

# Climbing (General Procedures)

## ELEMENTARY - CURRICULAR 2025

- Consult [Disability-Centred Safety](#) if your groups of students include students with disabilities.
- 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](#).

## Equipment

---

- 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.

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

## Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

---

- Appropriate clothing and footwear must be worn.
- 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 and accessible for the students participating. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the teacher.
- 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

---

- 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

---

- 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.
- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- Prior to first lesson Teachers must inform Qualified Climbing Instructor of students who have special needs (for example, behavioural management) or medical conditions that may influence full participation (for example, seizure disorder).
- Risks involved with each activity and how to minimize the risk of an injury from occurring must be communicated to the students.
- Teachers, Qualified Instructors and students must be aware of safety procedures.
- Prior to using a climbing activity provider for either on-site or off-site activities the following must take place:
  - Teacher must address school board policies

- Activity provider must provide evidence of knowledge, expertise, certification (where applicable) in activity to be provided.
- When students are participating in more than one activity, Teachers/Monitors must refer to the activity page for each activity.
- Students must be allowed to select a challenge at their comfort level, including the choice to not participate.
- Teachers and Monitors must be aware of the possibility of peer pressure and make sure no student is coerced into participating.
- Students who have been trained and can demonstrate the required Qualified 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.

## Climbing Activity Descriptions

- Aerial Parks: A supervised independent aerial experience where students travel from platform to platform while connected to a safety line. May include elements such as: tarzan ropes, suspension bridges, cargo net, ladders, climbing walls, ziplines, mechanically-operated descent. Required minimum age, height, and weight may vary between aerial parks. Please contact your aerial park provider for clarification. (Portable installation, or a permanent installation on a commercial site.)
- Ascending Lines: Where students climb or ascend and descend single lines suspended from anchors. (portable installation on school site, or permanent installation on school or commercial site). Grades 4 to 8 only.
- Bouldering: Where students climb relatively low walls, un-roped, protected by matting.(portable installation on school site, or permanent installation on school or commercial site)

- Challenge Course/Towers – High Elements: An element that requires the use of a belay in normal operation. (permanent installation on a school or commercial site). Grades 1, 2, 3 – low elements only (consult [Climbing \(Challenge Courses - Low Elements\)](#)). Grades 4-8 climbing and belaying permitted.
- Challenge Course - Low Elements: Where students perform a series of activities, either while working with others on initiative tasks or responding to personal challenges close to the ground. No rope belay system is required for fall protection and where spotting is needed. (portable or permanent at commercial or school/board site)
- Climbing Wall and Related Activities: For wall climbing programs where a belay is required. (portable installation on school site, permanent installation on school or commercial site).
- Outdoor Rock Climbing: Climbing the side of a rock face. (This is NOT outdoor ascending lines, ziplines or bouldering.) Grades 6 to 8 only.
- Traverse Climbing Wall: Students move mainly horizontally rather than vertically on relatively low, mainly flat, artificial climbing walls, un-roped, protected by matting, and may be assisted by spotters. (portable installation on school site, or permanent installation on school or commercial site)
- Zipline, Tyrolean Traverse: Where students move in a horizontal or descending manner along a fixed rope/line, installed in an elevated fashion (portable installation on school site, permanent installation on commercial site). Grades 1 to 8 where accommodated by the activity provider. Required minimum age, height, and weight may vary between ziplines. Please contact your activity provider for clarification.

## Fall Protection Operating System Definitions

- Climb Only: in such cases, only the instructor belays students.
- Full Belay: in such cases, students belay other students using a top rope belay.

- Participatory/Team Belay: in such cases, students participate in a belay team with a Qualified Instructor belaying other students using a top rope style belay.
- Auto Belay: mechanical fall protection system where student is connected to a self-retracting lanyard that controls their descent.
- Continuous Lanyard System: a system where the student is connected to the anchored safety cable continuously.
- Individual Lanyard System: a system where the student is directly connected to the belay cable via a pair of lanyards. There are two types of control systems:
  - Human control system: is used to manage continuous connection to the life safety system
  - Mechanical control system: is used to manage continuous connection to the life safety system (for example, SmartBelay, Clic-it, Bornack)

## Primary Fall Protection Operating Systems by Climbing Activity

- (Not all operating systems are appropriate for all grade levels. Consult individual activity pages for specific information.)
- For climb only:
  - Ascending Lines
  - Challenge Course – Towers/High Elements
  - Climbing Wall
  - Outdoor Rock Climbing
  - Zipline

- For full belay:
  - Ascending Lines
  - Challenge Course – Towers/High Elements
  - Climbing Wall
  - Outdoor Rock Climbing
  - Zipline
  
- For participatory/team belay:
  - Ascending Lines
  - Challenge Course – Towers/High Elements
  - Climbing Wall
  - Zipline
  
- For auto belay:
  - Aerial Parks
  - Ascending Lines
  - Challenge Course – Towers/High Elements
  - Climbing Wall
  - Zipline

- For individual lanyard human:
  - Aerial Parks
  - Challenge Course – Towers/High Elements
  - Zipline
  
- For individual lanyard mechanical:
  - Aerial Parks
  - Challenge Course – Towers/High Elements
  - Zipline
  
- For continuous lanyard system:
  - Aerial Parks
  
- For mats:
  - Bouldering/Traverse Wall Climbing
  
- For spotting:
  - Bouldering/Traverse Wall Climbing
  - Challenge Course – Low Elements

## **Supervision**

---

- 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.
- 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.
- Type of Supervision: Refer to the activity page for each climbing activity.
- Ratios: Refer to specific climbing activity pages for Qualified Instructor to student ratios. Where multiple activities are taking place at the climbing site, ratios for each specific activity must follow the specific activity page requirements.

## Qualifications

---

### Applicable to All Installations

- Qualified Instructors must be trained in, understand, demonstrate, and adhere to a directly relevant skill set for their respective activity. 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 ground school and/or be a Qualified Instructor.

### Applicable to Permanent School Sites

- Qualified 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.

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

---

- **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.

Last Published

Fri, 03/27/26 11:37 am