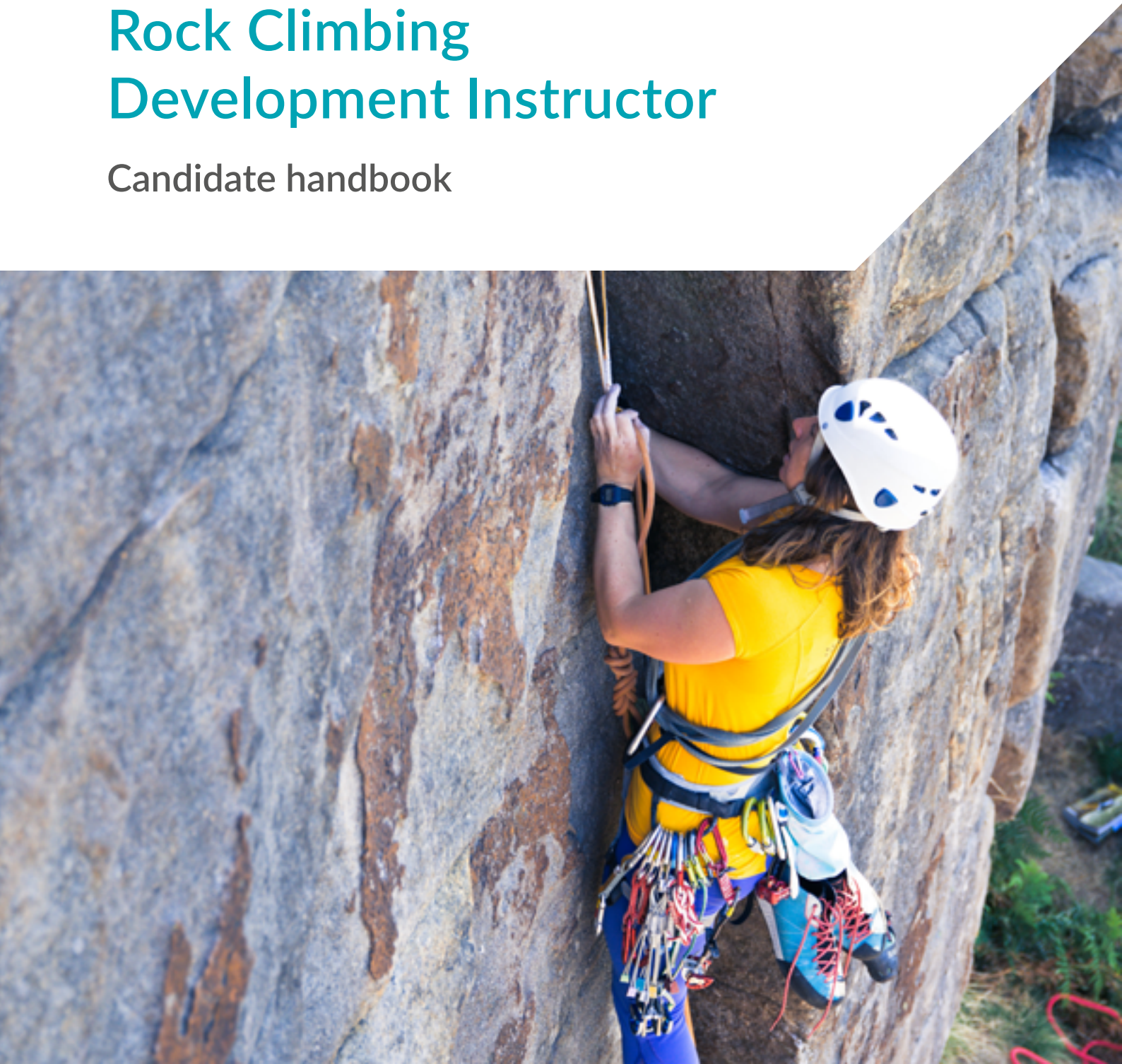




Rock Climbing Development Instructor

Candidate handbook





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Preface

This handbook has been designed to support candidates through Mountain Training's Rock Climbing Development 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 walking, climbing, and mountaineering are activities that have associated risks. Mountain Training provides training and assessment courses and guidance to help instructors develop the skills to manage the risks associated with the environment in which they operate and to enable new participants to have positive experiences.

All instructors owe a heightened duty of care to the people they instruct, their colleagues, and the wider public who may be impacted by the instructor's actions.

Mountain Training qualified instructors will act in the best interests of their group, individual group members and others, and they will always act within their competence to prevent harm to them.

Acknowledgements

Mountain Training would like to thank all the staff members and volunteers involved in the Climbing Awards Review 2014-2016.

Thanks also to the following individuals whose photographs bring the handbook to life: Bryn Williams, Huw Jordan Tatlock, Jez Brown and Nicola Jasieniecka-Evans.



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

1.1 Introduction

The Rock Climbing Development Instructor qualification enables experienced instructors to develop a participant's rock climbing proficiency on single pitch crags in the UK and Ireland. This development may extend to lead climbing.

1.2 Scope of the qualification

A qualified Rock Climbing Development Instructor can:

- Develop individuals to lead rock climbs in a single pitch environment using leader placed (traditional climbing) and equipped (sport climbing) protection.

1.2.1 Terrain

A qualified Rock Climbing Development Instructor can operate on:

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

Registration for the Rock Climbing Development Instructor scheme is an application process and you need to meet the following prerequisites:

- You must be a qualified Rock Climbing Instructor.
- You must have delivered a minimum of 20 days as a Rock Climbing Instructor at a variety of crags and with a variety of climbers, recorded in DLOG.
- You must have led a minimum of 60 named single pitch routes using leader placed protection in three different climbing areas at VS 4c or above and logged them in DLOG. You may include full multi-pitch routes using leader placed protection (up to 50% of the requirement).
- You must have led a minimum of 60 sport climbs in three different climbing areas at 6a or above and logged them in DLOG.

Up to 50% of this experience can be from outside the UK and Ireland.

Once your experience is recorded in DLOG you are required to;

- Register for the Rock Climbing Development Instructor qualification and pay the non-refundable fee.
- Notify Mountain Training (via the 'Send To Mountain Training' button on the 'Share' tab in DLOG) that your DLOG is ready to be reviewed.

A technical officer will then review your experience in DLOG and if it meets the minimum requirements, you will be notified by email that your registration has been approved.

Applications with less than the minimum experience cannot be approved.

If your application is not successful, you will receive feedback on how best to fulfil the experience requirements and your registration application will be held open until your successful registration.



1.3.2 Training prerequisites

- Your registration must have been approved.

You will not be able to book onto a training course until your registration has been approved by Mountain Training.

1.3.3 Consolidation period

During the period between training and assessment you are expected to reflect upon and evaluate your skills and techniques in preparation for assessment. You should seek a wide variety of quality experiences to help you achieve this.

Undertaking or observing only similar sessions to those experienced before training is unlikely to be the best way to consolidate the new skills and techniques learnt.

The Mountain Training Association provides workshops to support the candidate journey for trainees and qualified instructors.

Mountain Training has provided a self-assessment skills checklist for this qualification to assist you in completing any action plan discussed with the training course director.

See below for the minimum requirements for assessment. It is expected that the consolidation period will take in excess of 12 months.



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

Post training and before presenting yourself for assessment:

- You must have logged a minimum of 10 rock climbing teaching days with students at a variety of outdoor venues.
- You must have led a minimum of 30 single pitch routes using leader placed protection in three different climbing areas at VS 4c or above and recorded them in DLOG. You may include full multi-pitch routes using leader placed protection (up to 50% of the requirement).



- You must have led a minimum of 30 sport climbs in three different climbing areas at 6a or above and recorded them in DLOG.

Up to 50% of this experience can be outside the UK and Ireland.

- 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

2.1 Training

Training will involve a minimum of 32 hours contact time delivered over a minimum of 4 days.

Results: Completed, Not yet completed, Withdrew, Did not show, Exemption.

2.2 Assessment

Assessment will involve a minimum of 24 hours contact time delivered over a minimum of 3 days.

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

3.1 Training

Course directors must hold Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements. Additional staff must hold Rock Climbing Development Instructor or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.

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

3.2 Assessment

Course directors must hold the Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements. Additional staff must hold the Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.

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

4. Awarding organisations

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





Syllabus and guidance notes



Technical competence

Rock Climbing Development Instructors will have a sound knowledge of lead climbing on both equipped and leader placed protection. They will be able to identify and evaluate commonly used climbing equipment and demonstrate and teach its use to individuals during a lead climbing session. Candidates will be personally competent in a range of both indoor and outdoor climbing techniques and be able to provide clear demonstration and effective tuition when teaching novice climbers to lead, on both equipped and leader placed protection. They will be able to:

1. Equipment

- 1.1 Demonstrate appropriate use, care and maintenance of a wide range of commonly used trad and sport climbing equipment.

Guidance

As a Rock Climbing Development Instructor you may be asked to advise novice lead



climbers, experienced climbers and other instructors. Your significant experience will support you in choosing appropriate equipment both for personal lead climbing and teaching leading to others. You should have a comprehensive understanding of, and be able to effectively use, trad and sport climbing equipment in differing environments. The nature of lead climbing presents the possibility of falling with the attendant risk of side impact and head injury. You should be fully conversant with the advantages and disadvantages of wearing a helmet while lead climbing whether indoors or outdoors.



Chapter 6 Technical essentials

Key practice points

- Query experienced instructors on their choice of trad and sport climbing equipment and how they might choose one item over another to suit different activities and contexts. Everyone will have a differing and valuable opinion.
- Consider the manufacturer's approved use of key items and how equipment might be misused in trad and sport climbing environments. Use this to inform your own choices.
- Chat to others about your approach to care and maintenance of equipment and how it aligns to the manufacturers recommendations.





2. Anchors

- 2.1 Demonstrate a variety of anchor placements appropriate to the situation.
- 2.2 Demonstrate appropriate use of commonly used in-situ climbing equipment.

Guidance

A Rock Climbing Development Instructor will be able to quickly identify anchors and gear placements. Efficiently placing runners and selecting anchors are fundamental skills for any Rock Climbing Development Instructor. You should be able to quickly evaluate in-situ placements and make a judgment regarding their reliability.

In all cases you should be able to utilise these gear placements/in-situ anchors in a safe and efficient belay system using a variety of commonly used techniques appropriate to their intended use.



Chapter 6 Technical essentials

Chapter 9 Top-rope climbing and abseiling

Key practice points

- Using a variety of passive and active equipment, refine your anchor selection skills by aiming for first time placements in a range of rock types.
- Consider how you might vary your choice, fit and location of anchors depending on the needs of the participant.
- Develop a solid approach to anchor selection recognising the blueprint approach it will set to those you instruct.



3. Belaying

- 3.1 Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of different belay systems and choose one appropriate to the situation. This will include systems appropriate to novice and developing rock climbers in ascent and descent.
- 3.2 Demonstrate the use of commonly used belay devices appropriate to the situation.
- 3.3 Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of good practice when holding leader falls.

Guidance

Your familiarity with belaying equipment is very important and will help to shape the way you introduce belaying techniques to aspiring lead climbers. You should have a comprehensive understanding of the different methods used to belay sport and trad lead climbers and their applicability to different situations and activities. You should be able to demonstrate each one effectively.

As a Rock Climbing Development Instructor you will be acutely aware of the risks posed by lead climbing and be able to manage them. Effective belaying will be a very important part of this management.



You should be accomplished at dynamic belaying; paying out and taking in rope in anticipation of the climber's movements. You should also be able to hold a fall in a way that prevents the climber slamming against the rock/climbing wall and be able to adapt these techniques to compensate for leaders and belayers of differing weights. You should also be aware of when and where it is appropriate or not to use dynamic belaying. Belayer position and equipment choice can compromise the safety chain when a climber is leading and falling. You must be able to recognise and make others aware of the hazards and risks posed, and how to avoid them.



Chapter 11 Trad climbing

Key practice points

- Practise lead belaying with a range of different devices, including assisted braking devices and consider how you would teach correct use to novices.



4. Personal skills

- 4.1 Choose and lead single pitch VS 4c rock climbs in a safe, competent and assured manner whilst demonstrating good technique.



- 4.2 Choose and lead single pitch, F6a sport climbs in a safe, competent and assured manner whilst demonstrating good technique.
- 4.3 Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of good practice when taking a leader fall.
- 4.4 Demonstrate an understanding of the safety chain and fall factors in relation to lead climbing.
- 4.5 Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of different sources of information to select appropriate venues and rock climbs.

Guidance

Rock Climbing Development Instructors will be able to climb efficiently and safely on a variety of rock types demanding a range of climbing techniques. It is important to recognise that as a Rock Climbing Development Instructor you will be a role model to others. You must therefore be well within your capabilities when supporting and teaching others in order to manage risk, avoid issues and be able to give clear guidance throughout. A systematic approach to rope work will avoid error. The mandatory experience requirements to attend training and assessment respectively should be considered minimums. Experienced Rock Climbing Development Instructors will commonly have significantly more.



Chapter 9 Top-rope climbing and abseiling

Chapter 11 Trad climbing

Key practice points

- Practise operating in a tidy, efficient and organised manner.
- Critique your own skills – are you providing a model performance?
- Always try to climb in an assured manner to maintain safety and set a good example to others.



5. Background knowledge

- 5.1 Demonstrate an awareness of a wide range of rock climbing disciplines and grading.
- 5.2 Demonstrate an awareness of the history and development of climbing.
- 5.3 Be familiar with the role and philosophy of Mountain Training and its schemes, the mountaineering councils, climbing clubs and NICAS.
- 5.4 Have an understanding of Mountain Training's climbing pathway.

Mountain Training

The network of awarding organisations who administer skills courses and leadership qualifications. Approved providers deliver the courses.

Mountaineering councils

The councils protect the interests of walkers, climbers and mountaineers and the cliffs, hills and mountains they enjoy.



Mountain Training Association

Mountain Training's membership association providing support and development opportunities for trainee and qualified candidates.



Management and decision-making



Rock Climbing Development Instructors should be able to independently organise, plan, manage and deliver safe and progressive learning-to-lead climbing sessions to individuals with a range of climbing abilities. They should be able to:

6. Instructor responsibilities

- 6.1 Explain their general responsibilities to the climber(s) and, where appropriate, to parents/guardians, the organising authority, committee or manager of the activity, outdoor/facility users, environmental agencies, local residents, landowners and the general public.
- 6.2 Explain their specific responsibilities to choose appropriate aims and objectives, to complete detailed preparations and ensure that the climbers are adequately equipped and briefed for the activity.
- 6.3 Demonstrate an understanding of the current legislation and legal responsibilities that relate to the duty of care to individuals and climbers under their charge, including safeguarding issues specific to supervising young people and vulnerable adults.
- 6.4 Demonstrate an awareness of the variety of barriers to participation, including



mental and physical disability, ethnicity, fitness/health and be aware of the impact of various medical conditions.

- 6.5 Describe how to access national guidance on instructor responsibilities and good practice.

Guidance

As a Rock Climbing Development Instructor, your responsibilities are increased from those of a Rock Climbing Instructor due to the nature of the activities you will likely be instructing.

Two-way communication between you and the climber(s) is crucial, not only to facilitate their progression but also from a safeguarding and duty of care perspective. Conversations with parents/guardians of young people about progressing to lead climbing may require different language or a different approach depending on whether they are climbers themselves; their understanding of the potential risks will vary so be prepared to explain them as clearly as possible. Leader-placed protection, bolts and loose rock require particular attention when you're communicating the risks involved in trad and sport climbing.

There is a lot of jargon in climbing, which it's easy to forget about the longer you've been using it, so be mindful of this in your conversations with parents/guardians and new climbers.



Chapter 11 Trad climbing

Key practice points

- Explore what different organisations or employers expect from you as an instructor with regards to your responsibilities.
- Look at the AALA scope and regulations and work out how, when or if they might apply to you. An introduction to the regulations can be found [here](#).
- Become familiar with climbing walls' age policies with regard to lead climbing and parental consent.
- Familiarise yourself with opportunities for developing climbers to practise lead climbing with others, such as climbing clubs and climbing festivals.



7. Leadership and decision-making

7.1 The Leader demonstrates adaptable leadership behaviours and decision-making

- 7.1.1 Monitor the climbers, environmental conditions (including when operating on outdoor artificial structures) and activity, and can adapt their behaviours and decisions to meet ongoing safety, climber and task requirements.
- 7.1.2 Be consistent and confident in their decision making to achieve positive outcomes and communicate these clearly to the climber(s).

7.2 Vision – The leader is a positive role model and aims to inspire others.

- 7.2.1 Articulate clear and agreed values for their climber(s); lead by example; and behave how they want the climber(s) to behave.

7.3 Support – The leader creates a positive and supportive environment for the climber(s).

- 7.3.1 Recognise, respect and adapt to individual needs, differences, strengths and abilities.
- 7.3.2 Encourage independent learning; establish an environment where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities and provide clear and positive feedback to



support this.

7.4 Challenge – The leader provides relevant and appropriately challenging experiences.

7.4.1 Agree climber goals and calibrate the level of challenge to individual abilities and motivations.

7.4.2 Encourage and support the climber(s) to be part of the decision-making process and encourage them to overcome their own challenges.

7.5 The leader understands the Mountain Training ethos of leadership and has developed their own. They should be able to:

7.5.1 Articulate their own leadership ethos and beliefs along with those of Mountain Training.

7.5.2 Acknowledge and describe a range of leadership approaches, models and associated ethos.

7.6 The instructor understands the value of processing and learning from experience. They should be able to:

7.6.1 Facilitate a personal post-activity review to make sense of, and develop, themes/events occurring during the activity and identify the lessons learned and how to incorporate them into their own practice.

Guidance

Judgement and decision making within a risk assessment framework is central to this qualification. Rock Climbing Development Instructors will have a range of techniques through which climbers will learn the skills of leading; it will be up to you when, and if, they are ready to lead for real. You will use your experience to make sound, educated and informed decisions about what is right for the people you are teaching. It is important that you are clear about your duty of care when teaching lead climbing, especially with regard to minors. This level of judgement will only come through spending time in environments where new leaders are being taught and are experiencing their first leads.



Chapter 11 Trad climbing

Chapter 13 Inspiring others



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?
- Get into the habit of using well thought-out, timed session plans and reviewing them after the session.
- Consider how you might discuss motivation and target setting with your climbers to make sure you are delivering appropriate sessions. The participants should be encouraged to form realistic aspirations
- Explain your thinking and encourage and support climbers to be part of the decision-making process.



8. Knowledge and demonstration of techniques

- 8.1 Select a suitable venue and activities appropriate to the needs of the participants.
- 8.2 Effectively teach a broad range of skills and techniques appropriate to the developing novice and more experienced rock climber. This includes:
 - 8.2.1 Teach appropriate climbing movement to assist effective and safe lead climbing.



8.2.2 Teach lead rock climbing in a progressive and safe manner.

Guidance

It is very likely that climbers will not progress to lead climbing in one session. As a result it is very important that Rock Climbing Development Instructors can plan and deliver a series of progressive sessions that develop the skills required for lead climbing, appropriate to the people they are instructing. You should be able to differentiate your approach to aspiring sport and trad lead climbers. Sessions should be fun and engaging with a clearly defined outcome. As people develop at different rates you will need to adapt to their needs and be able to critically analyse their performance as they progress, modifying the overall plan accordingly.

Through your own experience and time spent observing others, you will be familiar with a range of exercises for teaching leading, involving both climbing and ground based activities, which you can incorporate into your session plans. These exercises should develop the competencies referred to in section 10. The wider your knowledge and range of exercises, the more likely you are to be successful in achieving your aims of teaching climbers safe and sound leading skills.

At the lead climbing stage your 'typical' novice leader should have at least basic runner and rope work skills, a desire to lead and be fully aware of the inherent risks of lead climbing. Routes should be identified and chosen for novice lead climbers that, ideally, are well protected and easier than those they can comfortably second. By dropping a climbing grade, novice lead climbers can move intuitively on the rock and thus be able to devote more of their attention to the techniques of lead climbing, such as placing and evaluating protection.

Whilst deficiencies in some or all of the above can be managed by you as the instructor, the belayer must be able to belay (including holding leader falls). It is also important to consider whether the route offers sufficient learning opportunities given the time available and desired outcome. A straight crack which demands similar equipment placement throughout may not be enough for some learners.



Chapter 11 Trad climbing



Key practice points

- Consider four different potential participants from a developing novice to a highly experienced climber; Who they are? What would a reasonable desired outcome be from two days' training? How would you structure your approach to achieve this?
- Consider differing, unfamiliar single pitch venues and how you might use them effectively and creatively to develop a novice and a more experienced rock climber. How can you get the most from each venue?
- Refine your approach to participants' lead climbing; How would you lay foundations in a safe, engaging and inspirational manner with a range of participants? What signs indicate that you need to do more or less across the key skills before proceeding?



9. Personal safety

- 9.1 Manage personal safety whilst supervising participants progressing to and undertaking lead climbing.

Guidance

Once the novice lead climber is on the 'sharp end' of the rope, the instructor needs to be in a safe position, close to their novice lead climber to give appropriate support e.g.



evaluating runner placements, coaching, reassuring, encouraging and, potentially, averting a fall. This can be done using a variety of methods but it is common to self-line using a fixed rope to do so.

You should be able to safely set up and efficiently use such as system in a variety of environments. You must be able to recognise the limitations of the system used and modify it accordingly. This may involve redirecting the rope or reducing rope stretch using additional anchors. (See Rock Climbing, Section 14: Teaching climbing.)



Chapter 11 Trad climbing

Key practice points

- Practise setting up and ascending a rope (self-lining) using an appropriate safeguarding method.



10. Hazards and emergency procedures

- 10.1 Carry out dynamic risk assessment throughout each climbing session and appropriately react to a changing environment.



- 10.2 Demonstrate an awareness of the hazards presented to other site users by lead climbers and act in a way to keep these minimised.
- 10.3 Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate warming up and injury avoidance techniques for lead climbers.
- 10.4 Demonstrate an understanding of how to avoid and deal with common problems.
- 10.5 Assess an incident on a crag to determine a safe, efficient and effective solution.
- 10.6 In the case of an incident describe how to call for relevant assistance.

Guidance

You have very limited control over a lead climber once they have left the ground. The whole point of a progressive, differentiated approach to teaching lead climbing is to facilitate a positive experience. Making the decision to progress onto teaching a participant to lead climb will require you to be fully confident that the fundamental basics of climbing (e.g. tying in and belaying) are well mastered and have been demonstrated in a competent manner. Avoiding 'common' problems is greatly helped if you:

- have visual contact with your team - good route choice and stance selection supports this useful positioning.
- understand that the process of skill acquisition is non-linear, requires the consolidation of skills and needs to progress from cognitive to automatic stages.
- choose a route within the lead climber's abilities so that they have the capacity to take on guidance passed to them.

Part of the process of teaching lead climbing will involve discussions around the risk assessment process. It is vital that this is brought into your progressive sessions and will require you to be crystal clear when communicating. A key issue is ensuring that participants are realistic in their understanding of risk and its mitigation. Individuals must be encouraged to remain vigilant at all times whether directly involved in the climbing activity or not.

Knowing how, who and when to call for help are crucial decisions for a Rock Climbing Development Instructor should an incident occur. Many crags are not easily accessible from the road, which may mean an ambulance cannot assist you and you may need to engage alternative services. If assistance is required then you will need to have sufficient equipment to support the casualty until help arrives.



As a Rock Climbing Development Instructor you should be able to approach from above or below (using conventional climbing techniques) to support participants. In the majority of cases you will not need to interact with the climber in a technical way to solve problems, but in these cases simple solutions are preferred, appropriate to the terrain. Beyond these issues things become more complex and should be described as rare occurrences and are therefore classed as unforeseeable. In these circumstances external support or assistance may be required. There should be no need to use hoists or other complicated rope techniques (e.g. counterbalance abseils).



Chapter 19 Incidents, accidents and getting help

Key practice points

- Practise teaching route reading to your climbers. Get them to scope out their route and identify where they will be able to place gear/when they will clip, key holds, rests and any challenging sections.
- Don't forget to introduce backing off and down climbing as an important safety and tactical technique.
- Make sure that you have 'checked out' that the climber and belayer are confident and competent at doing the tasks/techniques you are relying on them to do unsupervised.
- Develop the ability to focus on key risk areas whilst remaining situationally aware of the wider climbing environment.



Teaching and learning skills



Rock Climbing Development Instructors need to give tuition and support to climbers who are learning and developing their skills. They should be able to:

11. Teaching and learning skills

- 11.1 Demonstrate an ability to adapt the teaching style to meet individual needs.
- 11.2 Design and implement a plan to introduce progressive activities to ensure development of appropriate knowledge, skills and experience over time.
- 11.3 Observe and analyse individual performances to provide appropriate, effective and timely feedback for participants.
- 11.4 Evaluate a session and its outcomes to inform the planning of future sessions.

Guidance

Rock Climbing Development Instructors need to quickly build an environment of trust and confidence with their climbers so that they feel ready to tackle more challenging activities with greater personal responsibility. Age, ability, individual requirements, confidence and



energy levels will all influence the best approach to achieving this with each individual climber.

Well-developed communication skills are essential. The foundations of effective teaching include 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. In addition to these well-practised communication skills your accurate observation and assessment of individuals' abilities and confidence levels will form the basis of your sessions. The progressive nature of the activities you choose will build up an individual's skills in a safe and consolidated way. Lead climbing requires many techniques to be acquired autonomously, combined and applied in a range of environments and situations. This can be challenging for the climber and therefore these techniques should be introduced progressively.

Individualised feedback significantly supports the developing climber. This may focus on technique, tactics, fitness or motivation depending upon the situation. By observing their strengths and weaknesses you can then prioritise feedback to ensure participants are safe and inspired/confident to progress further.

An effective Rock Climbing Development Instructor plans their sessions strategically, building up the skills and experiences of their students over time. The ability to review the outcomes of each session and to build upon these in the future is essential. Understanding that progress is rarely linear and that different climbers may require different strategies are key concepts at this level. You should understand how learning develops, and how this is applied to structuring activities at an appropriate level.



[See all Notes for instructors](#)

Key practice points

- Review climber profiles in advance and discuss their experience and goals with them when you meet them.
- Build up your climbers' skills and risk levels gradually, consolidating each phase. Be aware of contextual interference when new environments appear to erode skill.
- Review progress with climbers and make sure they are taking on board the lessons being taught.
- Discuss next steps and provide signposting to ways ahead (beyond you if necessary).



The climbing environment



Rock Climbing Development Instructors should be informed and experienced in a variety of outdoor climbing environments, including both 'sport' and 'traditional' venues. They should be able to:

12. Access

12.1 Source current access information and act accordingly.

Guidance

As a Rock Climbing Development Instructor you have a responsibility to respect landowners' and facility managers' responsibilities, with regards to access. As a minimum, climbers should conform to recognised 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. You should know where to access such information, such as through the relevant mountaineering council, local authority, or access organisation.

The mountaineering councils work on behalf of climbers to negotiate and secure access to crags. As a Rock Climbing Development Instructor you should inform your groups about their work.



Chapter 1 The climbing environment

Key practice point

- Research the differences in access legislation between England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.



13. Conservation

- 13.1 Have a broad working knowledge of the mountain environment including geology, natural history, flora and fauna.
- 13.2 Operate in such a way as to minimise impact on the environment.
- 13.3 Pass on environmental knowledge in an engaging way to educate and enthuse.
- 13.4 Manage individuals and groups so that they have minimal impact.



Guidance

General knowledge about the environment the climbers are visiting is always valuable. The history of the area combined with 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, government agencies and environmental charities for conservation information relevant to crags you visit.



14. Etiquette and ethics

- 14.1 Have a broad working knowledge of local rock climbing and mountaineering ethics.
- 14.2 Operate a flexible programme of activities to accommodate other site users.



14.3 Describe the site-specific requirements and agreements relating to teaching leading on different climbing walls and artificial structures.

Guidance

Many climbing venues can be busy. Teaching lead climbing can be time consuming and instructors should be mindful of this, especially with regard to their choice of routes. Spending an hour or so on the most popular climb at the crag could be frustrating for other users, whilst having a queue of other climbers waiting for their 'turn' could be off putting to novice lead climbers.

You should be calm and respectful of other users of the climbing venue even if it means you have to change your plans. Often a good way to avert disruptive and potentially unsafe interference with each other's activity is to politely address them beforehand to gain an understanding of their intentions. The conditions can also significantly impact on what you can and can't do and it is important to have multiple plans in mind, in case 'Plan A' doesn't work.

Climbing wall managers have a duty of care to protect members of the public from foreseeable risks, be they climbers or spectators, and this extends to preparing codes of conduct, guidance and policies for wall users. Having a good understanding of a climbing wall's layout, route selection and overall setup will give you a greater level of knowledge from which to draw when planning a lead climbing session with clients.

Note: if you plan to teach leading in a climbing wall environment, you should be aware of and comply with the wall's arrangements and procedures with regards to users teaching lead climbing.



Chapter 1 The climbing environment

Key practice points

- Most guidebooks to crags will contain access information which should be checked before going climbing, even if it is a familiar site. This information should then be researched further online for any updates.
- Discuss with other instructors how they approach conversations with other crag/wall users when it's busy.



Appendix 1 - Definitions

Single pitch

For the purposes of this scheme, 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

Course delivery

Mountain Training courses are delivered by approved providers throughout the UK and Ireland.

Providers of Rock Climbing Development Instructor courses will appoint a course director for each course.

Courses can be found by searching on the [Candidate Management System \(tahdah\)](#) or on [our website](#).

Your training and assessment result will be recorded on your account.



Exemption from training

Experienced climbing instructors who already have substantial relevant personal experience as well as experience in teaching climbing skills and lead climbing techniques 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.

They should also have at least two years recent experience of teaching climbing on the crags of the UK and Ireland.

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 Development 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 Development 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.

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.



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.