

The Sandstone Group
Technical Notes for Leaders
Southern Sandstone Leader's Award

These notes are intended for use as a guide to good practice in conjunction with the Syllabus. They are not exhaustive; please refer to any of the texts listed as references and be familiar with as many techniques as possible.

These notes are in discussion form to help you organise and run activities; they are not intended as a definitive or prescriptive document. If you have any queries please contact the Sandstone Group.

Participation Statement – please read this before continuing

The British Mountaineering Council has produced the following participation statement. It is designed to inform any person booking a course involving hazardous pursuits of the risks involved, but is not a disclaimer of liability in the case of an accident. It applies to those entering the Sandstone Award as an instructor and can be adapted for instructors to use with their clients. Children cannot be held responsible for their own actions, so the statement acts as information for their parents/guardians.

“Rock climbing and abseiling are hazardous activities that carry the risk of serious injury or death. When joining the Sandstone Leaders Scheme, you acknowledge and accept these risks. The candidate must take full responsibility for their own actions and involvement, and cannot hold course staff, The Sandstone Group (or any other body) responsible for loss or injury during a course or when operating as a Sandstone Leader, unless due to their negligence.”

Syllabus areas

1. Knowledge and Currency

a) Keep up to date with current practices. Those who hope to lead and instruct others climbing or abseiling should have an interest in the sport themselves and generally be aware of current developments. Developments may happen quickly, and leaders operating in isolation will be helped by keeping abreast of current news by reading climbing magazines etc. If you join the BMC, you get Summit magazine, which contains a lot of information useful to the instructor.

Example: An example of change in practice is the situation with Figure of Eight descenders in 1998. A technical report was published and highlighted in national climbing magazines which told of some incidents where Fig 8 descenders, often used as belay devices, had been twisted so as to lie across the gate of a karabiner and when loaded actually break the karabiner. One abseiler in the UK died as a result of this on an instructed session when there was no independent safety rope. DMM subsequently developed a karabiner (the Belaymaster) which negates this problem, and it is now current practice never to belay with Fig 8 descenders except with this or a similar karabiner being used.

b) The best way to keep up with current practice is to go climbing, and to talk to other climbers. A level of personal skill is a great asset to leaders, and a personal interest in the activity is always apparent to the participants under instruction.

A qualification is useful only if it is used and the leader is fluent in their instruction, ropework and group management.

2. Personal Climbing

It is a requirement of the Syllabus that leaders climb at a 4a standard prior to assessment. However, subsequent to this leaders should also be aware that they are expected to be able to do what they are asking others to do. It may also be necessary to climb and abseil in order to facilitate a rescue or other situation and candidates should expect to demonstrate this. Leaders would not be expected to climb up to a climber unroped and rescue them; normally this is dangerous and unnecessary (see 'rescue procedures' below). Climbing more than a few feet off of the ground unroped at most sessions should not be part of normal practice for leaders.

Leaders are therefore required to show that they can climb and abseil themselves, and that they are capable of demonstrations of climbing technique at ground level.

3. First Aid

On assessment candidates should present their current First Aid certificate. If this is not available, out of date etc. candidates may be deferred (i.e. a full pass will be issued when the certificate is presented). There is no First Aid test or component involved in the assessment as this should be covered by a First Aid Certificate. Following assessment, it is the responsibility of the Instructor to maintain their First Aid training. This will be in line with current practice in outdoor qualifications, namely a 16 hour (2 day) First Aid Certificate which is renewed every 3 years. This qualification is not continually verified by the Sandstone Group; it is the responsibility of the Instructor – however, an employer or group leader may consider the SSSA Instructor Certificate invalid if a current First Aid certificate is not held.

4. Preparation

The requirements for leaders prior to organising a session of climbing or abseiling can be daunting; however once the checks have been done on the first occasion it should not be too difficult. Leaders must be aware of several factors; these are also discussed on the training course in some detail.

Legal factors

a) Climbing and abseiling leaders must understand that anyone offering instruction for payment must hold an AALA (Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority) Licence*. This is not within the scope of this scheme.

*(Please note: it is not appropriate to list here all of the conditions for licence requirements. You should check with each centre whether they have, or need, a licence as the situation is complex. Some centres for example offer only activities which do not need a licence; some are voluntary organisations (e.g. Scouts) and only offer activities to other voluntary organisations, and therefore don't need a licence; etc. etc. Please check!)

b) Some centres use outside instructors and make a charge, and hold their own AALA licences. Leaders working at such centres will be covered by those centres' licences; but it is your responsibility to clarify this with the centre beforehand.

Parental consent – procedure for this is covered below; leaders must be aware of the need for informed and written consent.

Practical considerations

a) Find out the ability/age of your group, this may affect the choice of venue/location.

b) Select venue and climbs – this may seem obvious but it is important to give climbers, especially at the start, a positive learning experience. Leaders often underestimate the difficulty of 'easy' climbs to new students. Ideally a location will have several very easy climbs in close proximity for easy supervision. These locations can be hard to find!

- c) Have knowledge of the chosen venue/location, preferably by climbing there before taking the group. This is an invaluable aid to improving the quality of experience for the participants and the safety levels – you will be aware of the hazards of operating at the location and better able to manage the group accordingly.
- d) Check if there are any access difficulties. For example, is parking possible and has it been a problem in the past with landowners etc.? Is the crag on private land and if so has permission been obtained/is it necessary to obtain permission?
- e) Prepare an equipment list by checking what is needed/available at the crag. For example, some crags will need longer static rope slings as belays may be well back from the edge.
- f) Obtain parents' permission to undertake activity. This must be done in writing. Parents must also give details of any medical conditions of which you should be aware. A sample medical/consent form is given as Appendix A When seeking consent parents must be given details of the activities to be undertaken and where there is any room for misunderstanding activities must be explained. For example, many people think of 'scrambling' as involving motor bikes. Many people do not understand the meaning of technical terms such as 'abseiling' – most probably do, but do not assume that they will. It is probably reasonable to assume that climbing and abseiling will be clear, but try to avoid any more technical terms.
- g) Appoint a Home Contact and ensure all details of participants are available.
- h) Be aware of the nearest first aid provision and hospital Accident & Emergency Department.
- i) Organise/ carry mobile phone wherever possible. Give the number to the home contact.

5. Equipment

a) Appropriate equipment. Whilst this is a large area of knowledge and will be covered in all training/assessment courses; some general points are:

- i) All participants in climbing and abseiling sessions should wear climbing helmets. These must be CE approved climbing helmets.
- ii) Need for chest/body harnesses for age 11 and under
- iii) Type of karabiner – steel/alloy/shape according to intended use and amount of wear anticipated.
- iv) Type of harness - these might be chosen for ease of use or range of size and adjustability. There are several good group harnesses available notably from Petzl, Camp and DMM. Note the comments about gear loops under 'misuse of equipment'.
- v) Ropes – full (single rope nominal 11mm) UIAA approved kernmantel climbing ropes should be used for climbing; 'static' abseil rope for abseiling.

b) Size of equipment – this is important as children can be a wide variety of sizes and some equipment is sized, so a set of harnesses for example mustn't be assumed to be usable for every group.

- Harnesses must be tight around the waist;
- Helmets must fit without falling off when the head is shaken/tilted;
- Chest harnesses should be tight
- All equipment should be adjusted carefully and checked by the leader. This is a common area of oversight and often assumed to be unimportant. Take care and time over this at the beginning of a session and check before each climb/abseil for loosening belts, straps etc.

c) Outdated gear – some types of equipment are still occasionally seen in use. Hawser laid rope for example should not be considered for use with groups. Some old types of harness (e.g. Whillans harnesses) are extremely uncomfortable and would by definition be past their safe life by now in any event. Climbing belts (as opposed to harnesses) should not be used.

d) Equipment should be stored in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. In general the life of 'soft' equipment like ropes, slings and harnesses will be up to three years, dependant on the level of use, if used and stored correctly. However be aware that you must check and maintain gear frequently. With heavy use a rope might last as little as two weeks even without any misuse. Gear should be stored in dry conditions away from UV light and any contact with chemicals, oil etc. Karabiners may last indefinitely provided that their functions still work correctly and they do not show signs of significant wear.

Equipment Considerations

Since 1995, all climbing equipment sold in Europe has had to have a CE mark, (like a British Standard). When sold, it must have clear instructions and notes about care, maintenance and, most importantly, life-span. Also, all climbing equipment used at work is considered personal protection equipment and is covered by the relevant laws. This means that each piece of nylon gear (slings, ropes, harnesses, etc) and helmets must be individually marked and identifiable, and a log kept showing their retirement dates, evidence of regular inspections (frequency depends on usage), any problems or repairs plus anything to keep an eye on.

This log can then be handed on to the next person in charge of gear, without there being a confusion about age etc. It is worth noting that a local school was still using a rope in July 1999 that was bought in January 1980, because staff had changed so frequently that they had no idea it was so old.

Metal gear need not be individually marked, but it must still be regularly inspected and discarded if showing signs of wear or not functioning properly.

Even though school teachers, youth leaders etc may not be considered professional climbing instructors, they are still using the kit for supervision whilst in a position of extra care, so the same rules apply.

Please note: manufacturers give a maximum life for nylon once it has first been used. This varies but in general a MAXIMUM of 5 years is average; if it is worn out before this, it should be discarded earlier. The BMC are recommending that ropes should be discarded 4 years after first use. Due to the Personal Protection Equipment Laws, it is both pointless to argue about this, and ILLEGAL to ignore it.

What you do with your own gear for your personal climbing is entirely up to you, as long as it is not used for work. If in any doubt, contact the manufacturers. Most of their websites give detailed technical notes and it is essential that you stick to these.

Ropes

There are 3 main types of Kernmantle climbing rope (we do not use hawser laid any more):

1. Static (or abseil) rope. This is actually called 'semi-static' rope, but can be considered for our purposes as having so little stretch as to be negligible. It is ideal for anchor slings and (obviously) abseiling. Sometimes you will see it being used as climbing rope for top roping, but it is very poor to handle and therefore is not recommended.
2. Lower stretch (or wall) rope. This is designed with top roping on walls in mind, where the climber will not take a leader fall, so is equally at home on the Sandstone outcrops. It is usually harder wearing and has the advantage of less stretch (so the climber falls less distance) but some shock absorption.
3. Dynamic (or ordinary climbing) rope. This is the normal rope we buy and is perfectly adequate for the local crags.

Rope sizes.

Manufacturers produce a wide range of ropes and rope diameters. The costs vary very widely as well! The only requirement is that it is a single rope (usually with a "1" marked in a circle on the tag on the end). This means it can be used on its own. They range from 10 to 11mm in diameter. Half ropes or "walkers" ropes are not suitable. If the rope has a circle with '0.5' in it, it may not be used on its own.

Depending on requirements, rope can be bought in 30 to 60m lengths (which can be cut into one or more ropes) or bought on drums from 100m upwards.

Tape slings

Today it is unusual to see anything other than sewn loops. It is far more versatile to use static line for awkward set ups than a length of tape, so this is not recommended. For many set-ups on the local crags, an 8ft sling is ideal, as it can simply be passed around the tree or through a bolt and the ends clipped together. Should a knot be needed, slings should be tied in overhand knots only.

Harnesses

Today the group leader has a far wider selection of specific group harnesses than ever before. The best kind have large loops specifically designed for clipping in, auto-locking and easily adjusted buckles and are simple to put on. **ALWAYS MAKE SURE THAT THE HARNESS FITS AROUND THE WAIST, NOT THE HIPS.**

Chest harnesses should be used for anyone with no proper waist (fat/thin) and as a general rule with all primary children. Unless it is a one off, improvised ones are not recommended.

Helmets

Again, there is a vast range available. The best kind are highly (and easily) adjustable, not too heavy, and are not chipped or damaged too easily.

Hardware

Karabiners. Generally, steel karabiners work best on the Sandstone as they last for ages, do not wear out with continual top roping and are very unattractive to thieves! Those with wide opening gates are very user-friendly, and children especially notice the difference. HMS (or pear shaped) krabs **MUST** be used with Italian hitches and certain types of belay device.

Always avoid three way loads and any moving ropes across gates.

"Maillons" are a cheap and very secure alternative for the traditional karabiner at the top of a climb.

Belay devices. There is a multitude of devices for available today. All should be used in the same way, i.e. **DO NOT** let go of the dead rope, even with a self-locking device. The best ones for you depend on personal preference, budget and requirements. Avoid slick, easy running devices designed for climbers with a lot of experience who need to pay out quickly. Your retailer should be able to help you with this, but the sprung Sticht plate still seems one of the best beginner devices for the price. An Italian hitch on an HMS krab is cheap,

but it locks off exactly the opposite way to all the other devices and twists the rope badly, so it may not be ideal.

Given the range of belay devices available, there is little reason to continue to use the figure of 8 descender (unless a modern type SPECIFICALLY designed for belaying too). It is worth remembering that deaths have occurred through descenders cross loading the gates of karabiners as mentioned above.

e) When to dispose of equipment:

- At the end of the period the manufacturer recommends in any event.
- Ropes – check for fraying, sheath slippage, core showing through, feels misshapen in the core.
- Harnesses – watch fraying especially at key points such as waist belt & attachment point. Minor frays (up to say 10% of width) may be monitored carefully but these will expand rapidly and it is best to dispose of them straight away.
- Karabiners – these will generally last longer than nylon equipment; however they can wear if used to run ropes through –distinct grooves can appear. A groove of just 1mm is the maximum permitted. Any burrs which could cut ropes mean they should be retired; and the movement of gates and so on checked. Belay devices etc. have similar wear properties and should be checked in the same way. It may be useful to use steel karabiners with this type of instruction as they wear better, and they don't need to be carried on a harness so weight is not such a consideration.
- Slings – check for fraying regularly.
- Helmets – check for chipping, cracks, cradle coming away from the inside, cradle adjustment wearing out/breaking

IN ALL EVENTS – READ THE MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS

f) There are many possible types of misuse of gear and the training and assessment courses discuss this in detail. There are many points to note with group work and this list is not exhaustive but illustrates a few common examples:

- Some climbing harnesses (and old belts) come supplied with a belay loop which seems like a good idea. However if inverted this loop will be attached only by a tiny tape and participants have been known to continue belaying/tying in with this. It is a good idea to dispose of these loops or at least the attaching tape so that the loop would fall off if inverted.
- Similarly many climbing harnesses not designed for groups have gear loops for a rack of climbing gear and participants will often use these to tie on to the rope.

Example – one student who had attended several climbing sessions and was 17 years old clipped on to the end of a rope using an accessory karabiner (breaking strain 10kg) and clipped this into a gear loop! He fell from 10 feet and just reached the ground safely, but the karabiner was almost completely straightened out.

- Many participants and leaders use the abseil loops of some harnesses to belay from and tie climbers in with. They aren't designed for this. Read the instructions to your harness carefully and see what you can do with each type. For example, Petzl Club harnesses have a loop which you can use for these purposes.
- Side/cross loading karabiners. Karabiners are designed to be loaded end to end along the back bar and should only be used that way. Loads or running ropes should never go across the gate.
- Fig 8 descenders for belaying – although these have been widely used there is great potential for the descender to fall across the gate and break it with a levering action. Fig 8 descenders should only be used to belay in conjunction with a DMM Belaymaster karabiner or similar.
- Belay devices in general must be used correctly; the locking hand must be able to bring the rope in line as a continuation of itself in order to lock properly. Twisted ropes or belaying with wrong hand will not lock properly.

g) It is useful to have a logbook for gear, even if just the simplest kind to record the date of purchase of gear. It is easy to forget how old gear is when it is used frequently. If you have a lot of gear you may want to develop a more sophisticated system to log gear in & out and record its usage. In this case gear should be numbered and each use recorded with comments etc. Most stores will already have such a system in place. The important factor is that each unit/store/leader should have an appropriate level of system – a leader who only uses their own equipment will know it better and be aware that something is wearing out; whereas multiple users will need a more accurate system of recording. The manufacturer's instructions that come attached to every piece of climbing gear should be kept and not disposed of (it is only necessary to keep one set of instructions for each batch of gear). These instructions contain information on maximum usage, care etc.

h) The uses of the equipment listed forms the basis of climbing instruction and as such it is not appropriate to describe each here. Leaders will already be aware of such points if they climb regularly. However leaders should familiarise themselves with the literature available so as to gain as wide a spectrum of knowledge as possible. (See references).

6. Belaying and Ropework

- Demonstrate an ability to set up anchors – this is a central part of climbing instruction and 100% safe anchors are crucial. Candidates will be expected to be able to assess the best choice of anchor and how to set this up, with

reasonable speed and efficiency. Candidates should be able to operate without lengthy delays in order that their participants are not waiting excessively to begin an activity (see group management). A variety of methods will be demonstrated on training courses. (SEE 'Anchor Selection' below)

- Connect self and others to rope/system – normally a leader will be connected only at the top of an abseil tower for personal safety; during a climbing session they would not need to tie in. Candidates must be able to tie in participants by using the rope directly and by using a karabiner on the harness; and appreciate the reasons for using either method. It is also important to tie into each type of harness correctly (the manufacturer's instructions indicate this).

- Demonstrate a variety of belay techniques – candidates should be able to choose between the merits of different systems and devices for belaying. It is useful to have a basic knowledge of even those types of methods not recommended for groups (e.g. body belays) in order that leaders can appreciate the merits of the systems they themselves use. (see 'Belaying' below)

Rope Techniques

Anchor Slings

It is now widely accepted that the belay krab must hang over the edge of the rock, in order to prevent the formation rope grooves. Ideally, a sling should be placed above the top of a climb in a tree, but this is not always possible. Therefore, the instructor must make a risk assessment of each set up, in order to decide whether the climber has to climb too far past the belay sling before reaching safety. If the krab is a long way down the crag, in order to avoid erosion, it may then be too dangerous to finish. There are 100s of climbs to choose from, so go somewhere else. The most cost effective choice of gear is to have a couple of 8ft sewn slings and a few different lengths of static line for more awkward set ups. Dynamic rope is NOT suitable for anchors, due to the stretch. The sewn slings thread nicely through bolts and clip together for quick set up. Static line is very versatile, a lot cheaper and can quickly be tied with a small selection of knots.

Traditionally, all belaying is done from below. Although it is possible to belay from the top, the system is not taught on the course and in many cases it would cause even more erosion at the top. It is not, therefore, recommended unless the instructor is well versed in this technique.

Lowering off is the normal technique used on group sessions at climbing walls and single pitch crags elsewhere however IT IS NOT TO BE USED ON SOUTHERN SANDSTONE.

This is because it doubles the wear on the rock. The exception is, of course, if a climber cannot reach the top.

Belay methods – some points

Types of belay device include:

- Belay or 'Sticht' plate (sprung/unsprung)
- Italian hitch
- Fig 8 Descender
- ATC/Bug/Tuber or similar
- Grigri
- Single Rope Controller, Reverso and others

Types of belay system include:

- Instructors only belaying
- Italian hitch belaying in teams
- Belaying using variety of devices in teams
- Walk back belays
- Incorporating ground belays

There is a wide variety of belay devices available, from the cheap (Italian hitch in an HMS krab) to the expensive Gri - Gri (about £50.00, plus krab). It is up to the instructor to choose the most suitable method, but NEVER treat any of the devices as "auto lock". There are several that appear to lock up under load automatically, but they are not 100% and so should be treated just the same as traditional devices. "Walk away" belays are possible at Bowles only now, as they have caused severe erosion at Stone Farm and are impossible at Harrisons.

Ground Anchors are sometimes possible, and are excellent for solving the problems of heavy climbers and light belayers, but they must be used cautiously. There are 2 main types:

1. The rope is clipped directly to the ground anchor and operated by a belayer.
2. The ground anchor is attached to the rope and the belayer, especially if the anchor is not 100%.

When using Sticht plate type devices and ground anchors, watch out for the belayers wandering forward of the plate and being unable, therefore, to lock it off.

Using different devices over a series of sessions is a good progression, but may be expensive.

If using the Italian Hitch, remember that it is the only system where the lock of position is forward, not on the hip.

Develop your own system for teaching belaying, but it is always a good idea to avoid any situation where loaded rope is allowed to slide through the hand, as it can cause burns. "Hand over hand" belaying is far better, and the same goes for lowering.

It is possible to hold the tail or "dead" rope behind the belayer at first as a failsafe.

It is suggested that the first time a lower take place, the instructor is in close attendance.

Anchor Selection

Make a dynamic risk assessment at the top of the crag. Is it safe for you to work on the edge, or is there a possibility of you tripping/slipping and falling, possibly in front of your group. Is it suitable for them to get off safely at the top of the crag, bearing in mind they may take a sizable fall if they fall from above the belay krab? If not, go somewhere else, or use extra safeguards.

Choice of anchor points – in many cases these will be obvious. Anchors should be directly above climbs/abseils and as high as possible. It is crucial that leaders pay great attention to the selection of their anchors.

Stakes and bolts: who placed them? How do you know? How old are they and what is happening beneath the surface where you can't see. Don't take it for granted that just because it's man made means it's fine – it isn't. Always visually and physically check them for looseness and wear.

Corrosion can mean that these are rotten very quickly. If you are using the in-situ bolts, they are already backed up with a second bolt so you do not need any further anchors, unless the bolt is out of line with the climb.

Examples: **trees** may be old, roots hollow, branches weak. Trees close to the top of crags are almost by definition growing in thin soil and can be very marginal. The lower you put the sling, the less leverage, but it is worth remembering that a gust of wind produces a far greater force than a climber on a rope. NEVER allow a moving rope to rub against a tree, as once the protective bark is damaged, infection can set in & kill the tree.

There is nothing wrong with single point anchors as long as they fulfil the following rules:

1. The finished anchor must be absolutely bombproof.
2. It must be in line with the direction of pull.

If the anchor is not in line, or you don't have a 100% single anchor, a second anchor must be used to create a "Y" hang. Each anchor must be independently tied off and tight.

If you are having problems avoiding erosion, use crag/rope protectors (carpet is cheap and covers a wide area).

Maillons are ideal (and cheap) for attaching the rope to the sling. If you use a krab, ensure the gate is aligned downhill and away from the rock. It is unlikely that it will stay like this, so monitor it carefully.

Clothing

Apart from soft-soled shoes, there are no rules about correct clothing. However, it is best to wear old, loose fitting clothing (not jeans) as it can get very abraded during some of the more grovelling climbs that are suitable for novices. Layering is the best solution, with water or wind proofs as useful as sunscreen and water in our changeable climate!

Gloves are completely useless for climbing.

Instructors do not need belay gloves if belaying correctly, i.e. no moving rope should slide through the hand.

7. Safety and Group Management

- The number of participants that each leader may supervise is twelve. In practise this will translate to three ropes when climbing, or when abseiling 1:1.
- The leader must ensure their own safety at all times. You will be of no use to participants if you are injured and unable to do anything.
 - On abseil towers or at the top of crags always tie yourself on.
 - When at climbing sessions do not make a habit of soloing around or up & down to climbers. This is bad practise as it degrades the perceived achievements of the participants under instruction; takes your attention away from the group; and could result in a fall for you which leaves the group unsupervised.
- Select venue and climbs – The session starts well before you leave with the group. Have you got consent, liability insurance, clearance from the County (if required), enough gear, medical information? Does the group have a clear indication of start/finish times, emergency contact numbers and what to wear & bring? (see above). Have you either a) enough experience to choose routes quickly on arrival, or b) visited the crag beforehand to get to know it. What will you do if the crag is busy and your favourite routes are taken?
- The way you plan, and then introduce the session will directly affect the quality of the day. A good, clear but concise introduction is better than rambling on so long the group loses interest.
- Consider which way to approach, top or bottom first (if there is a choice). If you are on your own, it may be better to keep the group with you at the top as you set up, especially if they are likely to misbehave.
- Make sure you set clear boundaries, explain what to do at the top, show them the descent and make a central gear dump away from the foot of the rock.
- Wear a helmet, and use a rope when demonstrating rather than soloing (see notes on soloing below). This will apply when demonstrating the system if necessary. A helmet must be worn by leaders if you are asking participants to wear one.
- Keep technical information to a minimum at first, beginners may often only retain a small amount and are often only interested in climbing as quickly as possible. More information can be added later on when they are tired!
- Remove jewellery and watches, although it is best not to bring them at all. Jewellery may become damaged; but more importantly can cause damage to fingers if caught when falling.
- Develop a clear and quick way of explaining how harnesses go on, and be aware of the wide range of different types and buckling systems. A common problem with pre-threaded buckles is the climber fails

to release the leg loops fully before putting it on. This causes the harness to dip wildly at the front and so not fit. Look at them from the side, the waistband should go around the waist, and not over the hips and dip to the front.

- Awareness of the group is vital. It is important not to get too involved with any one climber and ignore the rest. Frequently a climber having problems making a move will demand attention; if you walk to the bottom or climb a few feet and encourage that person then you cannot see the other ropes or climbers. Therefore it is better at most times to stand behind the group where you can see everyone and just go forward to deal with things as they arise.
- Ensure the group understands environmental issues such as erosion, carving, noise etc. Consider very carefully what to do about "toilet stops", and the environmental impact this might have.
- Leaders must comply with wall/tower rules even where these exceed your own organisation's guidelines.
- It is a very good idea to put a member of staff at the top to make sure climbers un-rope in the right place, and to ensure they do not go back to the edge if the rope becomes tangled. It also means you do not have to talk so much about what to do at the top, so the group get to climb quicker and have less information to forget.
- ALWAYS check everyone before they climb, no matter how many times they have been climbing. It is good practice to get them to check each other first, then call you over.
- If coats are taken off, or someone has been to the toilet, always check their harness in case it is too loose or on incorrectly.
- **Never** solo routes in front of groups as a) you might fall off and injure yourself b) the session is not for the ego of the instructor c) it devalues the achievements of successful climbers or further compounds the disappointment of unsuccessful ones d) they may copy you, with disastrous consequences.
- Be aware that the group if unoccupied may well wander off into other areas. This can be as important a safety issue as any other and frequently young people can be seen happily clambering about whilst the leader is preoccupied with the 'real' climbing or abseiling session.
 - Define strict areas before the session where participants may/ may not go.
 - Use assistants/ any adults helping to supervise participants not actively involved or between activities.
 - Occupy everyone. They won't wander off if they have something interesting to do.
- Don't assume anyone is a capable assistant or instructor unless you have proof or good references. It will still be your fault if they make a mistake on your session.

8. The Outcrops

As mentioned previously, this award covers only the Sandstone crags in the Southeast. All instructors, therefore, are expected to have a copy of the current guidebook. However, these often become a little dated, and some of the information regarding access, parking etc may change. It is the responsibility of the instructor to be aware of these changes.

No groups are expected to use crags on private land, and instructors are reminded that the inclusion of an outcrop in the guide in no way indicates a right to climb there.

Some crags charge a fee, and Bowles may not let you take group there at all if you are not sufficiently qualified (ring to make sure before you go!).

The BMC is set to take over the management of Stone Farm, which should ease the access and erosion issues.

In all cases, groups should try to avoid:

1. Excessive noise.
2. Widening of paths to and from and along the base of crags.
3. Erosion in general.
4. Litter.
5. Over use of the same venue.
6. Monopolising routes for long periods.
7. Sending someone to the crag early to get the best routes before the group gets there.
8. Mobile phones - switch them off and keep for emergencies.
9. There is a complete ban on abseiling on sandstone (even if you see others doing so, especially at Bowles).
10. Use only soft-soled footwear, or proper climbing boots. No "commando" style boots are allowed, as they damage the rock.
11. Do not allow your group to lower off from the tops of climbs, however safe or convenient this may be.

Climbing Walls

Since 1990, there has been a large increase in the number of climbing walls available for use with groups. Each has their own problems and rules, and instructors should make sure they are aware of them, and visit the wall, before taking a group. It is worth noting that some walls will not allow instructors in without qualifications, and sometimes insurance as well. There is often a conflict of interest with other users, usually the public.

The following should be noted:

1. Brief the group fully before entering the wall.
2. Be especially vigilant to prevent group members walking or climbing underneath others, especially solo climbers.
3. Pay particular attention to warm ups and stretching exercises, especially if the group is trying harder problems.
4. Try to keep noise down and avoid monopolising routes.
5. Ensure that the group is aware of the need for "spotting" in pairs, and that adequate matting is used when required.
6. Very often, there is considerably less friction through the belay system at a wall than at the crag, which may come as a surprise to some people. Pay particular attention to belayers on their first session at a wall, and particularly when lowering.

9. Rescue Procedures

At one time, abseil rescues were always taught. However, in the entire time that we have been involved in Sandstone climbing with groups, we have NEVER used one, and do not know of anyone who has HAD to. It is far better to avoid any climb where climbers may become physically stuck, thus avoiding the problem. If a climber is on a ledge and refuses to sit back on the rope, follow this procedure:

1. Ensure the safety of the rest of the group. This may mean getting all climbers down and sending them away with their teacher or another staff member.

2. Try to talk them down. It may be better to go to the top and talk to them there, so their attention is drawn away from the drop.
3. Try to get them to try a couple of moves, then tighten the rope so much that when they step down the rope is so tight they can be lowered.
4. IF ALL ELSE FAILS. A rope can either be thrown to the climber, (or clipped over the live rope at the top) and then pulled to remove them from the ledge. This must be done firmly but not as a massive yank, and the instructor needs to pay close attention to the belayer. This technique is not pleasant for the climber, so be ready to calm them down. It does have the advantage of not putting the instructor in any danger and it is very quick.

10. References

Mountaineering and Leadership by Eric Langmuir; Scottish Sports Council; ISBN 1850602956

This is a general text about leadership mainly aimed at Mountain Leaders, i.e. hillwalking leaders. However it is always good general reading for outdoor groups and highly recommended.

The Complete Rock Climber by Malcolm Creasey; Lorenz Books; ISBN 1859679080

An excellent guide to climbing in general with superb illustrations.

The Handbook of Climbing by Allen Fyffe and Iain Peter; Pelham; ISBN 0720720540

Again, an excellent, almost definitive, guide to all aspects of climbing. This is the 'official' BMC handbook for climbing.

Further Modern Rope Techniques by Nigel Shepherd; Constable 1998;

ISBN 0 09 478540 6

This excellent book is an addition to 'A Manual of Modern Rope Techniques' by the same author and is aimed specifically at instructors. Although some material is not needed at this level, many sections are and these are well explained with clear illustrations.

Modern Rope Techniques in Mountaineering by Bill March; Cicerone Press 1988

Not entirely modern; however some useful diagrams. ISBN 0902 363 70 0

None of these texts cover many techniques for instructors however. This information is not really found in print, and the best source of information is other instructors and many hours of experience.

Appendix A

***** Outdoor Activity Camp

Dates here

I give my permission for my son/daughter to participate on the outdoor activity trip to ***** and fully understand the nature of the activities involved.

Name of Participant _____

Name of Parent/ Guardian _____

Signature _____

Medical Details – please note that all of this information is essential

Please fill in below where the person legally responsible for the student will be contactable during the time of the activity course:

Home Address: _____

Telephone: Code _____ Number _____

Emergency Address and Telephone number (if different to above e.g. grandparents, aunt, work etc.):

Doctor's Name and Address _____

Doctor's Telephone Number _____

National Health Number: _____

Date of last tetanus injection: _____

Any known allergies (penicillin, plaster, insect bites etc.): _____

Dietary considerations (vegetarian etc.): _____

Prescribed medication to be taken:

Please indicate any medical conditions below:

Please include all relevant information (if you are not sure, please tell us anyway) and remember that your son/daughter will be taking part in strenuous physical activities:

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY AND SIGN BELOW

I confirm that I am the person who has parental responsibility for _____ I have read the information relating to Activity Day/ Camp and my son/daughter is aware of the details. I believe that he/she is fit to take part in the activities and have declared any relevant dietary requirements and medical details on the form overleaf.

I give consent for the staff to seek medical advice should illness or an accident occur. If a surgical operation or injection becomes necessary, I authorise the teacher in charge to sign on my behalf any written consent to operate, as advised by the medical authorities. I also consent to my son/daughter being administered a non prescription painkiller by a member of staff if he/she requests.

I agree to my son/daughter taking part in any or all of the activities described in the course letter.

I understand that if the party leader considers the behaviour of my son/daughter to be unsatisfactory or could in any way jeopardise his/her own safety or that of others, that he/she will be excluded from activities or in the extreme be asked to return home early at my expense.

I understand that it is vital for all pupils to obey without question, the instructions of the staff.

Signed _____ Date _____