

# Climbing (Bouldering/Traverse Climbing Wall)

## ELEMENTARY - CURRICULAR 2025

- Consult [Disability-Centred Safety](#) if your groups of students include students with disabilities.
- Portable Installation on School Site, Permanent Installation on School Site, Permanent Installation on Commercial Site.
- Bouldering Walls: Students combine vertical and horizontal movement on relatively low, artificial climbing walls, un-rope, protected by thick matting, which may include large overhangs and caves. In situations where the falling climber may injure a spotter (for example, the wall angle is steep and/or the climber is high), a spotter must not be used.
- Traverse Walls: Students move mainly horizontally rather than vertically on relatively low, mainly flat, artificial climbing walls, un-rope, protected by matting, and may be assisted by spotters.
- Outdoor bouldering on natural rock is not permissible.
- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).
- Also consult [Climbing \(General Procedures\)](#).

## Equipment

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- Determine that all equipment is safe (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters) and all assistive devices (e.g., a walker) are in good working condition and properly adjusted for the height and mobility needs of the student prior to participation.
- All equipment must be inspected by qualified personnel prior to activity.

## **Mats**

- **Bouldering Mats:** A mat surface (solid or cross-linked foam or equivalent) must be in place under the bouldering area. The mats must extend a minimum of 6 feet (approx. 1.83 m.) from the outward most point from the wall (minimum mat thickness is 6"). Where the height increases and/or angle of the wall (for example, overhangs or caves) increases, the thickness of matting must also increase accordingly (for example, 12"-24").
- **Traverse Wall Mats:** A mat surface (solid or cross-linked foam or equivalent) or an impact attenuating surface as per the manufacturer recommendations must be in place under the traverse area.
- **Mat thicknesses:**
  - cross-link foam 5 cm (2")
  - open-cell foam 5 cm (2")
  - polyurethane 5 cm (2")
  - dual-density 5 cm (2")
  - mats of equivalent compaction rating as determined by the manufacturer.

Refer to the [First Aid](#) section for first aid equipment requirements.

## **Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery**

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- Clothing and footwear appropriate to the activities and environmental conditions must be worn.
- Exposed jewelry is not permitted.
- Medic alert identification and religious articles of faith that cannot be removed must be taped or securely covered.
- Long hair must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

## Facilities

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- Determine that all facilities are safe and accessible for the students participating. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the teacher.
- The climbing area must be appropriate for the ability levels, age and size of the students.
- All providers must follow the [Ontario Building Code Act](#), and all applicable By-Laws and Regulations.
- All of the walls must be installed by a qualified professional (for example, Qualified Instructor/Outside Activity Provider). The initial installation of a bouldering or traverse wall must be inspected by qualified personnel upon completion of the installation and at least once a year thereafter by qualified climbing inspection personnel. This inspection must be documented with a written report. Necessary changes noted in the report must be addressed.
- When walking, running, or wheeling takes place off school site for a warm-up, conditioning and/or is an integral part of the activity:

- Teachers must do a safety check in order to identify potential problems prior to initial use of route or course.
- Teachers must outline to the students the route or course (for example, notice of areas to approach with caution) before the start of the activity.
- Teachers must determine that students are not crossing busy intersections unless directly supervised.

## Environmental Considerations

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- When environmental conditions may pose a risk to student safety (for example, thunderstorms [lightning] or student(s) with asthma, triggered by air quality), Teachers must take into consideration their school board/school's protocols and procedures related to:
  - environmental conditions (consult [Weather](#)); and
  - insects (for example, mosquitoes and ticks [consult the school/school board's protocols and/or regional Public Health Department's website]).
- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, sun burn, heat stroke, poisonous plants).
- At all times the school board's weather and insect procedures are the minimum standards. In situations where a higher standard of care is presented (for example, outside activity providers, facility/program coordinators), the higher standard of care must be followed.

## Special Rules/Instructions

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- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult [Medical Conditions](#).

- Students must not participate in the activity until they receive information on concussion prevention specific to the activity, inherent risks of the activity (for example, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks), and procedures and rules for safe play. Students must receive instruction on the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.
- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for communication with parents/guardians, the location of an off-site activity, means of transportation, supervision ratios, and parent/guardian permission.
- Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression.
- A warm-up and cool-down must be included.
- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- Students must be informed that the use of equipment and the gymnasium are prohibited without supervision. In addition to verbal communication, the doors must be locked or signs must be posted indicating that students are not allowed to use the gym unless appropriately supervised.
- Completed medical forms for each participating student must be accessible.
- Prior to the first lesson, Teachers must inform Qualified Climbing Instructors of students who have special needs.
- Risks involved with each activity and how to lower the risk of an injury from occurring must be communicated to the students.
- An introductory lesson must be an integral part of the program for all students.
- Activity and course elements that are introduced must be based on skills that are taught and appropriate for the age, ability level, language and and experience of the students.

- Teachers, Qualified Instructors and students must be aware of safety procedures.
- Students must be allowed to select a challenge at their comfort level, including the choice to not participate.
- Qualified Instructors must ensure that the landing zone under climbers is free of people and objects.
- A trained adult must be instructed in the safe and correct way of moving and handling the Bouldering/Traverse Climbing Wall (e.g., lifting, setting up/taking down/adjusting).
- When dismounting the wall, students must attempt to climb down from the wall rather than jumping or falling.
- *Grades 6 and below:* the hands of the students must not be more than 2.4m (7'10") above the landing surface.
- *Grades 7 and 8:* the hands of the students must not be more than 3.5m (11'6") above the landing surface.
- In order to minimize the risk of injury to both climbers and spotters, the activity provider must consider use of down-climb holds; instruction on proper falling technique and conscientious route planning; and seamless floor padding.
- Teachers and Monitors must be aware of the possibility of peer pressure and make sure no student is coerced into participating.
- Students who have demonstrated the required instructor skills and who are 16 years of age or older can assist with instruction but must be directly supervised by a Qualified Instructor.

## Traverse Wall Spotting

- Prior to the activity, the Qualified Instructor must determine whether a spotter is to be used.

- During initial instruction, a spotter may be used. The spotter's role is that of breaking or interrupting the fall of a climber, moving with the climber as they progress; it is not to fully absorb the fall of a climber. A student may fulfill the role of the spotter, provided instruction has been given.

## Bouldering Spotting

- Prior to the activity, the Qualified Instructor must determine whether a spotter is to be used.
- Prior to the use of spotters, instruction must be provided to spotters on proper technique.
- In bouldering situations where a falling climber may injure a spotter (for example, the wall angle is steep (for example, the climber is in a non-vertical position) and/or the climber is high (for example, climber's feet are more than 90cm/3 feet off the ground), a spotter must not be used.
- Students must not walk under anyone bouldering.

## Supervision

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- All activities must be supervised.
- The type of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.
- Direct Supervision is required during the safety and initial skill instruction.
- On-Site Supervision is required by the Teacher when a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring.
- On-Site Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity (e.g., equipment setup and take down, warm-ups/cool downs, application of the skills and games).
- Direct Supervision is required when trained students are moving and handling equipment (e.g., lifting, setting up/taking down/adjusting).

- A Volunteer, under the direction of a Teacher, can monitor students during physical education activities. Refer to your school board's policy on Volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.
- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Teachers and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.
- Where a Qualified Instructor is used and the Teacher is not directly with the Qualified Instructor, the Qualified Instructor must provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the safe application of skills and student behaviour for the duration of the activity.

## Supervision/Monitoring Ratios

- Bouldering:
  - Grade 6 and below: 1 Teacher/Monitor per 8 students
  - Grade 7 and 8: 1 Teacher/Monitor per 12 students
- Traverse Walls:
  - Grade 6 and below – 1 Teacher/Monitor per 8 students (not including spotters)
  - Grades 7 and 8 – 1 Teacher/Monitor per 12 students (not including spotters)

## Qualifications

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### Outside Provider Instructor

- Qualified Instructors must be trained in, understand, demonstrate, and adhere to a directly relevant skill set for bouldering/traverse climbing. A relevant skill set is a described set of skills developed by recognized climbing professionals.

- All Qualified Instructors must be 18 years of age or older to teach the introductory lesson and/or be a Qualified Instructor.
- After initial instruction, an individual (for example, Teacher) who is trained in the skills and safety elements of bouldering/traverse wall climbing can monitor students who are bouldering/traverse wall climbing.

## Applicable to Permanent School Traverse Walls

- Teachers must have attended and successfully completed training on the safe use of the elements of the school site's traverse wall by a climbing professional (for example, climbing companies).

## First Aid

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- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Sample First Aid Kit](#))
- A working communication device (for example, cell phone) must be accessible.

Off school site: At least one Qualified Instructor or designated individual responsible for providing first aid must have current First Aid qualifications equivalent to or exceeding St. John Ambulance Emergency First Aid with CPR Level C + AED.☒

## Definitions

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- **In-charge Person:**
  - Some activities refer to an "In-Charge" person. While the teacher is in-charge and responsible for the overall safety and well-being of students under their care, sometimes there are other personnel who must be identified as "In-Charge" related to specific situations (for example, a pool lifeguard). In activities where an "In-Charge" person is designated, that person, in consultation with the teacher, must make final decisions regarding safety of the students
- **Monitor:**

- An individual who assists the Teacher with a group of students, (e.g., Volunteer, Qualified Instructor) and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity.

- **Monitoring:**

- The role of monitoring is to observe, identify, act, and report:
  - Observe: Observe with attention to detail the actions of the students.
  - Identify: Identify the student and the unsafe behaviour.
  - Act: Take appropriate actions to safeguard students and others (e.g., stop the activity).
  - Report: Provide the name of the student and the unsafe behaviour to the teacher for management and direction.

- **Outside Activity Provider:**

- A commercial company, volunteer organization, or individual, not associated with the school board, who possess the required qualifications to provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the duration of an activity.

- **Qualified Instructor:**

- An individual who provides safety and skill instruction, and monitoring for an activity, and possesses the required qualifications (e.g., experience, certifications). This role could be fulfilled by a teacher, volunteer, or an employee of an outside provider. An instructor does not have the authority to supervise.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for management or direction. Activities, facilities, and equipment have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education includes three Types of supervision, Direct Supervision, On-Site Supervision, and In-the-Area Supervision. These types of supervision take into consideration the level of risk, which is related to the number of participants, the skill

level of the participants, the type of equipment used, the environmental conditions, the age, and developmental stage.

- The three types of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that activities require and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.
- Some activities in OPASSE transition from one type of supervision to another type of supervision (e.g., Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision OR On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision).

- **Teacher:**

- A person with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board (i.e., teacher, vice-principal, principal). This person is legally responsible for the students and has the authority and responsibility to supervise.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Direct Supervision:**

- Direct Supervision requires that the Teacher is physically present at the activity, providing visual and verbal oversight for management and direction of both, the activity and student safety.
  - Provisos:
    - No other activity can occur when part of the activity or the entire activity is under Direct Supervision when there is only one Teacher supervising.
    - The Supervision section of the relevant activity safety standards page in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education describes when parts of an activity are under Direct Supervision.
    - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for one activity and requires the Teacher to be present at that activity for management and direction.

- An activity may be under Direct Supervision:
  - During the entire duration of the activity;
  - During the set up and take down of equipment; .
  - During the safety and initial skill instruction;
  - During the performance/practice of the activity skill; and
  - When the activities transition from Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision.

○ **In-the-Area Supervision:**

- The Teacher is located in proximity to a combination of locations where the student activities take place, is circulating, and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
  - Provisos:
    - The Teacher is circulating between the activities occurring at separate locations, and is readily accessible, or the location of the Teacher is communicated to the student.
    - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and skill and instruction and is monitoring at a combination of locations, the Teacher is located in proximity to where the student activities take place, is circulating between the activity locations, and is accessible for management and direction.
    - Students may be out of sight for periods of time.
  - An activity or a component of the activity is under In-the-Area Supervision:
    - Where the same activity is located in separate locations (e.g., Fitness activities);
    - Where two or more activities under In-the-Area Supervision occur in separate locations (e.g., Badminton, Table Tennis, Handball (Wall));

- Where the skill application of the activity takes place at a separate location from the teacher (e.g., Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine), Cycling, hiking on trails);
  - When the activities occur in double or triple gymnasiums; and
  - Where more than one Qualified Instructor is providing activities at a combination of locations.
  
- **On-Site Supervision:**
  - The Teacher is present at one location where the student activity takes place (e.g., gymnasium, sports field, climbing wall at an Outside Activity Provider's facility, campsite) and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
    - **Provisos:**
      - Where more than one activity occurs in one location, the Teacher is circulating between the activities and is accessible for management and direction.
      - Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (e.g., equipment room, outdoor storage shed, boathouse, staff tent) is considered to be On-Site Supervision.
      - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for an activity or a combination of activities at one location and the Teacher is present and is circulating and accessible for management and direction.
  - An activity may be under On-Site Supervision:
    - During the entire duration of the activity;
    - During the safety and initial skill instruction;
    - With activities using multiple stations while the Teacher is circulating;

- When combining two or more activities at one location while the Teacher is circulating; and
- When activities transition from On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision.

- **Volunteer:**

- A responsible adult (e.g., Educational Assistants, Retired Teachers, Co-op Students, Parents/Guardians, Teacher Candidates) approved by the Principal/Designate who is under the direction of a Teacher and has been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with student's physical activities.

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