



STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

ABSEILING / ROCK CLIMBING

NOTE: This SOP is applicable to both abseiling and rock climbing and focuses on the mentor's responsibility in the successful facilitation of these activities. As a mentor you will be responsible to get the boys to and from the activity, but the actual activity will be facilitated by a qualified person.

Equipment needed:	Harnesses, Shoes, Helmets, Carabiners, Quick draws, Belay devices, Ropes, Slings
Facilitator equipment:	Own climbing equipment, First aid kit, phone with emergency contacts
Facilitator qualification:	MDT Wall Climbing Supervisor Award (WCSA) or higher
First Aid Requirement:	At least one person with a level 1 first aid qualification
Staffing:	Minimum 3 mentors and 1 qualified facilitator
Ratio:	1:5

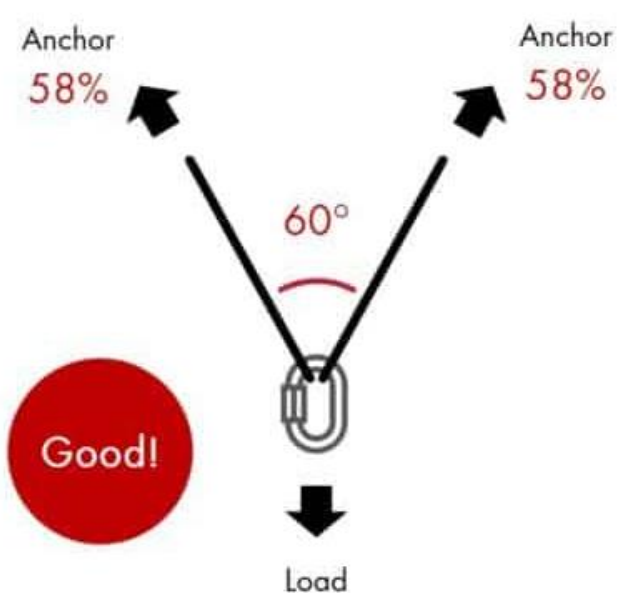
SUMMARIZED SOP



Check

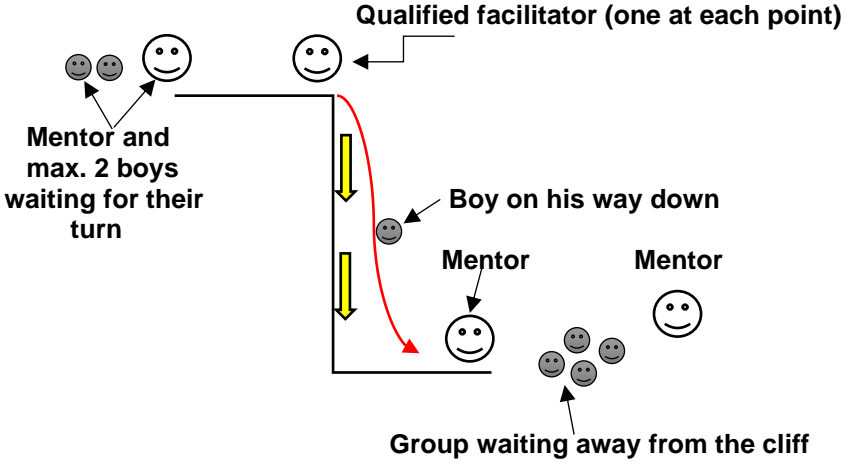
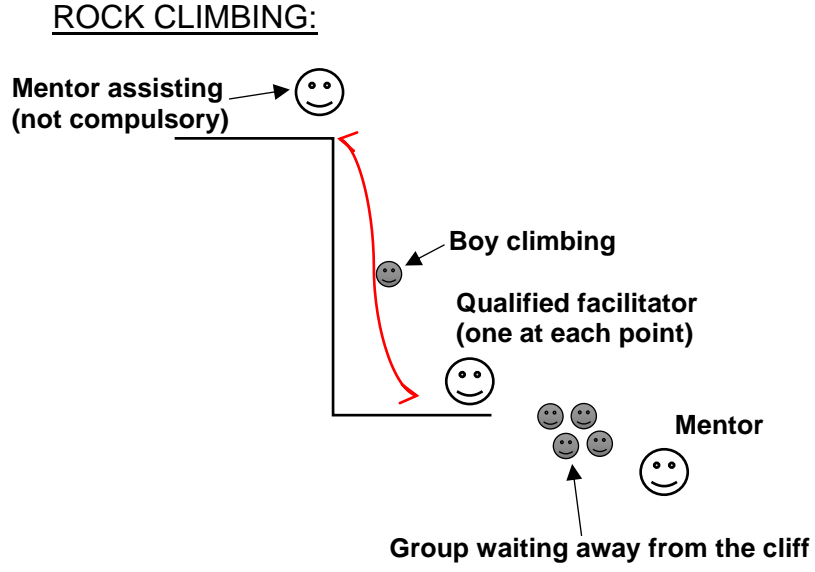
BEFORE - At the campsite	√
Step 1 – Assess conditions	
Step 2 – Check climbing equipment (qualified facilitator will do this)	
Step 3 – Setting up routes (qualified facilitator will go out to do this)	
Step 4 – Gather the group (mentors and boys)	
Step 5 – Pre activity line-up	
Step 6 – Check everyone's personal gear	
Step 7 – Introduce and discuss the activity	
DURING – At the activity area	√
Step 8 – Line-up	
Step 9 – Buddy system	
Step 10 – Gear hand out	
Step 11 – Demonstration (qualified facilitator will do this)	
Step 12 – Mentor positioning	
Step 13 – Abseiling / Rock climbing activity (qualified facilitator will manage this)	
Step 14 – Wrap up & collecting gear	
Step 15 – Line-up	
Step 16 – Cleaning routes (qualified facilitator will do this)	
AFTER – At the campsite	√
Step 17 – Post activity line-up	
Step 18 – Debrief	
Step 19 – Equipment check and logbooks (qualified facilitator will do this)	

DETAILED SOP ←

BEFORE - At the campsite		
Step 1 – Assess conditions	Activity leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check the weather. If it seems like there is heavy rain and/or lightning on the way, rather postpone or cancel the activity.
Step 2 – Check climbing equipment	Qualified facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All climbing equipment needs to be visually and physically checked.
Step 3 – Setting up routes	Qualified facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please note that the qualified facilitator will set this up according to industry standards, but as mentor you can check for and/or ask about the following when you get to the activity area; When setting up an abseil or top rope climb using natural anchors, use at least two (preferably three) anchor points. Always keep the angle between your anchors in mind, for a wider angle puts more pressure on your anchor points. <p style="text-align: center;">Keep the angle between the anchors below 90° to minimize the load on each anchor.</p>  <p>The diagram illustrates a top rope anchor setup. Two black arrows point upwards and outwards from a central carabiner, representing the ropes to the anchors. Each anchor is labeled 'Anchor 58%'. The angle between the two ropes is marked as 60°. A black arrow points downwards from the carabiner, labeled 'Load'. To the left of the carabiner is a red circle with the word 'Good!' inside.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very important: Safety lines must be used for all the boys and mentors.
Step 4 – Gather	Activity leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather the group (boys and mentors).
Step 5 – Pre-activity line-up	Activity leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do a line-up to make sure everyone is present before you start the activity briefing.
Step 6 – Check personal equipment	Activity leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check to make sure the boys and mentors have everything they need for the activity.

<p>Step 7 – Introduce and discuss</p>	<p>Activity leader</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the activity by telling the boys what exactly they will be doing, and how long the activity will be. • Discuss the rules and expectations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This is a high risk activity that can cause injury if safety procedures are not followed. ➤ Mentors and boys should keep their eyes open for any hazards. Examples include - overhead branches or rocks that might fall, dangerous animals, etc. ➤ Don't run off or climb onto anything unless a mentor has confirmed that it is safe to do so. ➤ Don't throw stones, especially not from the top of the abseil or climb. ➤ Report bad behaviour and injuries to a mentor. ➤ Be patient. ➤ Have a positive attitude. ➤ Always keep an eye on your friends. ➤ Encourage and help each other. ➤ Always listen to the instructions of the activity leader(s). ➤ When the call is made to return to camp, everyone needs to do so immediately. • <u>QUESTIONS TO ASK:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are the benefits of abseiling / climbing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We get to spend <u>time in nature</u>. ○ It teaches us to <u>follow</u> simple and complex instructions. ○ It teaches us to be <u>aware</u> of our surroundings. ○ It develops <u>mental skills</u> - Visualization, planning and goal setting, decision making, problem solving, concentration, determination, self-confidence, etc. ○ It presents us with an opportunity to <u>face fears</u> and gives us a feeling of achievement afterwards - achievement in conquering our fear of heights; or even conquering greater 'heights'. ○ It develops <u>social skills</u> - Communication and listening skills, trust, etc. ○ Rock climbing is one of the best <u>full body workouts</u> and develops lean, endurance muscles (the same muscles used by marathon runners).
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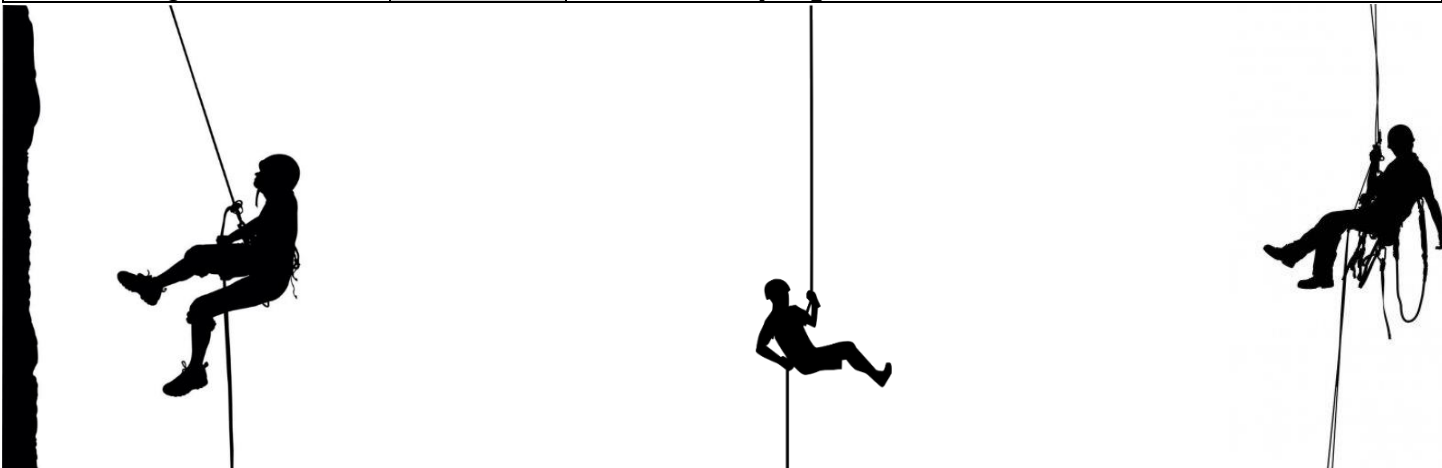
DURING – At the activity area		
Step 8 – Line-up	Activity leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do a line-up to make sure everyone arrived safely.
Step 9 – Buddy system	Activity leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a buddy system. Each boy should be paired up with another boy and should stay with that “buddy” for the rest of the activity.
Step 10 – Gear hand out	Activity leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand out gear to boys and MENtors. Each person should get a harness and helmet. If there’s not enough, equipment will be rotated.
Step 11 – Demonstration	Qualified facilitator	<p><u>SAFETY</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to all instructions. Do not play with your gear (for example, do not play with the buckles on your harness). Be aware of your surroundings and watch out for any loose rocks coming down from the top. <p><u>DEMONSTRATION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gear demonstration – this will explain and show the boys how the harness, helmet, carabiners and belay devices work. Technique demonstration – this will teach the boys useful and important techniques that will help them to successfully complete the activity. <p>Abseiling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foot placement – shoulder width or slightly wider Legs slightly bent – helps to absorb impact Body positioning – seated, feet flat against the rock Hand placement – one on your harness and one next to your hip Control – slowly and consistently letting the rope move through your hand <p>Climbing;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use your feet, don’t rely on upper body strength alone Focus on balance Keep your eyes on the rock When resting, hang on a straight arm Coming down you will use normal abseiling techniques Always focus on positive thoughts <p>Belaying;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain and show the belaying process to the boys. If the opportunity is there and time allows, teach the boys how to belay. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity demonstration – the facilitator will show the boys how it’s done by completing an abseil or top rope climb.

<p>Step 12 – Mentor positioning</p>	<p>Qualified facilitator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need mentors to assist at the top as well as at the bottom. <p><u>ABSEILING:</u></p>  <p><u>ROCK CLIMBING:</u></p> 
<p>Step 13 – Actual abseiling / rock climbing activity</p>	<p>Qualified facilitator & MENTors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The safety of the venue and abseiling / climbing area should have been previously ascertained, and all reasonable precautions taken to ensure the safety of the boys. The entire activity will be guided and supervised by the qualified facilitator(s). Mentors will assist where necessary. MENTors at the top of the abseil can assist with harnesses and helmets. MENTors at the bottom of the abseil can assist with unclipping, as well as sending the equipment back to the top. All harnesses, helmets and tie-ins MUST be checked before any boy attempts an abseil / climb. Boys will abseil / climb one at a time, and as instructed by the facilitator.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constantly encourage the boys to do their best and help each other. • Remind the boys of the abseiling / climbing techniques. • Manage the behaviour of the group. • Manage the time so that every boy gets an opportunity to go at least once. • Check for hazards on a regular basis. • Have each boy find his buddy every 15-20 minutes. Boys who cannot find their buddy should notify a mentor immediately. • MENTors should do a head count on a regular basis.
Step 14 – Wrap up & collecting gear	Qualified facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call an end to the activity and collect all the gear that was handed out.
Step 15 – Line-up	Activity leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a line-up to make sure everyone is present before you leave the activity area.
Step 16 – Cleaning routes	Qualified facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean the route(s) by collecting all the gear used for anchors, etc.
AFTER – At the campsite		
Step 17 – Post-activity line-up	Activity leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a line-up to make sure everyone is safely back at the campsite.
Step 18 – Debrief	Activity leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The debrief is very important because it will help the boys to think back and talk about their experiences, develop insights, reduce negative feelings regarding the activity and connect the activity to real-life situations. • A few lessons that relates to life: Focus – When you abseil / climb, you have to be fully present. You have to focus and deal with what’s in front of you. In life there will be many distractions, but if you can learn to be present and focused, you will succeed. Goal setting – When you abseil / climb, you have to plan and set goals for yourself that will guide you through the activity, or at least guide you to improve every time you attempt the activity. Setting goals gives you clarity on what you want to achieve. Setting goals in life ensures that you put time, energy and effort into things that really matter to you, the things you want to achieve. Capable of more – When you’re out on the rocks, several meters above the ground, feeling afraid is natural. But abseiling and rock climbing teaches us to face our fears, and that when we push through, we can conquer them. This shows us that we are capable of so much more than we sometimes think. So every time I feel scared, I can look back to this experience and remember that I am in fact capable of conquering my fears.

		<p>Persistence (perseverance) – Persistence keeps us going when we want to quit. It makes us try again and again. When we face tough times, we know we can get through it. Because we never give up. That also says a lot about our character.</p> <p>Problem solving – Each climbing route is like a puzzle and there is a certain level of intelligence necessary to figure out how to climb a specific route. You have to think about each route’s pros and cons, problem-solve through challenges, and ask for advice from others. Problem solving is an inevitable part of life, and a very valuable skill to have.</p> <p>Decision making – Climbing requires you to make spot decisions as you go. Your ability to assess a problem, look for a solution, and then execute a plan is important. In life, decision making is an on-going process. You will be required to make decisions at school, at home and almost everywhere you go.</p> <p>Patience – Both abseiling and climbing requires patience. With patience you can overcome almost any challenging situation, so instead of overreacting, choose patience.</p> <p>Communication – Communication between the climber and belayer is extremely important for climbing safety. You have to speak clearly and listen carefully (your life depends on it). In life, we cannot have meaningful relationships without communication. Communicating helps us to understand each other.</p> <p>Trust – Both abseiling and rock climbing involves other people. You are never alone, you shouldn’t be. You have to trust the person holding your rope. Trust is a crucial ingredient for all relationships. Without trust there can be no relationship.</p>
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Step 19 – Equipment check & logbooks	Qualified facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check (inspect) all equipment and complete the necessary logbooks.
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Know the risks:

FALLING



Falling from a significant height is very dangerous and can result in major injuries like broken limbs, fractured skulls and even death.

HUMAN ERROR



Most abseiling and/or rock climbing accidents is the result of human error, not equipment failure.

INJURY



Injuries can result from being reckless, the misuse of equipment, disregard of safety practices and other unadvisable activities.

DANGEROUS ANIMALS



It is wise to be aware of the potential dangers of the environments you abseil or climb in. By being conscious of what threats certain wild animals can pose, and by knowing how to properly react to those threats, you will greatly improve your chances to successfully survive an animal encounter.

WEATHER CONDITIONS



Threatening weather, like a thunderstorm, can become dangerous if you don't get yourself to safety.

Dangerous animals / insects you might encounter:



Wasps – Wasps are divided into two primary subgroups: social and solitary. If you stumble upon a wasp colony or have the audacity to disturb a nest you will quickly find yourself swarmed. A social wasp in distress emits a pheromone that sends nearby colony members into a defensive, stinging frenzy. Unlike bees, wasps can sting repeatedly. We are most familiar with wasps that buzz angrily and threaten us with painful stings. But most wasps are actually solitary, non-stinging, and do far more good for humans by controlling pest insect populations.



Bees - Bees are flying insects closely related to wasps and ants, known for their role in pollination and, in the case of the best-known bee species, the western honey bee, for producing honey. Honey bees are considered to be dangerous. A sting from a honey bee will result in a painful, raised welt. In some cases the venom from a honey bee sting can cause a severe allergic reaction that requires immediate medical attention. Honey bees defend their homes just like people do. If they perceive a threat, they will react.

What to do in an abseiling / climbing emergency

Common sense and good decision making go a long way in keeping you safe. However, accidents can and do happen so it's good to be prepared and know what to do in an emergency.

Assess

- ☛ Remain calm and assess the situation.
- ☛ The main thing is to establish the extent of the injury to the injured party.
- ☛ Determine whether the injured party is in a fit enough condition to get back to the campsite or initial meeting point on their own or with help from the rest of the group.

Treat

- ☛ If the injury is minor and some basic first aid will treat it, then you know what to do.
- ☛ If the injury is more severe, but you are able and qualified to treat it, you can go ahead.
- ☛ Assist the injured party to get back to the campsite or initial meeting point.
- ☛ Administer CPR and treat for shock if necessary (refer to first aid SOP).
- ☛ If the person is unconscious;
 - Check the person's airway, breathing, pulse and circulation frequently.
 - If you do not think there is a spinal injury, put the person in the recovery position.
 - Keep the person warm until emergency medical help arrives.

Call for help

- ☛ If you are unsure how to assess the situation or unsure what the best course of action would be, you need to contact Mountain Rescue or the Emergency Services.
- ☛ As a broad guide, the rescue service will likely start by asking you specific questions about the incident. Be ready to provide:
 - Location
 - Number of people in your hiking party and names
 - Detail on injuries / casualties
 - Your phone number as well as others in the group
 - Incident detail – time it happened, what happened, etc.
 - Equipment available at your location
 - Landmarks or features at your location
 - Location coordinates if you have them
- ☛ The rescue service will use this information to help them make their own assessment of the situation. Based on that they will then give you advice on what you should do.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

GAUTENG

MCSA Search & Rescue

074 125 1385 OR 074 163 3952

QRS (TCC Partner)

081 277 7777

HEMS (Hartbeespoort)

082 695 1240

WESTERN CAPE

MCSA Search & Rescue

021 937 0300

EASTERN CAPE

East London –

fire / rescue / emergency

043 705 9000