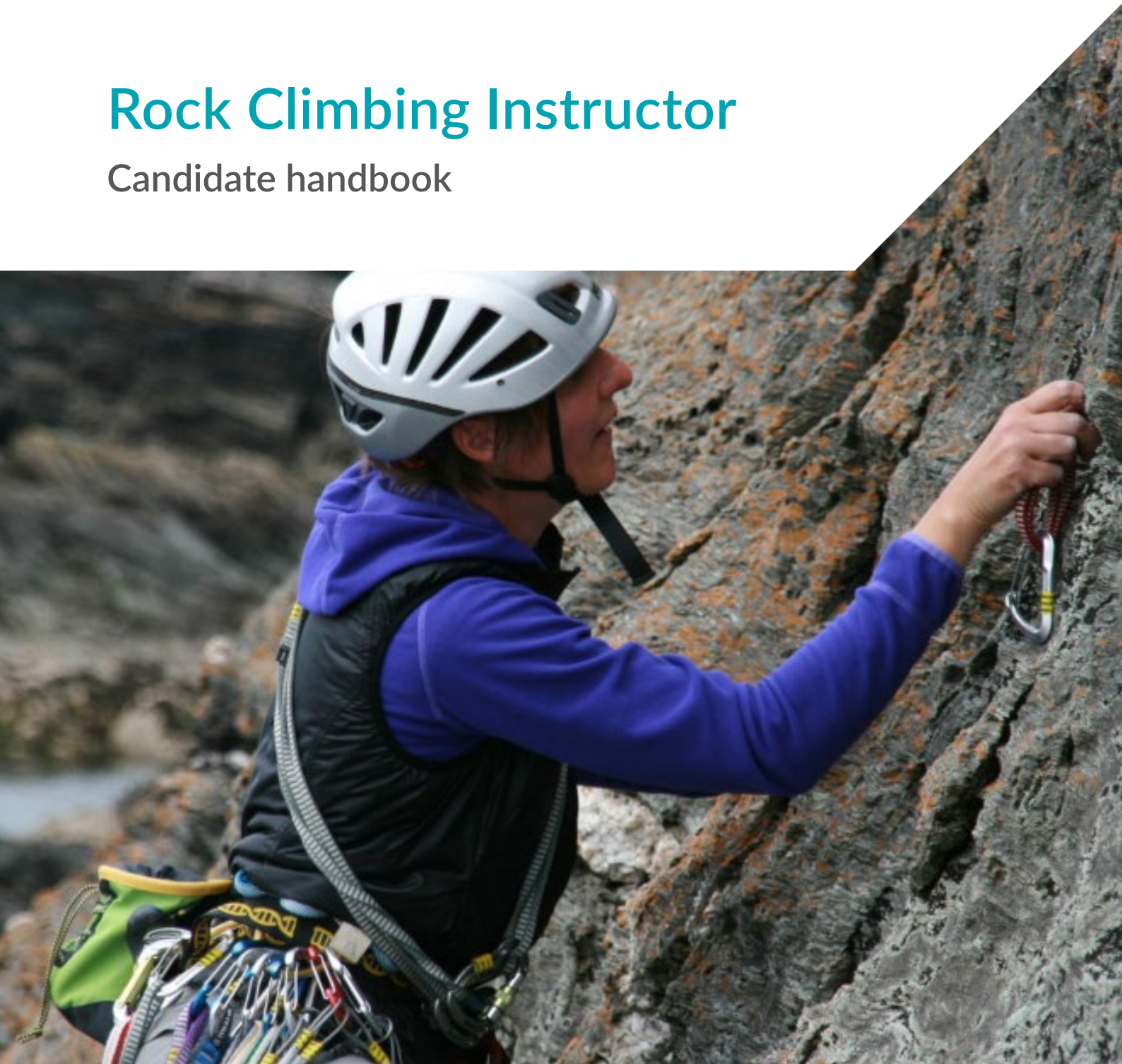




**Mountain  
Training**

# Rock Climbing Instructor

Candidate handbook





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# Preface

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This handbook has been designed to support candidates through Mountain Training's Rock Climbing Instructor qualification. It contains useful information about the various stages in the qualification as well as the syllabus and guidance notes.

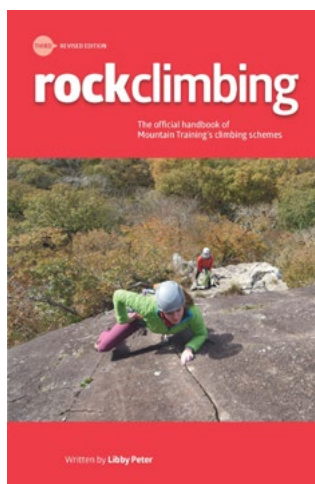
## Participation statement

Mountain Training recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions. Mountain Training has developed a range of training and assessment qualifications and associated supporting literature to help instructors manage these risks and to enable new participants to have positive experiences while learning about their responsibilities.

## Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to the preparation of the contents of this handbook, by attending Mountain Training working party meetings and by making detailed and constructive comments on the draft. Grateful thanks are due to volunteers and staff from the Climbing Awards Review Working Group, national Mountain Training organisation council members, course providers, staff of the mountaineering councils, members of the Association of Mountaineering Instructors, Mountain Training Association, staff from the National Mountain Centres and members of The Association of British Climbing Walls for their help and support.

Thanks also to the following individuals whose photographs bring the handbook to life: Alan Halewood, Alex Messenger, Charlie Low, Guy Jarvis, John Cousins, Karl Midlane, Mike Hutton, NICAS and Outdoor Adventure North West.



## Rock Climbing

Throughout this handbook there are references to Rock Climbing by Libby Peter which we publish to support developing rock climbers and instructors. It is packed with essential information and techniques and we have listed the relevant chapter(s) for each syllabus area.



# 1. Qualification pathway

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## 1.1 Introduction

The Rock Climbing Instructor qualification enables experienced rock climbers to instruct climbing on single pitch crags and artificial climbing walls and towers.

## 1.2 Scope of the qualification

A qualified instructor can:

- Teach climbing skills.
- Take people climbing, bouldering and abseiling
- Manage groups safely in these activities.

### 1.2.1 Terrain

A qualified Rock Climbing Instructor can operate on:

- Single pitch\* trad and sport crags.
- Indoor and outdoor bouldering venues.
- Climbing walls & towers.

\*See Appendix 1 for a definition of a single pitch crag.

### 1.2.2 Exclusions

The qualification does not cover:

- General mountaineering.
- Multi-pitch rock climbing.
- Teaching lead climbing skills.
- Access to tidal sea cliffs or any other location where retreat is not easily possible.



## 1.3 Stages in the qualification

### 1.3.1 Registration prerequisites

- You must be 18.
- You must be an experienced indoor and outdoor rock climber.
- You must have a genuine interest in climbing and the supervision of groups.
- You must be a member of a mountaineering council (British Mountaineering Council, Mountaineering Ireland, Mountaineering Scotland)

### 1.3.2 Training prerequisites

- You must be registered on the qualification.
- You must have an up to date logbook (preferably DLOG) with evidence of the following:
  - 15 led routes which must be graded rock climbs with traditional protection.
  - 15 led routes at a climbing wall.
  - 5 led routes which must be outdoor bolt protected sport climbs.

### 1.3.3 Consolidation period

Climb at a wide range of venues and on a variety of rock types, both as an individual and when assisting with the supervision of others.

All but the most experienced candidates should allow a minimum of six months between training and assessment.

There is currently no time limit on the validity of a training course and some candidates may take several years to complete the qualification.



Our association can help you as you work towards one of our qualifications. We are building a community of confident and expert leaders, instructors and coaches, that we hope you will join.



### 1.3.4 Assessment prerequisites

- You must have attended a Rock Climbing Instructor (or Single Pitch Award) training course or been granted exemption from training.
- You must be familiar with the syllabus.
- You must be competent leading Severe grade climbs on outdoor crags with leader-placed protection.
- You must have led a minimum of 40 graded rock climbs with traditional protection at a variety of venues (of which at least 20 MUST be at Severe grade or above).
- You must be proficient in the use of climbing walls and have a minimum of 30 climbing wall leads graded at F4 or above.
- You must be proficient in outdoor bolt protected sport climbing and have a minimum of 10 sport climb leads graded at F4 or above.
- You must have assisted in the supervision of 20 instructed sessions. These sessions should be at a variety of different venues with 10 being on indoor climbing walls and the other 10 on outdoor crags. A session is a half day or evening. At least five of these sessions must have personal reflective comments recorded on DLOG.
- You must have physically attended and completed (i.e. not online) a first aid course which involved at least two full days or sixteen hours of instruction and included an element of assessment.

## 2. Course structure

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### 2.1 Training

Training will involve a minimum of 24 hours contact time delivered over a minimum of 3 days, with 8 hours in a climbing wall.

Providers may offer a dedicated minimum 16 hours contact time Rock Climbing Instructor training course for candidates who have attended a Climbing Wall Instructor (or Climbing Wall Award) training or assessment.



## 2.2 Assessment

Assessment will involve a minimum of 16 hours contact time delivered over a minimum of 2 days with at least 4 hours delivered at an indoor climbing wall.

Results: Pass, Defer, Fail, Not yet completed, Withdrew, Did not show.

There is no exemption from any element of the assessment.

Practical reassessments cannot take place within three months of the initial assessment to allow sufficient time for practice and preparation. All deferral reassessments must be completed within five years of the original assessment. Candidates may undertake two short reassessments after a defer result. Subsequently a full assessment must be undertaken.

## 3. Course delivery

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### 3.1 Training

Course director must hold the Mountaineering Instructor Award or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.

Additional staff must be Rock Climbing Instructor (or Single Pitch Award) or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.

Min. course size: 2, max. course size: 8, max. ratio: 1:4

### 3.2 Assessment

Course director must hold the Mountaineering Instructor Award or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.

Additional staff must hold the Mountaineering Instructor Award or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements..

Min. course size: 2, max. course size: 8, max. ratio: 1:4.



## 4. Awarding organisations

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- Mountain Training Board Ireland
- Mountain Training Cymru
- Mountain Training England
- Mountain Training Scotland







# Syllabus and guidance notes

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## Technical competence

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The Rock Climbing Instructor will be able to identify and evaluate commonly used climbing equipment and demonstrate its use to individuals during a climbing session. They will be personally competent in a range of climbing techniques and be able to provide clear demonstration and effective tuition to novice climbers. They will be able to:

### 1. Equipment

- 1.1 Select and fit suitable climbing equipment for personal and group use.
- 1.2 Demonstrate an ability to evaluate the condition of personal climbing equipment and ensure appropriate use, care and maintenance in line with manufacturer's guidance.
- 1.3 Demonstrate an ability to evaluate the condition of climbing wall equipment and ensure appropriate use of:

#### 1.3.0.1 In-situ ropes



- 1.3.0.2 Auto-belays
- 1.3.0.3 Fixed matting
- 1.3.0.4 Holds
- 1.3.0.5 Anchors/lower offs and fixed equipment

## Guidance

A sound knowledge of equipment is important for a Rock Climbing Instructor because it is an integral element of climbing safely. Misuse of climbing equipment can have dangerous consequences. As an instructor you are also likely to offer advice to novices on choice and suitability of equipment which cannot be done well if you do not have appropriate knowledge and understanding.

Equipment manufacture involves thorough testing and the need to comply with agreed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) standards. While familiarising yourself with various pieces of equipment you should learn to recognise these standards and understand why manufacturers give guidance on appropriate use and care.



## Chapter 6 Technical essentials

### Key practice points

- Practise fitting a range of different helmets and harnesses. Research why there may be differences in the overall design or features.
- Take time to familiarise yourself with your own equipment by reading the manufacturer's guidance label each time you buy a new piece of kit.
- Discuss equipment choice with a range of decision makers (e.g. wall managers, qualified instructors, experienced climbers) to help develop your understanding.
- Be aware of particular requirements of the individuals to ensure all can participate e.g. headwear under helmets.



## 2. Anchors

2.1 Select suitable, sound anchors in a variety of situations. Anchors to include:

2.1.1 Spikes and blocks.

2.1.2 Nuts and camming devices.

2.1.3 Threads, chockstones and trees.

2.1.4 Fixed equipment including:

2.1.4.1 A variety of different bolts.

2.1.4.2 Stakes and other anchors placed in the ground

2.1.4.3 Climbing wall anchors

2.2 Set up single and multiple anchors for a belay and attach themselves securely.



## Guidance

Sound anchor choice is a fundamental skill for any Rock Climbing Instructor and it is therefore important that you develop the skills to evaluate them whilst utilising a safe and efficient system.



### Chapter 9 Top-rope climbing and abseiling

## Key practice points

- Develop an understanding of what makes a safe placement when selecting anchors and consider using a scoring system to rate its quality.
- Research how fixed equipment (bolts, lower-offs and climbing wall hand-holds) are placed and develop a method for checking the suitability of these.
- Visit a variety of different rock types to broaden your understanding of different rock features and how this then relates to the placing of anchors.
- Experiment with different anchors in the same location to consider which is the most appropriate option and to improve your efficiency.





### 3. Belaying

- 3.1 Tie into the rope. Attach group members to the rope.
- 3.2 Demonstrate the use of direct and semi-direct belay systems and choose the most appropriate for a given situation.
- 3.3 Set up top / bottom-rope systems and choose the most appropriate for a given situation.
- 3.4 Hold falls and control lowers.
- 3.5 Supervise others belaying.
- 3.6 Attach self and others to the belay system and abseil ropes.

### Guidance

The broad experience requirements for entering the Rock Climbing Instructor qualification assume that candidates are well practised with a variety of different belaying methods and techniques. Belaying is a crucial element of roped climbing and belayer error is a potential cause of serious accidents.

Your personal competence and ability to supervise others in this task is therefore of the utmost importance.



Chapter 7 Indoor climbing

Chapter 9 Top-rope climbing and abseiling

### Key practice points

- Familiarise yourself with a range of different manual and assisted braking belay devices and understand their use and application.
- Develop an effective method for demonstrating how to tie onto the rope and how to belay to a group of novices.
- Practise different belaying methods suitable for use with a group of novices.



## 4. Personal skills

- 4.1 Choose and lead single pitch, Severe grade and F4, rock climbs in a safe, competent and assured manner.
- 4.2 Demonstrate the skills of a competent second.
- 4.3 Interpret guidebooks effectively.
- 4.4 Demonstrate a basic understanding of the safety chain and fall factors.

## Guidance

Your personal skills underpin your actions as a Rock Climbing Instructor. The experience requirements for the qualification are listed as a minimum; therefore any additional experience you gain will only contribute towards your overall development. You also need to understand how the position of the belayer may affect the forces they feel in the event of a fall.



## Chapter 11: Trad climbing



## Key practice points

- Climb at a variety of different venues and on different rock types around the UK and Ireland to help broaden your knowledge.
- Climb with different people to seek out new or alternative climbing styles.



## 5. Abseiling

- 5.1 Abseil without requiring a back-up safety rope.
- 5.2 Demonstrate methods of safeguarding a novice abseiling.
- 5.3 Use common devices for abseiling competently and choose the most appropriate for a given situation.

## Guidance

Abseiling is a fundamental skill of a Rock Climbing Instructor. You may need to personally abseil for a variety of reasons which may include: retrieving equipment, to reach the ground following rigging climbs, assist a client in difficulty or to respond to an incident on the crag.



Abseiling is also commonly considered an activity in its own right which means you need to be able to support and safeguard novice participants. A well set up system ensures participants enjoy the activity and avoids problems occurring.



## Chapter 9 Top-rope climbing and abseiling

### Key practice points

- Practise rigging a personal abseil, ensuring that the anchors are sound and equalised.
- Practise using a prusik back up at ground level to help you understand its limitations and how it performs when loaded.
- Develop your own safety checklist for abseiling.
- Practise rigging abseils for novice groups at various crags to develop your awareness of issues such as the approach to and from the site.







## 6. Background knowledge

- 6.1 Demonstrate an awareness of the history, traditions and ethics of climbing in the UK and Ireland.
- 6.2 Explain the role and philosophy of Mountain Training and its qualifications, the mountaineering councils, climbing clubs and the National Indoor Climbing/Bouldering Award Qualifications.
- 6.3 Describe the grading systems used in the UK and Ireland.

## Guidance

Candidates enrolling onto the Rock Climbing Instructor qualification will be mountaineering council members. This gives access to a wide range of climbing resources which are valuable in starting the process of awareness of history, tradition, ethics and developments.

Guidebooks can also be an important source of information for rock climbers. In addition to route identification details, history and background and important access and environmental notes are contained within most guidebooks.



### Chapter 1 A brief history of UK and Irish climbing

## Key practice points

- Explore the Mountain Training website to gain a greater understanding of its role and relationship with other key organisations such as the mountaineering councils.
- Develop an understanding of the UK and Irish trad grading system, bouldering grades and sport/indoor climbing grade systems.



# Management and decision making

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Rock Climbing Instructors should be able to independently organise, plan, manage and deliver climbing and bouldering sessions to a wide range of participants, often with support from an assistant. They should be able to:

## 7. Planning and structure of sessions

- 7.1 Plan individual sessions and programmes of activities with appropriate aims and objectives.
- 7.2 Build in flexibility when planning activities; respond to changing circumstances.
- 7.3 Demonstrate an awareness of responsibility to any authorising organisation, parents/guardians, individual group members, the group as a whole and other site users.
- 7.4 Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of weather on climbing.
- 7.5 Be aware of Mountain Training's National Guidelines.



## Guidance

Effective Rock Climbing Instructors recognise that prior planning and good structuring of sessions commonly result in participants having a safe and enjoyable time. In many ways, preparation is the hallmark of high quality instruction. You should aim to use effective questioning to gauge the group's ability, aims and requirements for the session.



### Chapter 13 Inspiring others

## Key practice points

- Observe how other instructors plan and structure climbing and bouldering sessions based around their clients' aims and objectives and how this might change with different circumstances such as poor weather, busy crags or challenging group dynamics.
- Make yourself familiar with the legal aspects of taking people climbing, in particular those under the age of 18.
- Read Mountain Training's National Guidelines.





## 8. Organising sessions

- 8.1 In the case of an incident know how to call for relevant assistance.
- 8.2 Choose appropriate venues, activities and routes for group use considering:
  - 8.2.1 Suitability of approach/descent
  - 8.2.2 Terrain at the base of the crag
  - 8.2.3 Objective dangers.

### Guidance

Your choice of venues, activities, problems and routes can make or break your session and the ability to make those decisions is developed through knowledge and experience.

Knowing how, who and when to call for help are crucial decisions for a Rock Climbing Instructor should an incident occur. Many crags are not easily accessible from the road, which may mean an ambulance cannot assist and you may need to engage alternative services.

If assistance is required then you'll need to have sufficient equipment to support the casualty until help arrives.



Chapter 19 Incidents, accidents and getting help

Chapter 20 The law and risk management

### Key practice points

- Research the approach and retreat from a crag in advance to help you manage your clients appropriately and to find out about any objective dangers which may be present at the crag.
- What is the location of the crag? Make a note of the grid-reference or the postcode of a nearby building. The guidebook may well have this information.
- Check the network availability for phone coverage at the crag in advance as part of your overall risk assessment.
- Research, using guidebooks and other resources, what emergency services are



available in the area. It may be that the location of the crag requires a Mountain Rescue/Lowland Rescue team in an emergency rather than an ambulance.



## 9. Management of participants

- 9.1 Select appropriate management techniques to safeguard all participants, irrespective of whether or not they are directly involved with the climbing activity.
- 9.2 Utilise effective communication skills to:
  - 9.2.1 Set and review targets.
  - 9.2.2 Identify and react to the needs of the group in relation to involvement, interest, enjoyment and achievement.
- 9.3 Demonstrate an understanding of warming up and injury avoidance techniques.
- 9.4 Brief individuals and the group appropriately.
- 9.5 Manage time appropriately in relation to the plan, activity and conditions.
- 9.6 Avoid common roped climbing and abseiling problems.
- 9.7 Resolve common problems if they occur.



- 9.8 Communicate with the group and individuals to identify whether anyone has an injury or disability that may require reasonable adjustments to be made to enable them to participate in the session.

## Guidance

The role of a Rock Climbing Instructor is to facilitate a safe and successful climbing experience for everyone in the group. Each group will be different and good people management skills, along with the technical competencies highlighted earlier in the syllabus, underpin the delivery of your whole session.

You should aim to gain as much experience as possible by observing or working alongside other instructors as a way of developing a solid foundation of different people management strategies which can then be used when working independently as an instructor.

If you get to know your group, can communicate with them and anticipate common issues you will be well placed to manage the session. An effective Rock Climbing Instructor will be able to reduce the chances of problems arising through careful decision making. You should be continually monitoring and where appropriate adjusting the session based upon the prevention of problems.

That said, not all issues are foreseeable, as some incidents can occur at any time regardless of any control measures taken. Should a situation occur which requires some form of intervention, you need to be able to react swiftly and chose an appropriate course of action. Your safety and that of the group should be maintained throughout. Aim to find the simplest solution to deal with the issue rather than relying on a particular technique.



See all Notes for instructors boxes

## Key practice points

- Experiment with different ways of getting to know a group.
- Practise delivering briefings and instructions to novice climbers (friends and family can be useful for this) and evaluate what methods work well and understand why.
- Practise setting up climbs or abseils, then consider what issues could occur (for example, stuck/frozen climber, jammed abseil device, climber gone off route) and how



you might readjust the system to avoid that particular problem. Finally, consider what options you may have to deal with the issue should it occur, without putting the group or yourself at risk.



## 10. Decision making

10.1 Carry out dynamic risk assessments throughout each climbing session.

10.2 Assess the abilities and objectives of the group participating in the session.

### Guidance

Learning to make good decisions is a challenging and enjoyable part of being a Rock Climbing Instructor. It takes time, practice and self-reflection and will ultimately lead to more successful sessions for you and your clients so it is worth the effort.



Chapter 13 Inspiring others

Chapter 20 The law & risk management



## Key practice points

- Observe other instructors planning and delivering a session and review the decisions they made along the way. Why did they make those decisions? What would you have done?
- Research relevant health and safety approaches to sensible risk management, controlling risks and risk assessment. This can be used as a base level of knowledge and then applied to the climbing environment.



## 11. Personal safety

11.1. Demonstrate appropriate methods of protecting themselves while operating at height during all activities.

### Guidance

Rock Climbing Instructors will regularly spend time at the top of a crag in order to set up climbing/abseiling systems for their groups. As the nature and conditions of each crag are different, instructors can utilise a range of methods to ensure their safety.

These methods need to be carried out with commonly used climbing equipment, which may involve some level of improvisation, rather than relying on a specific item of specialist





equipment. If single anchors are being used extreme care must be taken.



Chapter 9 Top-rope climbing and abseiling

Chapter 11 Trad climbing

## Key practice points

- Ensure that the anchor being used to safeguard the instructor is reliable.
- Experiment with adjusting different methods of safeguarding yourself that enable you to set up safely without putting yourself in a position where a fall can happen.
- Practise various methods on a range of different crags to develop an understanding of which approach will suit each scenario.



## 12. Knowledge and demonstration of techniques

12.1 Deliver technical instruction to individuals and the group including:

12.1.1 Choice and fitting of suitable harnesses



12.1.2 Attaching the rope to the harness

12.1.3 Effective belaying

12.1.4 Abseiling

12.2 Teach and demonstrate fundamental climbing movement skills.

12.3 Supervise a group of novice climbers in the following activities:

12.3.1 Belaying and tying-in

12.3.2 Climbing

12.3.3 Bouldering

12.3.4 Abseiling

## Guidance

Rock Climbing Instructors need to build up a portfolio of knowledge and demonstration techniques to effectively facilitate a session. Often, instructors will find themselves working with large groups of novices, where a simple skill such as fitting a helmet will need a well thought out demonstration.

The key aspect of demonstrating skills is to ensure that you know your subject well and have practised it a number of times, ideally with feedback and criticism to allow for greater development (be an 'expert model'). See also syllabus section 14 Teaching and learning skills.



Section 4: Movement skills

Section 5: Training and improving technique

## Key practice points

- Revisit 'Key practice points' in syllabus sections 1, 3 and 5 (Equipment, Belaying and Abseiling).
- Film your demonstrations on a mobile device and review them.
- Develop a range of safe bouldering activities for a variety of groups.



## 13. Managing / supervising other staff

- 13.1 Explain the role and scope of an assistant. Describe the opportunities and liabilities presented by using an assistant in a session.
- 13.2 Manage an assistant.

### Guidance

An assistant is any person who supports an instructor in the delivery of their session but who does not direct or make decisions about the management of the session.

Assistants and other unqualified staff can be of enormous benefit to a session provided that they are managed appropriately. They can support the talented, those with individual requirements, their peers, or their own students and children. They can also be powerful role models for the participants. A Mountain Training Indoor Climbing Assistant can help with clearly defined technical roles such as fitting personal climbing equipment, backing up belayers and managing a single bottom-rope climb. However, judgement about what activities are to be undertaken, and how they are to be managed, remains with the instructor. Do not overburden yourself and the assistant.

Assistants and other staff come with a wide range of experience and competencies and you are wholly responsible for assessing these. If in doubt you should not use an



assistant and not be compelled to work with them either. By definition an assistant or an unqualified member of staff cannot work independently and you are responsible for the group and the actions of an assistant at all times. All assistant deployment should be risk assessed before each session begins.

It is essential that assistants are appropriately supervised by you, the instructor, so that there can be constant communication and guidance given.

It is not possible to give specific guidance on instructor/student ratios with assistants as this will vary with the situation. For example, a severely disabled climber may benefit from the support of two or more assistants working very closely with an instructor whilst a talented academy group may benefit from one qualified and experienced assistant working in sight of the instructor in a bouldering wall. The qualified instructor remains ultimately responsible for the group and must always be in a position to intervene if necessary.

## Key practice points

- Practise briefing an assistant about their role and remit.
- Practise maintaining a position of maximum effectiveness, keeping assistants within sight and easy communication at all times.
- Get into the habit of discussing your session with an assistant to give and receive feedback.





# Teaching and learning skills

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Rock Climbing Instructors will frequently need to give tuition and support to a range of climbers in a variety of climbing related techniques. They should be able to:

## 14. Teaching and learning skills

- 14.1 Create and maintain a positive learning environment for all participants.
- 14.2 Communicate effectively and appropriately with a group and individuals, checking for understanding.
- 14.3 Demonstrate an ability to adapt the teaching style to meet group needs.
- 14.4 Help participants develop a positive attitude towards climbing and introduce the idea of lifelong participation.
- 14.5 Identify and use appropriate tasks to develop effective and safe climbers.
- 14.6 Demonstrate an understanding of the reasons for evaluating a session and success of the outcome.



## Guidance

Climbing Instructors need to quickly create an environment of trust and confidence within their group so that participants feel relaxed and comfortable to tackle new and challenging activities. Age, ability, individual requirements, confidence and energy levels amongst the group will require different approaches to achieve this.

Good communication skills are key. The ability to create rapport, communicate at an appropriate level, use positive language, provide a variety of demonstration techniques, check for understanding through skilled questioning and give useful feedback and encouragement to individuals are the foundations of effective teaching.

In addition to these communication skills effective teaching requires instructors to be able to observe and assess participants' abilities and confidence levels. They then need to calibrate the appropriate level of challenge and structure a task to stimulate and stretch the climber but not to intimidate or defeat them. Instructors also need to be adaptive in their approach. If a particular technique or activity is not working well then they should adapt their approach to better suit the needs of the group.

Remember that assistants can offer a valuable resource to support you with your teaching. Assistants are often connected with the group and will know much about their individual needs and potentially how best to deliver information to them.

All instructional sessions are different due to the nature of the group and the conditions of the day. Instructors should reflect upon the outcome of each session and consider changes of style or content that may improve the outcomes of the next one.



### Chapter 13 Inspiring others

## Key practice points

- Learn some effective games/activities to engage learners at the beginning of a session and to enable you to observe group dynamics.
- Make sure everyone can see and hear you clearly.
- Experiment with different ways of checking for understanding.
- Practise different delivery styles and think about when/with whom you might use them.



# The climbing environment



Rock Climbing Instructors should be informed and experienced in a variety of climbing environments, such as the indoor climbing wall environment, including both small and large scale (commercial) venues; outdoor climbing venues, including both 'trad' and 'sport' climbing venues. They should have a broad knowledge of the issues and challenges affecting access and use of a variety of climbing areas. They should be able to:

## 15. Access

- 15.1 Source current access information and act accordingly.
- 15.2 Show an awareness of important climbing wall rules and regulations, and demonstrate an ability to obtain and comply with this information.

## Guidance

As a Rock Climbing Instructor you have a responsibility to respect landowners and facility managers with regards to access. As a minimum, any supervised group should conform to codes of good practice and comply with relevant access legislation, which may differ between the nations of the UK and Ireland along with local restrictions or guidelines.



## Chapter 1: The climbing environment

### Key practice points

- Source access information for a crag you've never visited before – be creative with your sources and check for the accuracy of the information.
- Research initiatives like 'Leave No Trace' and the work of the mountaineering councils' access teams.
- Research the differences in access legislation between England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.



### 16. Conservation

- 16.1 Have a basic working knowledge of the rock climbing environment including geology and natural history.
- 16.2 Operate in such a way as to minimise impact on the environment.
- 16.3 Pass on basic environmental knowledge in an appropriate and engaging way to educate and enthuse.





16.4 Manage groups so that they have minimal impact and leave the crags in an improved condition where possible.

## Guidance

General knowledge about the environment the group is visiting is always valuable. The history of the area combined with some basic knowledge of the land use, plants and animal life can illuminate the climbing experience for the participants and initiate a lifelong interest. As an instructor you are best placed to deliver this information to novices who may be unaware of the fragile ecosystem which supports climbing as an activity..



### Chapter 1: The climbing environment

## Key practice points

- Research the mountaineering councils' websites and publications for guidance on environmental, access and conservation information.
- Most guidebooks to crags will contain some information which should be checked before going climbing, even if it's a familiar site. This information should then be researched further online for any updates.
- Create some basic resources for your participants as a useful way for them to engage more with the environment.





## 17. Etiquette and ethics

- 17.1 Describe their responsibilities to the general public, other facility users, environmental agencies, local residents, landowners and the wider climbing community.
- 17.2 Describe local rock climbing ethics related to single pitch crags.
- 17.3 Operate a flexible programme of activities so as to accommodate other site or facility users.
- 17.4 Describe the hazards presented to other site users by the actions of a group and act to minimise these.
- 17.5 Describe the site-specific requirements and agreements relating to different crags, climbing walls and artificial structures.

### Guidance

Good behaviour of climbers at crags and climbing walls can help maintain access and reduce friction between facility and land owners, which ultimately supports access. The same applies to instructors and their groups and their relationship with fellow climbers.

Instructors need to set a good example while supervising or climbing at a crag or wall

Engaging with other facility users to find ways of minimising disruption between each other is a really good start, for example vacating routes as soon as you are finished instead of leaving ropes unattended. Make your group aware of other users too as at times you may not be directly supervising while you are engaged with other tasks such as setting up ropes on the top of a crag.



### Chapter 1: The climbing environment

### Key practice point

- Learn to avoid taking over whole sections of a crag/wall – it's usually better to split into smaller groups and spread out.



# Appendix 1 - Definitions

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## Single pitch

For the purposes of this qualification, a single pitch route is one which:

- Is climbed without intermediate stances.
- Is described as a single pitch in the guidebook.
- Allows climbers to be lowered to the ground at all times.
- Is non-tidal and has little objective danger.
- Presents no difficulties on approach or retreat, such as route finding, scrambling or navigating.

## Traditional protection

Traditional protection includes equipment such as cams, hexes and nuts which are placed in cracks and weaknesses in the rock by a lead climber as they climb. The protection is then clipped to the rope using a quickdraw.





## Appendix 2 - Additional information

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### Course delivery

Mountain Training courses are delivered by approved providers throughout the UK and Ireland. Providers of Rock Climbing Instructor courses will appoint a course director for each course.

Courses can be found by searching on the Candidate Management System (CMS) <https://mt.tahdah.me> or on our website <http://www.mountain-training.org/find/find-a-course>

Your training and assessment result will be recorded on the Candidate Management System (CMS).

### Exemption from training

Experienced climbers who already have substantial personal climbing experience and experience of supervising groups on climbing walls may apply for exemption from training. To qualify for exemption candidates must, at the very least, meet the minimum experience requirements for attendance at an assessment course and demonstrate that they have received relevant training in the management of climbing groups and assistants.

Further details of the exemption process can be found on the Mountain Training website.

There is no exemption from assessment.

### Further experience

Once you have passed the Rock Climbing Instructor assessment you are responsible for remaining current and up to date with good practice for as long as you are using your qualification. Mountain Training would like to encourage you to regularly dedicate some time to your development both as a climber and as a Rock Climbing Instructor.

The Mountain Training Association (MTA) is a membership association designed to support both trainee and qualified candidates by providing access to developmental workshops, conferences and peer learning events among other member benefits.

The responsibility for ensuring that leaders receive refresher training must lie with the provider of the service, or the individual in the case of self-employed leaders. Rock Climbing Instructors who wish to operate beyond the scope of their qualification(s)



by virtue of their additional experience and/or training, for example a Rock Climbing Instructor taking a group climbing at a sport climbing quarry, may be enabled to do so either through in-house training and/or within the context of a site specific qualification.

Mountain Training publishes a digital document called the National Guidelines which provides advice on good practice for anyone with a responsibility for climbing, walking and mountaineering related activities, and encompassing the principles of safety management.

## Personal reflective comments

Mountain Training presently requires assessment candidates to have reflective comments recorded in DLOG for the Rock Climbing Instructor, Climbing Wall Instructor and Climbing Wall Development Instructor. Reflecting on experience is an important part of an instructor's development. Although feedback from others can be very useful it is important we can also independently consider our experiences in relation to the desired outcome.

The key aim of undertaking these reflective comments is to identify and reflect on areas of practice from the relevant Mountain Training qualification syllabus, and supporting guidance notes, where there is a desire or perceived need to reflect on one's personal practice to develop fluency. Being able to effectively analyse experience can be challenging but a few critically analysed sessions are of great value in identifying potential improvements for the future. When making these comments candidates should ask themselves the following questions and outline their responses:

- What are the desired aims and objectives of the session? What were the actual outcomes of the session?
- What was successful and less successful (reference the relevant Mountain Training syllabus) in your delivery of the session?
- What you would change to improve the outcome?

Your responses can then be added into DLOG in the comments section of the relevant DLOG entry.



# Mountain Training Association

Our association is a membership organisation that can help you as you work towards one of our qualifications.

As a membership association we are building a community of confident and expert leaders, instructors and coaches, that we hope you will join.

## We can help you with:

- Big savings on clothing and equipment
- A wide range of accredited development workshops, events and opportunities for continuing personal/professional development
- Specialist mentoring for your qualification
- Regional networks and opportunities to build connections with others in the sector
- The Professional Mountaineer magazine offering advice, tips and guidance from experts and peers within the profession
- Specially negotiated rates for liability insurance for qualified members

Anyone can join from the moment they register for a Mountain Training qualification, and can join anytime when working towards a qualification or when qualified.

Join via your account on the Mountain Training Candidate Management System (Tahdah – CMS).

“The workshops I’ve done have been brilliant and have definitely made me a better leader” Alex, Association member.

“The Association offers an excellent range of CPD, which has given me a broader understanding of the role, skills and expertise required to be a great leader. Definitely recommend.” Charlie, Association member.