

Climbing (Challenge Courses - Low Elements)

ELEMENTARY - CURRICULAR 2023

- Portable or Permanent Installation at a commercial or school/board site.
- Where students perform a series of activities either while working with others on initiative tasks or responding to personal challenges close to the ground.
- A low element course is one in which the only fall protection is spotting.
- 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 inspected by qualified on site ropes/challenge course personnel prior to the activity to determine that all of the equipment is safe to use.

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

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Clothing and footwear appropriate to the chosen activities and environmental conditions must be worn. Tops with drawstrings are not permitted.
- Exposed jewelry is not 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.
- All of the challenge course low elements must have been originally installed according to the current edition of the [ACCT Standards](#).
- A qualified Challenge Course Inspector must inspect all of the challenge course low elements annually. This inspection must use the most current edition of the ACCT Standards and be documented in a written report.
- Recommended maintenance to the challenge course low elements noted in the report must be appropriately addressed.
- There must be an adequate layer of wood chips at the base of any trees which support low challenge course elements to limit soil compaction.
- If indoors, the floor surface under the ropes must be covered with Velcro mats:
 - cross-link foam 5cm (2")
 - open-cell foam 5cm (2")
 - polyurethane 5cm (2")
 - dual-density 5cm (2")

- The mats must be checked regularly for wear and tear.
- Trained on-site personnel must inspect all of the challenge course low elements prior to use.
- Both the spotting path and the landing zone for all of the challenge course low elements must be cleared of debris and other obstacles prior to use.
- 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 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, instructors and students must be aware of safety procedures.
- Students must be made aware of expectations as they relate to:
 - behaviour

- emergency procedures
- signal to assemble
- boundaries for activities
- The low element challenge course must operate in accordance with the most current **ACCT Standards**. A qualified, designate Course Manager who is responsible for overseeing the staffing and operation is required.
- The low element challenge course must establish and follow local operating procedures (LOPS) for all elements.
- The LOPS must incorporate any recommendations made by the qualified Challenge Course Professional.
- Each activity that requires spotting needs the direct supervision of a trained instructor.
- When students are spotting, an introductory lesson that incorporates the following items must precede the activity:
 - the instruction to step down rather than fall off elements
 - the responsibility for another student's safety
 - instruction and repeated practice on:
 - concept of spotting
 - general principles for spotting such as stance and hand position
 - communication and the climber/spotter contract
 - specific instructions for the particular challenge course element
- When students have not been taught to spot or are not able to spot effectively, spotting must be performed by one or more trained instructors.
- Instructors must rotate spotters so that no one becomes physically or mentally fatigued.
- Instructors must address the effect of size differences between a potential low rope participant and his or her spotters when assessing the suitability of using student spotters.

- If low ropes course is outdoors, the school board's lightning protocol must be shared with the operator/activity provider.
- 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 instructor.

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- On site supervision by both a teacher and qualified instructor(s) who must be present for all aspects of the program.
- 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.
- 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

- Grades 1-3: 1 instructor per 8 students
- Grades 4-8: 1 instructor per 12 students

Qualifications

Applicable to All Installations and Sites

- All lead low element challenge course instructors must complete an annual training course taught by a qualified challenge course Trainer OR be currently certified in [ACCT Standards](#) as a challenge Course Practitioner (Level 1 or 2).
- Instructors must be trained in, understand, demonstrate and adhere to a directly relevant skill set for Challenge Courses (Low Elements). A relevant skill set is a described set of skills developed by recognized Challenge Course Professionals. This training must be directly applicable to the course/elements at the site. This training must be documented.
- All instructors must be at least 18 years of age or older to teach the introductory lesson and/or be an instructor.

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

- **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

- **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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