

Avon Outdoor Activities Club

Risk Assessment for Outdoor Rock Climbing

Date of last review: Mar 23

This Risk Assessment is based on the guidance provided by the British Mountaineering Council and Mountain Training UK, and complies with the AOAC third party liability insurance requirements.

All AOAC approved Activity Leaders who take on the responsibility of leading a rock climbing activity should be conversant with the hazards, causes and mitigation measures described in this document. The list herein is not exhaustive and should be used in conjunction with dynamic risk assessment and a specific risk assessment for the chosen activity venue. The mitigation suggested for each risk should, if employed correctly, minimise the risk to be As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP).

Rock Climbing Generic Risk Assessment			
Hazard	Who is at risk?	Potential Cause(s)	Mitigation
Incorrect techniques	Climbers and belayers	Incorrect or insufficient training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All formal training within AOAC is to be carried out by qualified instructors operating within the remit of their qualifications e.g.: CWI, RCI, CWDI, RCDI, MI.Climbers should self-select into an experience level in accordance with SOPs. Leaders should observe climbers to confirm self-selection and satisfy themselves that participants are acting within their abilities.
Incorrect Group Management	All	Insufficient group control or failure to understand control methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All Activity Leaders and instructors to be approved in accordance with SOPs.All Activity Leaders and instructors to be familiar with and understand the SOPs and this Risk Assessment.
Uncontrolled fall	Climberse	Equipment failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All climbing equipment to be UIAA/CE approved.Observe good safety chain principles: Ensure all equipment is serviceable, within usable life, minimise complexity, and add redundancy in the system.Check fixed protection before use.'Trad' lead climbers to be practised in placing protection.Climber/Leader/Instructor to ensure ropes aren't abraded over edges.
		Poor belay construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lead climber to follow best practice techniques for building a belay.Good/multiple anchor selection.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a suitable reminder mnemonic such as IDEAS/ERNEST/SERENE.
	Lead climber and belayer	Poor belay technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure belayer is trained in best practice techniques, by a qualified instructor. • Activity Leader to observe and provide guidance during activity if required. • Employ method of dealing with climber/belayer weight differences (typically >1:1.5) e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Swap partners for more equal ratio ○ Use Edelrid Ohm ○ Use ground anchor
	Abseiler	Poor abseil technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All climbers to learn best practice abseil technique from a qualified instructor. • Abseil/friction device to be extended away from harness. • Back-up prussic or other auto-blocking device to be used. • Choose a rope of sufficient length for the abseil. • Knots to be tied in the end of the rope before abseiling.
	Boulderer	Slip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use spotting. • Use crash pads. • Remove hazards if possible e.g.: small rocks around fall zone.
Physical trauma	All	Incorrect clothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Leader to check clothing for suitability, particularly footwear at venues with a rough walk in.
		Falling material (rock, equipment, litter etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participants to wear serviceable and suitable helmets during activity and when within close proximity of the crag.
	Climber	Fall, slip, broken rock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climber to check holds before weighting them. • Activity Leader to have first aid kit available and be first aid trained. • Know location of nearest hospital. • Ensure ability to contact emergency services if needed.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All head injuries to be reported to medical services. • AOAC incident report to be raised by Activity Leader for any injury or near-miss.
Stuck Climber	Climber	Inexperience or fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Leader and belayer to observe and assess climber competence and confidence before activity. • Leader or friend to “talk down” the climber. • Suitably experienced climber to carry out abseil retrieval.
Entanglement	Climber and belayer	Poor rope management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belayer to ensure that rope is stacked neatly in clear space, and kept out of the way of feet. • Use rope mat or similar.
		Long hair	Tie up long hair before climbing activity.
		Clothing and jewellery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No loose clothing to be worn. • Jewellery, especially rings to be removed before activity.
Endangerment or exclusion	Children and vulnerable adults	Lack of adaptation. Lack of consultation. Lack of consideration. Unsuitable supervision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe club safeguarding policy. • Only suitably trained/qualified leaders or instructors to work with vulnerable adults or children. • Apply adaptive techniques where required. • Consult vulnerable adult participants to identify any additional needs. • Ensure parents are involved and supervise their children at all times.
Disgruntled Landowner	All	Reputation of AOAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Leader to check and observe guidance of BMC RAD when choosing venue. • Be considerate, don’t damage infrastructure, natural environment or bother wildlife/livestock. • If challenged remain calm and polite and if necessary leave the area when requested.
Via Ferrata Specific Risk Assessment			
Puncture wound	All	Sharp burrs on metal work or protruding cables	Ensure all participants wear suitable gloves and are briefed on the hazard

Venue Specific Risk Assessments			
Avon Gorge			
Miscommunication	Lead climber and belayer	Road noise	Lead climber and belayer agree systems before beginning climb e.g. tugs on rope, radios or mobile phones, spotter to relay signals.
Cheddar Gorge			
Personal injury	All	Road traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity Leader to warn participants of hazard. Participants observe traffic before moving around venue or setting up belay next to the road. Observe seasonal climbing restrictions.
Woodcroft Quarry (Wintour's Leap)			
Personal injury	All	Litter, broken glass, former quarry machinery and parts	Activity Leader to ensure that group are aware of the hazard and take suitable precautions
Goblin Combe and Leigh Woods			
Infection	All	Tick bites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity Leader to brief all on the high likelihood of ticks at these venues and Lyme Disease. Wear long sleeves and trousers with tight cuffs and/or tucked in socks. Use Deet or other protective chemicals. Check for ticks within 24 hours and remove using an approved tool/technique. Watch for bullseye rash and seek medical advice if seen or symptoms of Lyme Disease are experienced.