



Climbing and Rappelling

Council Approval: [Required](#)

Activity Permitted For: D* B* J C S A

[See Master Progression Chart](#)

About Climbing and Rappelling

Girls may participate in various types of climbing, rappelling, and rope adventures.

Note:

- Daisies and Brownies are limited in what they can do in this activity—check the Climbing and Adventure Sports Master Progression Chart. Daisies and Brownies can do slacklining and low-challenge elements.
- Brownies can participate in most indoor climbing activities.
- Outdoor high ropes, high elements, and rappelling are only permitted for Girl Scout Juniors and older.

Bouldering. This sport involves climbing without a rope but at a height not greater than 6 feet off the ground. Spotters (participants who safeguard the movements of a member of the group) provide support and protect the head and upper body of a climber in case of a fall. Spotting is used when descending and ascending high elements or climbing routes.

Top Roping. In this climbing method, the rope is anchored from the top of the climbing route, using belays (safety ropes to secure a person to an anchor point). The belayer (person who controls the belay/safety line to prevent long and dangerous falls) is set up at the bottom of the route with the other end of the rope tied to the climber.

Multi-Pitch Climbing. For experienced climbers only, this is a climb on a long route that requires several pitches the length of a rope or less. (A “pitch” is the rope-length between belay stations). The group climbs to the top of the first pitch; the lead climber climbs the next pitch, anchors in, and belays each remaining climber individually to the anchor.

Free Climbing. This method, which involves climbing on rocks or walls without a belay system in place, is not approved.

Slacklining: A sport and an art that can involve balance training, recreation, and moving meditation. It is similar, at first glance, to tightrope walking and is accomplished by stretching and tensioning a 1-inch to 2-inch length of nylon/polyester webbing between two anchor points, most often trees. It is a way of passing time while maintaining concentration, fitness, core

strength, and balance. It can be used as a team-building activity in which spotters safeguard the movements of each member of the group.

Artificial climbing walls and harnessed indoor ropes are great learning options too.

Learn More:

- [International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation](#)
- [RockClimbing.com](#)
- Indoor climbing advice: [REI](#)
- All about rock climbing: [Mpora.com](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls of all abilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that [Disabled Sports USA](#) provides to people with disabilities.

Safety Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. For bouldering, top roping, and multi-pitch climbing, an instructor with documented experience—indicating competence in equipment use, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training (must provide certification) or documented experience according to your council's specific guidelines—directly supervises the group. Ensure that there is a regular process of review and update for all instructors. A minimum of two instructors need to be present, and instructors should be skilled in selecting appropriate activities, teaching and supervising spotting and belaying techniques, and modifying tasks to provide an appropriate experience for the ages and skill levels in the group. Before use, instructors must inspect all equipment, course components, and landing areas.

Facilitators of indoor or outdoor artificial climbing walls and auto belay or harnessed indoor ropes courses should have experience, indicating competence in equipment maintenance, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training. A minimum of one facilitator and an additional adult must be present, and facilitators need to be skilled in selecting appropriate activities, teaching and supervising spotting and lowering techniques, and modifying tasks to provide an appropriate experience for the ages and skill levels in the group. Before use, facilitators should inspect all equipment, course components, and landing areas.

Indoor or outdoor artificial climbing walls and auto belay or harnessed indoor ropes courses are activities that do not incorporate an element of high risk and can be done by Brownies through Ambassadors. However, all ages must have appropriately sized harnesses. If no harness properly fits a child, that child cannot participate in climbing and/or rappelling. Daisies are not permitted to participate in climbing and rappelling.

The instructor-to-participant ratios are:

- **Bouldering and top roping:** one instructor to ten participants
- **Multi-pitch climbing:** one instructor (qualified lead climber) to three participants

Select a safe site. Permits and permission requests are filed as required for outdoor natural climbing sites and facilities. All permanent structures and the belaying system are planned and constructed by experienced individuals. Plans and procedures are established to avoid unauthorized use of the site, structures, and equipment. The artificial climbing site must be posted to warn against unauthorized use.

Participants learn about and prepare for climbing and rappelling. Instructors teach a set of readiness and action commands to all participants for climbing, spotting, and belaying. All participants take part in muscle warm-up and stretching activities before beginning physical activities. Instructors describe the objectives, safety procedures, and hazards to the participants before beginning an activity.

Participants practice safe climbing and rappelling techniques. Spotting techniques (if necessary) are taught, demonstrated, and practiced by participants prior to any climbing or rappelling activity. All activities should be appropriately spotted. For activities where partners are needed, instructors must match participants according to size and skill level, if appropriate. Instructors should supervise all tie-ins, belays, and climbs on climbing sites and spotting on bouldering sites.

Safety Gear

- Climbing helmets with the UIAA-approved label—worn for all outdoor natural climbing situations where the participant is more than 6 feet off the ground or on belay
- A disposable liner, such as a shower cap or surgical cap, to wear underneath the helmet to protect against the spread of head lice
- A chest harness with a seat harness or a full-body harness, required for specific climbing or ropes activities
- Sturdy shoes
- Close-fitting clothing—loose clothing should be avoided, especially around the head and neck
- Portable drinking water
- Raingear, as necessary
- Long pants or bike pants, recommended for activities involving potential skin abrasions on legs

All equipment used for belaying, such as ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets, should be designed and tested for the purpose of this type of activity and appropriate for the size of the user.

Climbing Type	Grade Levels	Safety Standards and Gear	Additional Information
Bouldering (any element that has a fall distance of 6 feet or less)	B, J, C, S, A	Comfortable clothing Sneakers Spotters	Bouldering Low Elements
Artificial Climbing Walls (indoor and outdoor)	B, J, C, S, A No free climbing above 6 feet; Brownies on indoor walls designed specifically for small children	Auto belay/harnessed indoor ropes Belaying equipment: ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets that are designed, tested, and manufactured for the purpose of climbing and size appropriate for user	Expert Advice Indoor Climbing <i>Note:</i> if the hosting facility or instructor indicates the use of helmets is hazardous for belay – follow those instructions. They may not offer helmets for this reason. When the hosting facility or instructor indicates a helmet is required, always opt for the helmet.