

Queensland Government – Dept of Education, Training & the Arts

Rock Climbing and Abseiling

Version 2.0 (downloaded 08 Nov 2007)

Forms part of HLS-PR-012: [Curriculum Activity Risk Management](http://education.qld.qed.gov.au/strategic/epr/health/hlspr012/) at <http://education.qld.qed.gov.au/strategic/epr/health/hlspr012/>. The particular features of this activity are to be considered as part of the general responsibilities of principals, teachers or other leaders outlined in that procedure.

Scope

Rock climbing refers to ascending cliffs. Abseiling refers to the method used by rock climbers and bushwalkers for descending cliffs.

Both activities may occur in natural or built environments and require the use of specialised equipment and ropes.

Multi-pitch climbs and abseils should not be included in school climbing and abseiling activities.

The safety requirements for rock climbing and abseiling also apply to all rock climbing walls and abseiling towers specifically constructed for this purpose, including those in gymnasiums.

If a school wishes to build an abseiling tower or rock-climbing wall, it should be constructed in accordance with the Department of Administrative Services specifications and be checked before use.

Nature of hazards

As part of the process of safety self-regulation, all persons engaging in this activity should identify the hazards, assess their significance and manage the potential risks including any additional hazards not mentioned here

Hazards in natural environments are subject to on-going change. These changes may be in relation to the number, magnitude, type and specific location of hazards.

Hazards that may be encountered in rock climbing and abseiling include:

- environmental hazards (e.g. dead or dying trees, sharp rocks, slippery surfaces, adverse climatic conditions)
- gravitational hazards (e.g. rock falls above the site, on cliff surfaces or underfoot)
- thermal hazards (e.g. burns from ropes, burns to ropes)

Level of risk

The categorisation of these conditions is subjective and offered as a starting point for risk management planning. The actual degree of risk is best ascertained by persons with intimate local knowledge present at the site of the activity.

Participation in rock climbing and abseiling involves high risk (level 3).

Minimum supervision

A minimum of two adults should supervise students at all times at the climbing and abseiling site.

One adult present should have knowledge of, and an ability to perform, first aid procedures.

Qualifications

If an adult other than a registered teacher is engaged for instruction, a teacher should be present to take overall responsibility.

The qualifications listed in this section are minimums for each type of situation. Leaders are encouraged to seek training to raise their qualification level above the minimum listed.

The leader should be:

- a registered teacher with:
 - competence (demonstrated ability to undertake the activity) in rock climbing and abseiling at a more difficult level than that of the activity proposed for the students
 - competence (demonstrated ability to undertake the activity) in teaching rock climbing and abseiling at the level being undertaken
 - competence (demonstrated ability to undertake the activity) in the area to be used by students
 - competence (demonstrated ability to undertake the activity) in cliffside rescues and emergency procedures
 - competence (demonstrated ability to undertake the activity) in group management procedures appropriate to rock climbing and abseiling
- an adult who holds a Rock Climbing Instructors Award, when a teacher is not available

Minimum equipment

Staff and students at the climbing and abseiling site should wear climbing helmets of correct size.

Student ropes, harnesses and slings should be checked for wear and abrasion before each climb and abseil.

Abseiling rope should be long enough for the descent.

When abseiling or rappelling, a top-rope safety rope should be used in addition to the abseiling rope.

First aid equipment and consumable items appropriate to the activity should be readily available.

Hazard reduction

The leader should reconnoitre the area and ensure its soundness before using it with students.

Safe areas should be designated. Movement to and from these areas should be appropriately managed and students should be supervised in the safe area.

The location should allow:

- safe access to staging areas
- allow vehicular access to within a reasonable distance of the cliff in case of an emergency
- students who are actively participating to be seen by at least one of the adults at all times

Visibility and access should be considered before choosing routes.

Equipment (e.g. ropes, recognised manufactured harnesses, helmets etc.) should be designed specifically for rock climbing and abseiling.

An equipment log should be kept for ropes, harnesses, tapes, hardware and slings. Equipment with any signs of abrasion or wear should be discarded immediately. Manufacturers' guidelines for the discarding of equipment should be adhered to.

Belaying should always be supervised.

Students should not engage in lead climbing.

Spare equipment should be available for use in an emergency.

On a flat surface climbing wall, helmets are not required. Where a protrusion or an overhang is part of the construction of the wall, helmets should be worn.

Matting of sufficient density to absorb body impact is required to be placed on the floor at the base of the climbing wall.

Links

- [HLS-PR-013: Developing a Sun Safety Strategy](#)
- [SCM-PR-002: School Excursions](#)
- [HLS-PR-005: Injury, Illness and Dangerous Event Recording and Reporting](#)
- [HLS-PR-003: First Aid for Schools and Non-school Locations](#)