



# Normal Operating Procedure (inc. Risk Assessment) Climbing Auto Belay

## Risk Profile

The following risks have been identified through PGL's risk assessment process:

- a. Extreme weather.
- b. Injury from participation/physical exertion.
- c. Fatigue/exhaustion/dehydration.
- d. Injury due to incorrect set-up and operation.
- e. Injury from falling objects.
- f. Collision/entanglement with elements/structures/equipment/people.
- g. Entrapment of hair, fingers, loose clothing, etc. in element or operating structure.
- h. Splinter injury from pole.
- i. Injury from cables and cable clamps.
- j. Tear/de-gloving injuries from rings and other jewellery.
- k. Danger of ground fall from.
  - i. Lack of supervision of climbers.
  - ii. Intentional misuse of equipment and systems.
  - iii. Incorrect attachment.
  - iv. Poor fitting of harnesses.
  - v. Equipment failure.
- l. Rope burn injury.
- m. Slips/trips/low to ground falls.

Implementation of the following operating procedures reduces the residual risk to a level as low as reasonably practicable given the intended purpose of the activity.

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## Control Measure

### Deployment Requirements

Instructor Qualifications: Centre based training by Approved Ropes Trainer and assessment by PGL Approved Assessor.

Instructor – Participant ratio: 1:4

Active participation: Maximum 4 climbers with 4 climber buddies.



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## 1. Equipment Requirements

**Per Activity Base:**

## 2. Guest & Instructor equipment requirements

**Per Instructor:**

If off ground:

- 1 x Chest harness
- 1 x Combi sling

**Per Guest:**

- 1 x Sit harness
- 1 x Chest harness
- 1 x Combi sling
- 1 x HMS karabiner

## 3. Specific Clothing Requirements

- Trousers or long shorts
- Flat soled shoes or boots unable to slip off
- Long hair tied back
- Jewellery removed where possible, or made safe
- Where a chest harness is worn, a top or t-shirt must be worn that covers the individual's shoulders
- Loose items removed from pockets
- Any items constituting a risk of entanglement removed

## 4. Session Preparation

- a. Instructor to carry out a routine visual inspection of the element and activity area, checking the integrity of the whole element (to include poles, ladders, high lap splices, anchor points and guys, etc.), as per 'daily rope inspection checks.doc'.
- b. If built in a wooded area, check for fallen branches or unsafe trees.
- c. If the instructor has any concerns about the integrity and safe use of the element and activity area, then they should raise this with the appropriate senior staff member, prior to any activity taking place.
- d. On all days when the activity takes place, a record of the first routine inspection of the day should be logged for future reference.
- e. For outdoor elements, check the expected weather conditions, focusing on expected wind strength. Elements must not be used in wind conditions above Force 5, or those agreed with the technical advisor or during any storm that breaches the 30/30 rule.
- f. All set-ups must be rigged in accordance with PGL/MIC Technical Advisor approved methods/policy.
- g. If ladders are used, they must be secured in line with PGL ladder policy.
- h. Access to adjacent activity areas must be restricted during the session i.e. Jacob's Ladder rungs.



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- i. Instructor to visually & physically check the integrity and setup of all PPE to be used, including twists in any straps and amount of PPE for the group.
- j. Instructors should prepare themselves for the session ahead by ensuring they are aware of relevant group information, and have a broad session plan which can be finalised when meeting the group.
- k. Instructor must inspect the webbing of each unit prior to the first use of the day as detailed in the ACOP.
- l. The Instructor will attach guests to the system as per the ACOP.

### 5. Session Instruction

- a. All guests must receive a safety brief and a demonstration and instruction in how to climb – see the ACOP.
- b. Only the instructor can clip and unclip guests from the system.
- c. All persons (instructor or guest) can climb only when attached to the auto-belay webbing and instructor final checks have been carried out.
- d. No one is to be in a forwards or inverted position when being lowered off the wall.
- e. Guests must not climb faster than the retraction speed on the auto-belay unit.
- f. Whilst supervising and instructing, instructors must be aware of their own positioning and sight lines, ensuring they can see all the participants they are directly supervising at all times.
- g. Instructors should remain vigilant at all times and make ongoing dynamic risk assessments of the environment, people and the activity.
- h. The instructor should ensure that maximum inclusion is aimed for by involving participant in the activity. This must be balanced against maintaining the safety of participant.
- i. Some walls can be relatively quick to climb, the stop procedure should be reinforced before participants leave the ground and the no racing rule is very important for this element.
- j. Bouldering may be used as an introduction or development. The techniques should be instructed, including spotting technique. A low maximum height must be set, no one to boulder without spotter.
- k. Reaching games and exercises should be used when participants are just a few metres off the ground. They will have very positive outcome on their climbing technique, before they become affected by the exposure of additional height.

### 6. Problem solving and rescues

Participant may become entrapped within elements either by limbs, clothing, or they may become emotionally frozen.

- a. Problems should be solved with the least complicated solution/rescue and in the way most sympathetic to the 'victim'.
- b. If "rescues" are needed which are outside of the instructors assessed qualification level, a supervisor's assistance must be called for using either a radio, via other staff, an accompanying adult or a minimum of two participants.
- c. If a participant becomes physically entrapped, but is not in immediate danger then the instructor should send for a supervisor.
- d. If a supervisor has been called, they will need to execute either a parallel rope rescue or a snatch rescue depending on the circumstances.



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- e. If a participant becomes physically entrapped in a way that constricts their breathing – i.e. suspended by their clothing, then the instructor must send somebody to raise the alarm and then they must try the following solutions (in order of simplicity):
  - i. Ask participant to get their weight back on their feet and hands to take the weight off their neck
  - ii. Ascend the wall using the auto belay next to the guest to try and aid them in taking pressure off their neck and getting them free from entrapment.

### **7. Session Conclusion**

- a. Positive active reviewing should be used to revisit aims and objectives and allow participant to share/reflect on achievements.
  - b. The activity base must be left so that unauthorised people cannot access the element.
  - c. Any tracer cords must be secured to the top of the tower before leaving the base.
  - d. Tower covers must be replaced when the base is unattended.
  - e. All harnesses should be left extended to the limit.
  - f. Any dirty equipment must be washed in clean water.
  - g. Any activity base or equipment faults must be communicated immediately to the appropriate senior/s and where items/bases should not be used, the instructor must take initial steps to ensure this does not happen.
  - h. Any relevant accidents/incidents/events must be recorded on the relevant report form or centre logbook.
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