

Avon Outdoor Activities Club Standard Operating Procedure – Indoor Rock Climbing and Bouldering

Reviewed: 8 Feb 2022 (for review again Feb 2025)

1. Introduction

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) sets out the procedure for holding indoor rock climbing and bouldering events within Avon Outdoor Activities Club (AOAC). It also identifies the responsibilities of participants, in order to ensure that indoor rock climbing events are safe and enjoyable for all. This SOP does not apply to indoor climbing or bouldering events that are not listed on the Club Calendar. These are private events and are not covered by AOAC policy or insurance.

2. Participation Statement

AOAC recognises that indoor rock climbing is an activity with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in this activity should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

3. Event Planning

At least annually, the Climbing Coordinator will convene a meeting to establish a calendar of indoor climbing events for the summer and winter seasons. The meeting will also determine Event Organisers and where possible Indoor Activity Leaders responsible for each individual event. These events will be suitable for individuals with a range of different Experience Levels, and will be listed on the Club Calendar by the Climbing Coordinator or other nominated Event Organiser.

4. Experience Levels

The Experience Level is the level at which the participant can confidently and safely perform the skills identified in Table 1. These levels are self-selected by the individual, and it is strongly recommended that caution is exercised in doing so. As an individual progresses, they may choose to self-select into a higher Experience Level, however it is strongly recommended that they seek advice and an informal assessment from an Instructor or Indoor Activity Leader before doing so.

Experience Level	Skills Required
Beginner	None required. Complete Beginners should attend at least 3 indoor climbing sessions with AOAC prior to progressing to Novice.
Novice (Indoor top rope)	Can tie a figure eight knot. Can confidently and safely belay on top rope. Communicates using standard climbing calls. Understands basic climbing wall etiquette. Novices should attend at least 10 indoor climbing sessions with AOAC prior to progressing to Competent

Competent (Indoor lead climb)	Competent at all Indoor top rope skills. Can confidently and safely belay on lead. Can climb on lead and safely clip in to fixed gear as per Approved Venue rules
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Table 1: Experience Levels and minimum skills required to achieve each level

5. Individual Event Requirements

Each event must be led by an Activity Leader and must be held at an Approved Venue. The Indoor Activity Leader will manage the event according to their responsibilities set out in Section 6. Event participants will participate in events according to their Experience Level, and comply with their own responsibilities set out in Section 7.

6. Responsibilities of the Indoor Activity Leader

The Indoor Activity Leader must ensure that on each event:

- All Beginners are identified and allocated to a Climbing Instructor in order to be taught the techniques required to progress to Novice level. Indoor Activity Leaders may only instruct or supervise Beginners if they are also a Climbing Instructor.
- All Novices wishing to progress to Competent level must be partnered with a Competent level climber and actively supervised by the Indoor Activity Leader when belaying a lead climber (maximum 2 Novices per Indoor Activity Leader). Suitability for progression to Competent level should be confirmed by an Indoor Activity Leader
- Checking and advising on good practice to Club climbers as required during sessions
- Informing Beginners of Experience Levels and the method of self selection as described in paragraph 4
- The Climbing Coordinator is informed of any accident or injury as soon as possible after the event, and details of the incident are reported using the AOAC website form.

7. Responsibilities of all event participants.

Each event participant must ensure that they:

- Self-select into an appropriate Experience Level and err on the side of caution if unsure
- Book onto events through the Club website and inform the Organiser if they subsequently are unable to attend
- Uses a rock climbing harness, belay device and carabiner that meet UIAA/CE safety standards for rock climbing equipment, and regularly inspects such equipment for wear
- Follows the instructions of the Activity Leader/Approved Venue staff and all Approved Venue rules
- Notifies the Activity Leader if they are uncertain about performing a particular procedure safely
- Uses an anchor or resistance device when belaying anyone more than 1.5 times their own body weight
- Acts in a way that does not negatively affect the enjoyment of other climbing wall users.

8. Selection of Indoor Activity Leaders

A person wishing to be an Indoor Activity Leader must fulfil either of the following criteria:

- Hold a suitable NGB Climbing Instructor award (e.g. Climbing Wall Instructor, Rock climbing Instructor), or
- Be a Competent level climber, and have climbed indoors for a period of at least six months at a variety of climbing walls, including the specified activity venue.

Prospective Indoor Activity Leaders who do not hold NGB qualifications must be assessed and confirmed by a minimum of three current Indoor Activity Leaders to have a suitable level of experience before being permitted to lead the particular activity. At least one assessor must be an NGB qualified Climbing Instructor. The Climbing Coordinator is to provide a list of competences to be checked during the assessment(s).

Indoor Activity Leaders who have been approved for roped sessions may also lead bouldering sessions by default; however, if an Indoor Activity Leader has only been approved for bouldering they must be further assessed for roped sessions before being permitted to lead such sessions.

A register of Indoor Activity Leaders will be maintained by the Climbing Coordinator and published on the AOAC website.

9. Risk Management

A generic Risk Assessment will be produced by the Climbing Coordinator for indoor climbing events at the Approved Venues. This should be reviewed by the Indoor Activity Leader prior to the event. All Indoor Activity Leaders and event participants must obey the AOAC Health and Safety Policy at all times.

10. Definitions

- Climbing Instructor: An individual who holds a National Governing Body (NGB) qualification for rock climbing and in the context of this SOP may act as an Indoor Activity Leader by default as described in the approval process at paragraph 8.
- Indoor Activity Leader: A person supervising, directing and providing peer-guidance to Event Participants during the course of an AOAC indoor climbing activity. This person will be responsible for dynamic risk management during the event.
- Climbing Coordinator: The individual with overall responsibility for compiling and coordinating the AOAC climbing activity programme and providing leadership to climbing activity within AOAC..
- Event Organiser: A person who plans and publishes to the calendar one or more AOAC events. Note, the Event Organiser does not need to be an Indoor Activity Leader themselves but should ensure that Indoor Activity Leaders are nominated for the event.
- Event Participant: An individual AOAC member participating in the specific event.
- Approved Venue: An artificial climbing wall venue which has been approved by the Association of British Climbing Walls (www.abcwalls.co.uk) or similar best-practice organisation.

Enclosure: Indoor Activity Leader - Competence Checklist (available through Club website)