

Climbing (Climbing Wall and Related Activities)

ELEMENTARY - CURRICULAR 2023

- Climb only and belaying conditions for grades 1 to 8 when wall climbing.
- Portable Installation on School Site, Permanent Installation on School Site, Permanent Installation on Commercial Site
- 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

- Determine that all equipment is safe for use (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters). Students must be encouraged to report equipment problems to the teacher.
- All of the equipment must be commercially and specifically manufactured for the intended climbing related activity and adhere to one of: UIAA, CE, NFPA, ULC, CSA, ASTM standards.
- All equipment must be inspected by qualified personnel prior to activity.
- The belay rope must be compatible with the chosen belay device and the climbing activity.
- The climbers must use climbing harnesses (sit or full body) appropriate for their age and/or body size.
- Belay devices must be connected with a locking carabiner rated at 22kN/2200kg/ 4945lbs., where commercial friction or camming devices are used.

- The top anchors must have 2 individual points or belay bar.
- The top anchors must have locking devices. The climbers must not be able to climb above the anchors. The top anchors must be able to sustain a load of 22kN/2200kg/4945lbs.
- The bottom anchors must be one of: 2 individual floor anchors, or belayer harness, (a belay system/technique that will not allow the climber to ground- fall in the event the belayer becomes incapacitated) or combination harness and floor.
- The bottom anchors must have a belay device connected with a locking carabiner and be capable of sustaining a load of 10kN/1000kg/2240lbs.
- Mats (for example, Velcro utility mats, wrestling mats) must be in place at the ascending and descending points for all of the indoor walls.
- 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.
- Helmets:
 - The wearing of a helmet (or not) must be professionally determined based on the existing hazards in the facility (for example, toe/hand holds, features) and/or the operating system (for example, auto-belay).
 - Facilities must provide helmets when their use is not hazardous or when they are required by the school/board, or parents/guardians.
 - When appropriate, helmets that are commercially and specifically manufactured for climbing must be properly fitted (as per manufacturer's guidelines) and properly worn.

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

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Clothing and footwear appropriate to the activities and environmental conditions must be worn. Tops with drawstrings are not permitted.
- No exposed jewellery permitted.
- 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

- Determine that all facilities are safe for use. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the teacher.
- The climbing wall must be appropriate for the ability levels, age and size of the students.
- All of the providers must follow the [Ontario Building Code Act](#), and all applicable By-Laws and Regulations.
- All of the climbing equipment must be installed by a qualified professional (e.g., instructor/ provider). The initial installation of the climbing equipment 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 running takes place off school site for a warm up:
 - Teachers must do a safety check 'walk through' 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 run.

- Teachers must determine that students are not crossing busy intersections unless directly supervised.

Environmental Considerations

- 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).
- 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

- 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.

- Activities must be modified according to the age, ability level, language, and experience of students, number of participants, and the facility available.
- 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 proper 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.
- Completed medical forms for each participating student must be accessible.
- Prior to the first lesson, teachers must inform 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.
- Teachers, 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.
- A belay system suitable to the age, maturity, size and skill of the students must be used.
- When students are belaying, the following elements must be addressed in an introductory lesson prior to top-rope climbing:
 - the introductory lesson be identified as top-rope specific
 - the introductory lesson must be identified as specific to the belay device being used
 - the introductory lesson must include instruction on and repeat practice of:
 - correct use of harness
 - correct use of knots and tie-in points
 - concept of top-roping

- correct use of belay device
 - general belaying principles
 - lowering procedures
 - communication and the climber/belayer contract
- A qualified instructor must do a safety check of any student leaving the ground.
- Teachers, instructors and supervisors must be aware of the possibility of peer pressure and make sure no student is coerced into participating.
- Individuals who have been trained and can demonstrate 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 teacher instructor.
- A trained adult must be instructed in the safe and correct way of moving and handling the Climbing Wall (e.g., lifting, setting up/taking down/adjusting).

Fall Protection Operating Systems

- Programs may be offered utilizing the following fall protection operating systems:
 - **Climb Only**
 - **Full Belay**
 - **Participatory/Team Belay**
 - **Auto Belay**
- Programs are required to follow the ratios related to the grade level and the fall protection operating systems as indicated in the Supervision Section.
- A qualified instructor must check the harness and connection to the fall protection operating system for any student prior to them leaving the ground.
- The fall protection operating system utilized must be one that was installed and recommended by a qualified Challenge Course Professional.

- The climber-to-belayer weight ratio must be taken into consideration when determining the number of buddy belayers necessary in any non-ground anchored system. In most conventional top-roped belay systems, an approximate climber-to-belayer weight ratio is 1:1.
- A body belay is not to be used.
- A belay system/technique that will not allow the climber to ground-fall in the event that the belayer becomes incapacitated must be used by student belayers.
- Ground/floor anchors must be backed up by a harness attachment unless they have been specifically installed for climbing and conform to recognized standards (see equipment list).
- Students in grade 6 and below are not allowed to belay.
- Lead climbing by students must not be done.

For Climb Only Programs

- Rules must clearly be explained to students prior to climbing by a qualified instructor.
- Students are not permitted to:
 - belay
 - apply harnesses to themselves or others
 - tie knots for themselves or others
 - connect to an auto belay system themselves
- Belaying, applying harnesses, tying knots, and connecting to an auto belay must be done by a qualified instructor.

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- The level 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.

- A volunteer could assist in the supervision of physical education activities. Examples of volunteers are educational assistants, retired teachers, co-op students, parents/guardians, early childhood educators, and teacher candidates. Refer to your school board's policy regarding volunteers. These volunteers must be accompanied by a supervisor.
- On site supervision by both a teacher and qualified instructor(s) who must be present for all aspects of the program.
- 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.

Supervision Ratios Applicable to All Installations

- Climb only:
 - Grades 1-3: 1 instructor per 1 active line
 - Grades 4-6: 1 instructor per 1 active line
 - Grades 7-8: 1 instructor per 1 active line
- Full Belay:
 - Grades 1-3: Not permitted
 - Grades 4-6: Not permitted
 - Grades 7-8: 1 instructor per 2 active lines
- Participatory/Team Belay:
 - Grades 1-3: Not permitted
 - Grades 4-6: 1 instructor per 4 active lines
 - Grades 7-8: 1 instructor per 4 active lines
- Auto Belay:
 - Grades 1-3: 1 instructor per 4 actively participating students in close proximity

- Grades 4-5: 1 instructor per 6 actively participating students in close proximity
- Grades 6-8: 1 instructor per 8 actively participating students in close proximity
- After introductory lesson, above ratios must be maintained.

Intramural Wall Climbing Clubs Ratios

- For Grades 7 and 8 intramural Clubs (for example, Wall Climbing Clubs) that go to a commercial site provider, all of the above ratios apply for the first three visits (total time 6 hours minimum) that take place within a reasonable time frame. After three separate visits (total time 6 hours minimum):
 - an instructor provides a belay check for each student
 - a climbing professional provides on-site supervision
 - 1 instructor to 12 students

Qualifications

Applicable to All Installations

- Instructors must be trained in, understand, demonstrate, and adhere to a directly relevant skill set for Climbing Walls. A relevant skill set is a described set of skills developed by recognized climbing professionals.
- All instructors must be at least 18 years of age or older to teach the introductory lesson and/or be an instructor.

Applicable to Permanent School Sites

- Instructors for permanent school sites must hold a current certificate (within the last 3 years), demonstrating successful completion of a training workshop that directly addresses the climbing activities they are teaching.

First Aid

- 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.
- On school site: Follow the school's first aid emergency response (consult [First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response](#)) and the school board's concussion protocol (consult [Concussions](#)). An emergency action plan and response to deal with evacuations and lock downs must be followed and communicated to students.
- Off school site: At least one instructor or an 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

- **Auto Belay:**
 - Auto Belay is a mechanical fall protection system where the student is connected to a self-retracting lanyard that controls their descent.
- **Climb Only:**
 - Climb Only is when only the instructor belays students.
- **Full Belay:**
 - Full Belay is when students belay other students using a top rope belay.
- **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
- **Participatory/Team Belay:**

- Participatory/Team Belay is when students participate in a belay team with an instructor belaying other students using a top rope style belay.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for regulation 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 designate three categories of supervision, Constant visual supervision, On-site supervision, and In-the-area supervision. The categories take into consideration the risk level of the activity, the participants' skill level and the participants' maturity. The three levels of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that an activity requires and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.

- **Supervisor:**

- A supervisor is defined as a teacher, vice-principal or principal with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board. The supervisor is legally responsible for the students.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Constant Visual Supervision:**

- Constant visual supervision means that the teacher is physically present, watching the activity in question. Only one activity requiring "Constant visual" supervision may take place while other activities are going on.
- Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practising relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For high jump, the teacher is at the high jump area and is observing the activity.

- Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For parachute, the intramural supervisor is at the event and is observing activity.

- **In-the-area Supervision:**

- In-the-area supervision means that the teacher could be in the gymnasium while another activity is taking place in an area adjacent to the gymnasium. In-the-area supervision requires the teacher to be readily accessible.
- In-the-area supervision occurs:
 - in activities in which students may be out of sight for periods of time and the location of the teacher is not nearby (for example, alpine skiing, cross-country running). At least one of the following criteria must be in place:
 - The teacher is circulating
 - The location of teacher has been communicated to students and volunteers
 - in single activities and those that may be combined (for example, other in- the- area activities such as badminton, table tennis, handball – wall) with the following criteria in place:
 - The teacher must be circulating between the activities and readily accessible
 - The teacher informs students of the location of the activities
- Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practising relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For distance running, the students are running around the school and at times may be out of sight.
- Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For a scavenger hunt, the students are running around the school

grounds and at times may be out of sight.

- **On-site Supervision:**

- On-site supervision entails teacher presence but not necessarily constantly viewing one specific activity. Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (for example, equipment room) to the gym is considered part of “on-site supervision”.
- Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practising relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For a relay, the students are practising on the track and can be seen by the teacher who is with the high jumpers.
- Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For relay games, the students are participating on the playground and can be seen by the intramural supervisor.

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