed for the trip

The following prerequisites apply to participants on crag climbs who belay and climb top-roped, but do not lead:

- Graduation (or Equivalency) from the Basic Climbing Course, or
- Student-status in the Basic Climbing Course (upon satisfactory demonstration at field trips of the rock climbing skills), or
- Graduation from an introductory rock climbing course and with leader permission

Courses

Activity committees may offer climbing courses teaching a range of climbing skills that fall within the Climbing Technical Advisory Committees' recommendations. Established courses, curriculum framework and educational outcomes are outlined in Appendix A. Content explanations may be found in the most recent edition of *Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills*.

- Course curriculum will follow recommendations by the Climbing Curriculum Committee, as published in Appendix A.
- New courses must have stated educational outcomes and a written curriculum framework that is informed by a pilot course

Other activities

The Mountaineers may offer ad-hoc climbing clinic and practice sessions, and host presentations about climbing. These enrichment activities must be aligned with Clubwide Climbing Activity Standards even if they do not have a formal, regular curriculum.

Safety

Mountaineers Climbing Programs will adhere to recommendations from the Organization-wide Safety Committee as listed in Appendix C.

Maximum Party Size

Climbing trips and field trips will have a maximum party size, including Climb Leader and Assistant Leaders, that is determined by the Outdoor Ethics Policy. The Climbing Access and Stewardship Committee may recommend a reduced maximum party size on popular climbs. Once approved by the Climbing Summit Group, these recommendations can be found in Appendix D of this document.

Appendix A
Curriculum

Mountaineers Basic Alpine Climbing Course

Students who graduate the Mountaineers Basic Alpine Climbing Course will have the skills to participate as a competent team member in a Mountaineers Basic Alpine Climb, and to engage in non-technical mountaineering outings within the context of a private party.

Goals and Objectives

The Basic Alpine Climbing Course is a critical component of the Mountaineers' outdoor educational program. These Goals and Objectives will provide a structure for the core mission and outcome for the program to ensure it is delivered with consistency and quality across the organization.

The Mountaineers as an organization recognizes that each branch must have the freedom to create its own structure for delivering the course in a way that serves its members, volunteers, and students most effectively. For example, differences by branch in class size and available facilities may warrant different approaches. It also recognizes that the course content must contain the necessary core curricula of skills and competencies to ensure that the program can produce capable and safe climbers.

During the course, students of the Mountaineers Basic Alpine Climbing Course will demonstrate the following:

- **Proficiency and safety in the required skills and competencies** associated with the basic alpine climbing course
- **Effective teamwork** while working and climbing with their fellow students, instructors, and climb leaders
- A sufficient, accurate, and **honest level of self-assessment** to properly determine their ability to successfully participate in basic alpine climbs. Their self-assessment would include, but not be limited, to an accurate evaluation in the following:
    - Proficiency with the basic alpine climbing curricula of skills and competencies
    - A necessary level of conditioning and fitness
    - A level of comfort with exposure
    - Ability to match their skill and fitness level to selected activities

At course completion, successful graduates of the Mountaineers Basic Alpine Climbing Course will be able to demonstrate the following:

- Successful participation in a Mountaineers (or equivalently led) basic alpine climb(s) as a **competent team member**
- The necessary judgment and skills to **plan and engage in their own trips in non- or low-technical scramble terrain.**
- A sufficient understanding of **group dynamics and fundamental decision making** skills in the backcountry
- An **awareness of hazards and good safety habits** to manage risk in the backcountry
- A mindfulness for **environmental stewardship and respect for other parties**

Mountaineers Basic Alpine Climbing Course

Curriculum

Based on the goals and objectives of the Basic Alpine Climbing Course, the curriculum will include a set of skills and concepts taught at all branches as well as some skills that may optionally be taught *in addition* to the mandatory skills:

- **General**: Equipment and Clothing; Packing Wisely; Ten Essentials; Mountain Weather, including lightning; Etiquette & ethics on crowded climbs; Decision Making Skills; Teamwork; Risk Management & Mitigation
- **Knots, Hitches & Related Skills**: Overhand, Water Knot, Girth Hitch, Figure 8 on a Bight, Rewoven Figure 8, Bowline, Modified Device Mule knot, Butterfly, Clove Hitch, Munter Hitch, Flat Overhand Bend, Double Fishermans, Prusik Hitch, MMO, Butterfly coil, Mule Knot, Autoblock hitch, Creating Texas prusiks
- **Optional knots**: Klemheist Hitch, Bachman Hitch
- **Anchor systems**: Rigging Belay Anchors (i.e.: using a cordelette or webbing to sling existing natural anchors like trees and boulders or 2 or more bolt hangers) ; Recognizing masterpoints, connecting to it with clove hitch, and pull-testing; Placing snow anchors including pickets, bollards & deadman/T-Slot; Running belays (passing pickets) on snow; Mid-clip vertical picket anchor
- **Belaying**: Toprope belay with PBUS on a device; Lead belay with a device using PBUS; Belaying a follower including body belay with SSS and munter belay off an anchor
- **Belay Tie-Off & Escape:** Tie off using a load releasing knot (mule knot on load strand or spine of carabiner), transfer the load, create a back-up, escape the system
    - **Optional Releasable Belay Tie-Off & Escape:** Tie off using a load releasing knot (mule knot on load strand or spine of carabiner), transfer the load using prusik and Munter Mule Overhands, create a back-up, escape the system
- **Related Belay Skills**: Following a leader including cleaning pro and climbing commands.
- **Optional Belay Techniques**: Belaying a follower using a device and a redirect; Lead Belaying with a Munter using SSS
- **Rappelling**: Double strand extended rappel on a belay device using an extension (either as a dedicated extension or with a single nylon runner); Sit & Spin Rappel; Autoblock; Fireman's Belay
    - **Optional Rappelling Techniques**: Belay Device Double Strand (non-extended); Arm Rappel (recommended); Leg Wrap
- **Rock Skills**: Strategies for avoiding party-caused rock fall; Rock Climbing Techniques
- **Snow Skills**: Avalanche Awareness; establish an emergency snow shelter; Ice Ax Self-Belay (including face in and face out); Snow Travel (plunge step, kicking steps, rest step, walking in balance, glissading, French crampon technique/flat footing) and assessing runout; Self Arrest using feet (with a discussion of scenarios where using feet could be dangerous); Snow Camping
    - **Optional Introductory Alpine Ice Skills**:; Chopping or cutting Steps; Front Pointing; ; High Dagger and effective ice tool swing; Placing Ice screws; building v-thread anchors; building multipoint ice anchors;; Ice bollards; Descending walking forward
- **Glacier Travel**: Shortening the rope on a glacier climb (Kiwi Coil vs putting the rope in the pack); Seat Harness prusik belay; Roped Glacier Travel
- **Responding to a Crevasse Fall / Crevasse Rescue**: Roping up for glacier travel; Holding the fall; Anchoring the rope including backup; Communication between ropemates; Safely approaching the crevasse; Communication with fallen teammate; Making a plan; Executing a raising system
- **Crevasse Rescue Raising Systems**: All students will learn both 3:1 Z-pulley and 2:1 drop-loop C-pulley, and understand the advantages and disadvantages of each system. Students will demonstrate proficiency in at least one raising system.

Mountaineers Basic Alpine Climbing Course

Graduation Requirements

Graduation will be granted to students who:

- Demonstrate proficiency in all required skills
- Complete a Mountaineers Wilderness Navigation Course (or equivalency)
- Complete a Wilderness or Remote First Aid, MOFA or equivalent course
- Complete a day of Stewardship
- Participate in at least two (2) Mountaineers Climbs, including: one successful Basic Rock Climb and one successful Basic Glacier Climb

Equivalency

Committees may grant course equivalency for applicants that:

- Submit a resume of their climbing experience that shows that they have mountaineering training and experience that exceeds the requirements for course graduation, and
- Demonstrate through a practical examination in the field that they can perform the skills required for course graduation, and
- Participate in at least one Basic Rock Climb and one Basic Glacier Climb to demonstrate competency in the mountains

Committees should follow a standard equivalency process as published on The Mountaineers website.

Mountaineers Intermediate Alpine Climbing Course

Updated November 2017

Curriculum

(Prerequisite: Graduation or equivalency from the Basic Climbing Course)

- Rescue methods, including construction of rescue anchors, raising systems, and lowering systems
- Rock climbing, leading and swinging leads on mid-5th class rock, including:
  - Anchor Construction
    - Constructing belay anchors using SRENE principles
    - Using natural anchors such as trees, horns, rocks, and other features
      - Constructing multidirectional anchors
  - Gear Placement
    - Placing passive and active protection so it will hold a fall
    - Using slings to manage rope drag and minimize movement of protection devices
- Ice climbing, leading and swinging leads on alpine ice(minimum 45 degrees), including:
  - Flat-footing and front-pointing crampon technique
  - Using ice tools
  - Placement of ice protection, including pickets and ice screws
  - Construction and use of ice anchors for belaying
  - Construction and use of ice anchors for rappelling, including the v-thread anchor
  - Running belays on low angle ice and hard snow
- Winter mountaineering, including:
  - Winter camping
  - Application of climbing skills in winter conditions
  - Emergency winter shelters
- Level I avalanche training
- Wilderness First Aid (Graduation from a WFA course or equivalency)
- Group Leadership, including trip planning and group dynamics

Graduation Requirements

Intermediate Course graduates must demonstrate competence in the course contents and satisfactorily complete the following climbs:

- At least six basic climbs as a rope leader, including two BR-rated climbs and two BG-rated climbs, and
- At least five intermediate climbs, swinging leads as applicable, including two IR-rated climbs and two II-rated climbs.

Mountaineers Crag Climbing Course

Revised November 2017

Curriculum

(Prerequisite: Mid-5th class rock climbing skill on top rope)

- Rock climbing, leading and swinging leads on mid-5th class rock, including:
  - Constructing belay anchors using SRENE principles, including hanging belays
  - Placing passive and active protection so it will hold a fall
  - Constructing multidirectional anchors
  - Using slings to manage rope drag and minimize movement of protection devices
  - Rappelling using a device and a rappelling using a carabiner brake system, including self belay using an autoblock
- Wilderness First Aid (Graduation from a WFA course or equivalency)

Crag Course graduates must demonstrate competence in the course contents and satisfactorily complete at least three crag climbs; at least one of the climbs must be multi-pitch.

Appendix B

Leaders

Leaders

Revised January 2018

Leaders must be approved to lead climbs by the sponsoring committee.

Leaders are expected to lead climbs within their ability, to maintain their leadership and technical skills through regular practice and training, and to be up to date in current climbing skills & techniques taught by The Mountaineers.

Basic and Intermediate Climbs

Sponsoring committees must be satisfied that leaders of basic and intermediate climbs have competence in:

- Rock, snow, and glacier climbing (Graduation from the Basic Climbing Course or Equivalency)
- Leading on mid-5th class rock Leading on alpine ice routes up to 45 degrees (required only for leaders of II-rated climbs)
- Group leadership
- Use of topographical maps, compass, and altimeter
- Mountain safety, including identification of hazards such as exposure, rockfall, avalanches, and changing weather; and actions to minimize risk
- Wilderness First Aid or equivalent experience
- Emergency preparedness (including rescue skills, emergency bivouacs, and when and how to summon help should it be needed)

Crag Climbs

Sponsoring committees must be satisfied that leaders of crag climbs have competence in:

- Leading on mid-5th class rock (Graduation from a relevant course or two years of demonstrated experience leading multi-pitch 5th class rock climbs of difficulty up to 5.8)
- Group leadership
- Mountain safety, including identification of hazards such as exposure, rockfall, and changing weather; and actions to minimize risk
- Wilderness First Aid or equivalent experience
- Emergency preparedness (including rescue skills and when and how to summon help should it be needed)

Water Ice Climbs

Sponsoring committees must be satisfied that leaders of water ice climbs have competence in:

- Leading on vertical ice (Graduation from a relevant course or two years of demonstrated experience leading multi-pitch technical ice climbs of difficulty up to WI3)
- Group leadership
- Mountain safety, including identification of hazards such as exposure, rockfall, avalanches (Level I Avalanche training or equivalent), and changing weather; and actions to minimize risk

- Wilderness First Aid or equivalent experience
- Emergency preparedness (including rescue skills, emergency bivouacs, and when and how to summon help should it be needed)

Appendix C

Mountaineers Safety Committee Recommendations

Rappel Operations Protocol for Mountaineers Training Activities

Purpose – The following outlines operational standards rappel stations at Mountaineers field trips and training activities

Goal – To reduce rappel incidents on Mountaineers field trips and activities

Metrics

- Rappel incidents and near misses on field trips per field trip activity days
- Compliance surveys

Protocol for Mountaineers field trips and activities involving rappel

- Dedicated Rappel stations
    - Designate specific routes, anchors, rope and equipment as designated rappel stations for field trips
    - If a new rappel route is added midway, apply the same operational procedures that follow

- Clear Roles and Responsibilities
    - Assign a dedicated Instructor as the ACCOUNTABLE party for Safety across station routes
        - Ensures that there is a RESPONSIBLE party to oversee rappel station management – Setup, inspection, maintenance through the day and general oversight
        - Ensures that there is direct supervision of students in scenarios where rappelling is being introduced (e.g. Basic Climbing Course, Introduction to Alpine Rock, introductory clinics on rappelling…)

- Operational Protocol for Rappel stations
    - Required – All participants in exposed areas be secured to prevent from falling
    - Required – Positive verification that the rappel system is closed (e.g. rope strands touch ground, and/or rope is centered with knots in ends)
    - Recommended – Backup method (e.g. Autoblock or Fireman's belay)

Version History

1.0 Approved by Safety Committee 3/27/2018 for recommendation to and adoption by the Climbing Summit. The authoritative version of this document will live in the Climbing Summit Basecamp until incorporated into the Climbing Standards document

2.0 Edits based on Climbing Summit feedback thru 4/10