



Ardmore House

**ROCK CLIMBING
RISK OVERVIEW**

Rock Climbing

Aim and benefits of Activity

To introduce and/or develop skills in rock climbing (single pitch) on indoor and outdoor climbing walls, local crags and crags in other locations throughout the UK. Rock climbing is a challenging and exciting sport that develops physical agility, balance and co-ordination as well as fitness and a strong sense of self esteem and mental well being through overcoming challenge. Rock climbing also develops strong bonds of trust and dependence on others and equipment.

Hazards	Resulting harm	Who is at risk	Risk management measures
Height Loose material and detritus Boulders and uneven terrain Poor belays and protection. Falling and impacts Loose clothing/long hair Student behaviour Equipment failure Poor practice/negligence	Abrasions Cuts and bruises Broken bones Dislocation Hypothermia Crush injuries Death Rope burn	Staff Students Public	Competent, experienced and approved staff who have a working knowledge of the climbing wall procedures, crag environments and who hold the appropriate MLT award. Appropriate planning including weather forecasts. Suitable equipment for both students and staff including safety equipment. Regular checking of equipment and replacement at or before manufacturer's recommendations and following visual/physical inspection Appropriate rock climbing management protocols, including briefing, familiarisation, belaying techniques and activity management.

<u>Key Locations</u>	<u>Associated specific hazards</u>
<u>Ardmore Wall</u>	<u>Other users</u> <u>Complacency</u>
<u>Hotrock wall</u>	<u>Other users</u> <u>Complacency</u>
<u>Hotrock outdoor wall</u>	<u>Trailers and other obstacles</u> <u>Soft ground rubber crumb</u>
<u>Centre climbing boulder</u>	<u>No protection</u>
<u>Altnadue quarry</u>	<u>Other users</u> <u>Difficult access/egress to abseil and from the top of the crag</u> <u>Loose material – note the back of the quarry must not be used due to unstable rock face</u>

<u>Range of crags in Mournes</u>	<u>Standard crag hazards associated with mountainous areas.</u>
<u>Other mountain regions and crags as required when on trips</u>	<u>As above</u>

Maximum Operating Ratios

Note that once considerations highlighted below are taken into account the agreed ratio may be reduced

Climbing Walls

1:12 (including participating staff)

1:15 with the assistance of an assistant leader*

Altnadue quarry

1:8 (including staff)

Single pitch crag (External Provider)

1:10 (including visiting staff)

1:13 with the assistance of an APPROVED Trainee or approved assistant leader*

Multi pitch crag (External Provider)

1:4

Appropriate operating Ratios are dependant on all the factors outlined below, including experience and competence of staff. However, the above ratio will, under no circumstances, be exceeded.

1. Environmental Considerations

Weather: where the instructor is concerned for the safety of the group give the ensuing weather conditions, the level of the activity should be moderated accordingly, or the activity abandoned.

Nature of the site: the nature of the climb/abseil should present no significant danger to the students and be appropriate to the standard of their ability. Therefore – it is important that the leader in charge fully consider whether the venue is appropriate to their needs and the course aims. Where there is concern e.g. loose holds or rock, this should be reported/recorded appropriately and a decision made to continue or change venue.

2. Other User Groups

Any venue will only support a safe maximum number of students. Where the sheer numbers using a site creates a hazard, the instructor should abandon the site. Special consideration may suggest limiting access to climbing area. This can only be achieved through consultation with respective management team.

Equipment Used By Students

- Climbing harness (**Not needed when bouldering**)
 - Must both incorporate leg-loops and waist belt or be a full body harness.
 - Correctly sized and properly fitted. Care must be taken to ensure that the belt is fitted above ill-defined waistlines, particularly where several layers of clothing are worn.
 - When working with people who are deemed to be obese a full body harness or a sit and chest harness combination is required.
 - When working with minors and novices, any participant who removes the harness must have it re-checked by the activity upon refitting.
- Climbing helmet - properly fitted. (**Not needed on indoor walls**)

Note:

On arrival at the crag/on entering the quarry, each student and member of staff must put a climbing helmet on. The helmet must be worn throughout the activity period and only removed on leaving the crag/quarry.

Equipment Used By Instructors

- Climbing harness - It is recommended that a full harness incorporating leg loops and waist belt be worn.
- Climbing helmet - The instructor should wear a climbing helmet while operating at the base of the crag and when actively involved in climbing/scrambling and abseiling.

Safety Equipment Carried By The Instructor

- The following should be considered as the minimum requirement:
 - First aid.

When climbing in more remote area

- Insulating clothing/sleeping bag.
- Shelter tent.
- Mobile phone
- Where a mountain crag is being used the additional safety equipment should be considered depending on the weather and the remoteness of the crag including additional insulating clothing, knife, warm drink and additional food.

1. *Briefing*

- Hazards of the venue, where to sit and where to avoid.
- No climbing unless roped. (Except whilst bouldering)
- No stone throwing.
- Define parameters within which to stay when not actively climbing/abseiling.

- Need to keep climbing helmets on and not to undo harnesses after being checked.
- Means of attaching the rope to the harness using a screw-gate karabiner or tying in.
- Commencing the climb only when directed by the instructor.
- The line of the route.

Note:

- I. When attachment of the rope to the harness is by a krab, it must be a screw-gate krab.
- II. When a harness is used without a permanently affixed screw-gate krab, the instructor must emphasise the potential for inadvertently clipping the attachment krab to a gear loop.
- III. The instructor must ensure a system where failure to lock a screw-gate krab is avoided.

2. *Securing participants when on the cliff top following a climb*

On completion of a climb, the continued safety of the student must be assured by either:

- Abseil/lower from the route.
- Suitable and if necessary supervised walking descent.
- Securing to the anchor system prior to descent.

All minors should be supervised during descent

Note:

- I. When transferring a student from a climb to an abseil while remaining on the cliff edge, the student must remain attached to the belay system throughout.
- II. The descent by students who are minors from the cliff top must be supervised carefully. This is likely to mean accompanying the group members until safely away from the cliff edge before directing them onto a descent path, from which it would be difficult to err.
- III. Children in younger year groups (Year 8 to Year 10) should in no circumstance be expected to negotiate their own way to a safe descent path off the cliff top where proximity to the cliff edge and a simple trip or error on their part could result in tragedy.
- IV. With older age groups, clear instructions directing the student to the descent path may be appropriate, but the instructor should continue to observe the student until he/she is sure that the student will not err towards the cliff edge and has safely located the descent path.

3. *Managing The Group On The Cliff Top Prior To Abseiling*

- Where the working area at the top of the abseil site is small, a system of bringing only 1 or 2 students to the cliff top at a time should be used.
- The group members remaining at the bottom of the cliff should be a safe distance from its base to avoid injury from falling rocks or equipment.

General

The Belay System

The belay system adopted should reflect the principles of current best practice. Inherently it should as a minimum incorporate at least 2 points of attachment and ensure that the belayer's stance allows them freedom of movement and good visibility of the line of the route.

Note:

Within the climbing safety chain, security may be dependent upon a single piece of equipment. It is therefore important to avoid damage to any piece of equipment where catastrophic failure would have serious consequences. To this end karabiners and figure of 8's must not be subjected to dropping/impact.

Where minors, beginners and novice students are involved in belaying each other by use of a 'gri-gri' especially at the wall, strict supervision must be afforded by the instructor.

- One instructor must not attempt to supervise more than 2 ropes.
- Students and unqualified staff must NOT be permitted to lower the climber. This is the sole responsibility of the instructor and the risk of accident when doing so should not be underestimated. Gri-gris must be fully weight loaded before lowering can commence.

Route Choice and Selection

It is important to emphasise that the crag, route and grade choice for the students is a critical component in the planning process – as poor choice of route can result in a situation whereby the students can be over challenged and learning and indeed safety may be compromised.