
Climbing

Application

This standard applies to club-sponsored climbing activities. It applies to any committee sponsoring a climbing trip, including, but not limited to branch climbing committees.

Definitions

Basic Climbs are summit routes with a difficulty rating of Grade I and occasionally Grade II that involve:

- Class 3, 4, or low 5th class rock; and/or
- Steep and possibly hard snow with hazards that may require crampons & ice ax; and/or
- Glacier travel

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* and other climbing guidebooks.

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* and other climbing guidebooks.

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

Trips

Climbing trips will be rated with these categories, and the rating must be available to participants when they sign up.

Basic Climbs

BR (Basic Rock): The route will include one or more pitches of class 4 to 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

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

Parties are expected to adhere to the Climbing Code, as described in the most recent edition of *Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills*.

The maximum party size is 12 unless other party limits apply.

Equipment

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

Each participant must carry an ice ax and use it for self-belay on snow slopes. For trips that will not encounter snow, such as crag climbs and snow-free routes, 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.

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 methods, emergency bivouacs, 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
- 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 methods and how to summon help should it be needed)

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 essential systems.

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 a Basic-level course module (upon satisfactory demonstration at field trips of the rock, snow, and glacier climbing skills needed for the trip)
- Demonstrated ability to travel 3 miles in 2 hours, gaining an average of 800'/mile, carrying at least 30 lbs.

The following prerequisites apply to rope leaders on basic climbs:

- Graduation (or Equivalency) from the Intermediate Climbing Course, or
- Student-status in the Intermediate Climbing Course with satisfactory completion of the rescue methods field trip (and the rock climbing field trips for BR-rated climbs).
- Graduation (or have Equivalency) from both a Trad Rock Climbing Course and the Basic Climbing Course.
- Demonstrated ability to travel 3 miles in 2 hours, gaining an average of 800'/mile, carrying at least 30 lbs.

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

- 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 and require them as prerequisites for trips. Established courses and their minimum content are listed below. Content explanations may be found in the most recent edition of *Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills*.

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 that they can perform the skills required for course graduation

Basic Climbing Course

- Mountain Fitness assessment (see Basic Climbs pre-requisites)
- The Climbing Code
- Equipment and clothing selection, including the ten essential systems
- Mountain safety, including identification of hazards such as exposure, rockfall, avalanches, and changing weather; and actions to minimize risk
- Use of topographical maps and compass
- Rock climbing, including travel on class 2-3 routes, following class 4 and low 5th class routes, and cleaning protection
- Snow travel, including step-kicking, plunge stepping, self-belay and self arrest, and crampon use
- Snow camping
- Climbing knots and hitches and their application, including:
 - Water knot
 - Figure eight knot (both rewoven and on-a-bight)
 - Double fisherman's knot (aka grapevine knot)
 - Clove hitch
 - Münter Hitch
 - Prusik knot
 - Girth hitch
- Belayed climbing techniques, including:
 - Construction of simple belay anchors
 - Belaying with a device and belaying with a Münter Hitch
 - Verbal belay commands

- Belay tie-off and escape using friction knots
- Rappelling using a device including self-belay using an autoblock or prusik knot.
- Ability to plan for an use an alternative to the primary rappel device (this can include carrying a second device or learning an alternative technique such as munter hitch rappel or carabiner brake system)
- Construction of snow anchors, including using pickets, deadman anchors, and snow bollards
- Quick belays on snow, such as the carabiner-ice ax belay or boot-ax belay
- Travel in rope teams on glaciers, including routefinding, team self-arrest, and running belays through snow anchors
- Crevasse rescue techniques, including self-rescue using a friction knot system, direct pull, a 2:1 (single-) pulley system, and a 3:1 (z-) pulley system
- Wilderness First Aid or equivalent experience
- “Leave no trace” principles
- Emergency preparedness (including emergency bivouacs and how to summon help should it be needed)

Basic Climbing Course graduates must demonstrate competence in the course contents, adequate physical condition for alpine climbing, and satisfactorily complete at least two basic climbs, including one BR-rated trip and one BG-rated trip.

Intermediate Climbing Course

(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:
 - Constructing belay anchors using SERENE principles
 - Placing passive and active protection so it will hold a fall
 - Using natural anchors such as trees, horns, rocks, and other features
 - Constructing multidirectional anchors
 - Using slings to manage rope drag and minimize movement of protection devices
- Ice climbing, leading and swinging leads on alpine ice up to 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 or equivalent experience
- Group Leadership, including trip planning and group dynamics

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.

Trad Rock Climbing Courses

(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 SERENE 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 or equivalent experience

Trad Rock Climbing 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.

Instructors

Instructor qualifications are:

Basic Climbing Course

- Graduates or students in the Intermediate Climbing Course (or have equivalency) who have successfully completed instruction in the subject, or
- Approved by the sponsoring Committee to instruct

Intermediate Climbing Course

- Graduates of the Intermediate Climbing Course (or have equivalency), or
- Students in the Intermediate Climbing Course who have successfully completed instruction in the subject, or
- Approved by the sponsoring Committee to instruct

Trad Rock Climbing Courses

- Graduates of the Crag Climbing Course or Intermediate Climbing Course (or have equivalency), or
- Students in the Intermediate Climbing Course who have successfully completed instruction in leading 5th class rock, or
- Approved by the sponsoring Committee to instruct

Related Clubwide Minimum Standards

- General Standards for All Club Activities

- Level I Avalanche Training
- Wilderness First Aid/Mountaineering Oriented First Aid (MOFA)

Comparable Standard

UIAA Standards for Voluntary Leaders and Instructors, October 2006

- Activity Standard 4: Rock Climbing (applies to Trad Rock climbing)
- Activity Standard 6: Alpine Climbing (applies to Basic and Intermediate climbing)