

Thinking like a leader

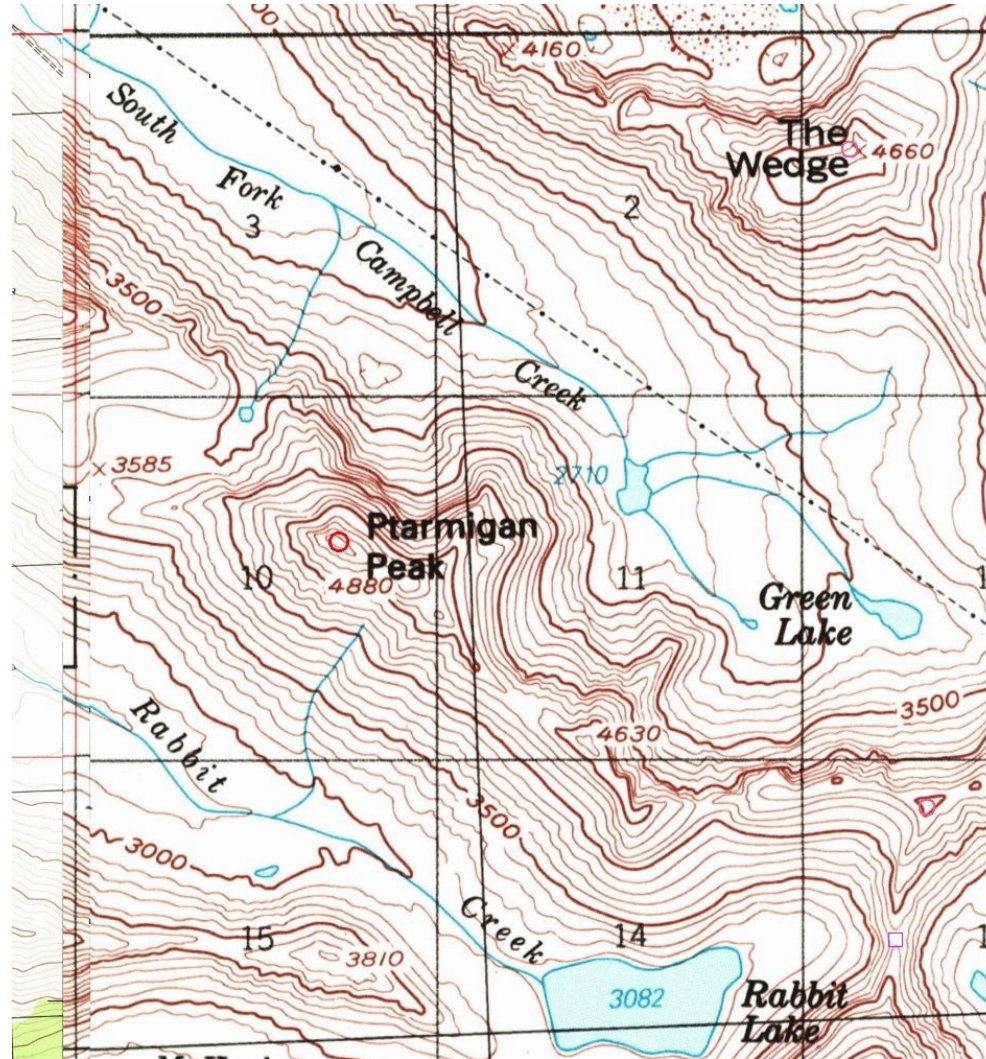
You are a member of a 14 person party on the 2nd (graduation) climb of a wilderness climbing program. There are two instructors and other members are students, with only the last climb as experience.

It is late June and the previous day you set up camp on the north side of Ptarmigan Peak, with the objective of climbing the North Couloir route

Your group has typical snow climbing gear, including mountain boots, ice axes (mix of 50cm and normal 65-70cm), ropes, and crampons.

One strong preference is for the party to be back at the cars (short distance from the camp), by early evening

Graduation climb – Ptarmigan Peak



The situation

- The weather is good, with cool temps overnight, warming up during the day
- Your group is split into 2 rope teams of 4 and 2 rope teams of 3.
- Your party started the climb around 0715 to climb a 2000' couloir on hard snow with crampons and axes.
- Climbing was slow, and party topped out around 1430, then rested
- At 1600, the party decided to descend, there was a general wish to be back at camp by 1700.
- Several alternative descent routes are possible, such as walking off the gentle slopes to the west, though this would take much longer.
- The snow has softened up since the firm footsteps of the morning

What is your descent strategy? Considerations:

- Weather? Time?
 - Techniques? Gear?
 - Route?
 - Party experience?
 - Anticipation of possible hazards.
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- Let's go to breakout rooms for the SIGs and discuss. Reconvene in 10 mins with 5 mins to wrap up.