



Intro to rock climbing – skills checklist and safety practices webinar Q&A

1. Do you have any suggestions for how to find climbing partners if you don't know anyone that climbs? How to join a group and find a climbing buddy in a new area?

The climbing community is really friendly and inviting. Going to your local climbing wall, asking the staff there or talking to other climbers, you will start to build friendships and if you ask nicely, I'm sure someone will take you out.

There are loads of social media groups that you can join to find climbing partners, ask questions, and share advice and share stories. Most climbing walls have a social media page you can start with or searching for local climbing pages will point you in the right direction.

Mountaineering Scotland have a huge list of all their affiliated club across Scotland. Clubs are a great way to meet new people, go climbing with experienced climbers and try new adventures. Check out the club list here and find your local club: <https://www.mountaineering.scot/find-a-club>

2. Are there any areas in Scotland that are particularly well suited to completely inexperienced climbers? Or would an indoor wall be the preferable option to learn in a safe supervised location? Hi- wondering if you could help advise on some beginner outdoor walls in Scotland? Or some of your favourites?

There are so many amazing climbing spots across the country that are great for beginners or getting back into outdoor climbing gently. Every area will have its best spots, but every climber will have their favourites. Ask you local climbing wall for their go to spots. Likewise ask the local climbers, or social media pages for great suggestions for your area.

Check websites like UKClimbing (UKC) for crags in your area and your get descriptions on each venue and how accessible the routes are: <https://www.ukclimbing.com/logbook/map/>

ClimbScotland have a short select list of our favourite go to crags on our website: <https://www.climbscotland.net/where-to-go/get-outdoors>

3. What books would you recommend for beginner climbers to advise on routes etc? I am currently reading through "freedom of the hills" and enjoying leaning some new skills.

There are loads of great books out there on climbing, as well as some fantastic online resources. Ask for recommendation on any climbing social media group and you will be flooded with great suggestions. Here is a couple of great ones to get started.

- Rock Climbing- Essential skills and techniques by Libby Peter
- Vertical Mind: Psychological Approaches for Optimal Rock Climbing, Don McGrath and Jeff Ellison

- Rock Warrior's Way, Arno Ilgner
- Rock Climbing Technique: The Practical Guide to Movement Mastery, John Kettle
- Climbing Games, Paul Smith

Oh, and any guidebook you can find will definitely help build the psych.

4. Is second-hand gear ok to buy? Buying cheap gear from Amazon?

Yes, second-hand gear is ok to buy, but you must be very careful. All climbing kit comes with a recommended life span from the manufacturer and must be treated well and stored correctly, to be safe for that lifespan.

However, how kit is stored, how often it has been used and how it's been treated will all effect its quality over time. Items with webbing like ropes, harnesses, slings etc. are all susceptible to damage from contaminants, damp storage conditions or over exposure to sunlight. Metal work is much more durable.

Only buy second-hand, if you are happy with the history of the gear, and that it's been treated well, stored well and is within its recommended lifespan.

Look for 'start up' intro packs or deals on sets of gear in climbing/outdoor shops. These can make getting the best kit really accessible.

If a deal looks too good to be true, it probably is. The equipment we use in climbing must be tested and rated for climbing. If the equipment is designed, tested, and rated for climbing it will come with a CE EN number and a UIAA number. If the gear you buy doesn't have these things, then there is no guarantee it will be safe for climbing. Most climbing walls will ask you not to use any climbing equipment that doesn't meet these standards. Be careful what you buy online.

5. Why is a chalk bag so important? Does it make such a difference to grip?

Yes and no. As you climb our hands generally sweat, chalk helps to dry our hands and keep contact with the rock dry and grippy. In Scotland especially its often raining, and holds can remain damp or greasy for a while after it stops raining. Chalk helps to keep that dry grippy contact between your hands and the rock.

You don't need much chalk and it is very easy to overdo when you start out. If it's a cold dry day and your hands aren't sweating then you may not need any chalk at all.

Note: if you do use chalk and at the end of your session there lots of excess chalk left on the wall. Try brushing as much off as you can. Always try and "Leave No Trace" when we go climbing.

6. Me and my Dad are starting outdoor climbing and are wondering a good course to start on

Looking for guiding companies, or freelance instructors is a great place to start or any Intro Rock Climbing courses being run. Going with Mountain Training qualified instructor will ensure you are being shown the best practices to keep you safe, and give the best chance of progressing well.

<https://www.mountain-training.org/personal-skills/rock-skills>

Likewise local clubs are a great place to start. Being part of a community of experienced and beginner climbers will give you a safe and comfortable environment to learn at your own pace.

7. Do you suggest BD camalot or DMM Dragon?

It's great that you are already looking at two of the best on the market. But to be honest, it's completely up to you.

Safety wise there is no difference between them. They have both been tested and are rated to the same standards. What makes the difference is personal preference on grip, action, thumb loop or no thumb loop. I'd recommend going to a shop when they open and trying a couple out to see what you prefer.

8. Top 3 tips for being more efficient on longer routes?

Ropework – Practice every part of your ropework as often as possible. Practice at the crag, practice and the climbing wall, practice at home. The more automatic you can make these skills the more efficient you'll be over the climb. But never forget to do your buddy checks. Just because these skills are automatic doesn't mean mistakes can't happen.

Slow is fast – Trying to climb really quickly doesn't always make an efficient climb. Taking your time you'll make less mistakes, you'll save your energy and be able to move for longer, and you'll gain more from the climb.

Planning – Plan your day, your climb and your partners. Make sure you have a good idea of the route you're doing, looking at the guide book and reading your line.

9. Does Glenmore lodge allow foreign nationals for courses for qualifications?

Yes absolutely. Everybody is welcome.

That goes for all qualification and course providers in the UK. There is no discrimination on who can attend.

During course we need to discuss vital safety points. Language barriers here do make things hard, however with some effort and understanding there are ways to overcome this.

10. What qualifications are needed to join a climbing club and get out with them?

Clubs don't usually require any qualifications to join, and generally are happy with complete beginners that are willing to learn. Any experience they would like to see is best discussed with the clubs directly.

11. On a limited budget what equipment would you suggest you start with? Info on where to buy your own gear/how to know if its good quality? A good first trad rack / Sensible rack to start outdoors?

Start with a small rack, share with friends, join a club who offers equipment to borrow. Climb equipment is unfortunately expensive so you can start small and build up over time.

Absolute basics

- Bouldering: Rock shoes, chalk bag, boulder matt, brush
- Indoor climbing: Rock shoes, chalk bag, harness, belay device, rope (appropriate length for where you climb)
- Sport Climbing: Helmet, rock shoes, chalk bag, harness, belay device, rope (appropriate length for where you climb), 3-4 screw gates, a set of quickdraws (as many as you need for the crag)
- Trad Climbing: Helmet, rock shoes, chalk bag, harness, belay device, rope (appropriate length for where you climb), a set of quickdraws, 3-4 screw gates, 2 slings, rack of nuts (NOTE: You can add cams later. A small selection of cams – sizes 1,2,3 to start with and build up slowly)

12. Is it ok to start climbing outside even if you don't have much experience of climbing in general? Or should you stick to indoor?

Yes, you can. Indoor climbing walls offer a chance to climb when it's raining, and work on your movement to help outdoors. So doing both would be ideal. However, if all you want to do, or can do, is climb outside... go do it.

13. Coming back to climbing after a few years away. Been a couple of years since climbed outdoor so mostly a refresher on anchor building for belays?

There are some practical safety skills that are just too hard to cover in a webinar, and definitely too easy to get wrong in an article. Our recommendation would always be to go out with an instructor or an experienced climber and practice lots. Take your time, don't push yourself before you are ready and always double check what you've set up.

14. Best way to transition from indoor to outdoor? How to start climbing outside after only climbing on the wall?

Just go for it. Follow our advice above on finding climbing partners, joining social media groups, joining club or going out with an instructor.

It's always the best idea to go out with an instructor to start off with the best practices before you go out yourself and consolidate your knowledge. Clubs are also a great way of learning from experienced climbers.

15. Building specific fitness for climbing? What simple exercises can people do at home to prepare their body for the climb?

Climbing is a physical sport, so a good level of fitness will help but is not essential. Anyone of any fitness level can climb.

If you want to build your fitness, but hate the idea of training, just go climbing, it's one of the best full body workouts you can do.

If you want to do some exercises to build basic fitness, some easy conditioning will help. You can find loads of resources on basic conditioning online.

If you want to do much more intense training to push your performance, seek advice from a qualified climbing coach.

16. Buying the right harness?

The one that fits you. When the shops are open, try on lots of harnesses as some may fit you better than others. You want a harness that's comfy and tightens properly.

You can get a more specific harness for the type of climbing you are doing. For sport climbing, light weight with only a couple gear loops will be perfect. For trad climbing you're looking for something that's comfortable to hang in all day, and has lots of gear loops.

17. Sport climbing- making yourself safe at top of route, untying from rope then re-tying- best practice for this?

Again, there are some practical safety skills that are just too hard to cover in a webinar, and definitely too hard - and easy to get wrong - in an article. Our recommendation would always be go out with an instructor or an experienced climber and practice lots. Take your time, don't push yourself before you're ready and always double check what you've set up.

However, no matter what way you learn to rethread the rope, you should NEVER be completely disconnected from the rope.

18. How advisable is it to go rock climbing alone? Where are the best places to start out?

Bouldering is a great way to start outdoor climbing, and can easily be done alone. Follow the same advice for going hillwalking alone by having a "Late Home" procedure. Let someone know where your going and when you'll likely be home.

19. Foot movements/foot placement

Climbing is all about footwork. You can't use your strength properly, move correctly or stay injury free without proper footwork.

Best quick hit advice: Move slow and quiet. Making sure your foot ends up on the best part of the hold with the best part of the shoe. Use your edges to allow you the most movement. If you try to climb like a ninja (silent) it will force you to be accurate with your footwork.

20. Building top ropes, self belay on, climbing with children?

The best way to learn how to do this would be to go out with an instructor, or look at joining one of ClimbScotland Youth Focused Climbing Clubs. These are a great way for families to go climbing together and learn some technical skills from other experience parents.

<https://www.climbscotland.net/club-spot/club-spot-near-you>

21. Reminder of the best angle to set up anchors please

Aim to keep the angle under 90 degrees.

22. Best way to rack gear on harness

It's completely personally preference. Everyone has a different system. All that matter is that you find a system that works for you and stick with it. The only reason we have systems is so we know where everything is on our harnesses.

Try with this. The gear you use the most should go at the front so it's easy to reach i.e. things you use while climbing, gear, quickdraws etc. Then kit you would use for your anchors can be further back and any emergency kit can be tucked away right at the back.

23. Particularly interested in building my confidence to shift from sport to trad climbing.

Go climbing loads. You will feel much more confident starting out trad climbing when your able to climb well and find good resting positions.

Learn how to place gear and build anchors from someone experienced or If you have sport climbing lead experience, consider a Learn to Lead trad climbing course. Start on easy climbs, focus on the technical aspects/gear placements and building belays, and build up slowly.

For more information on climbing outdoors and climbing courses visit:

- [Mountaineering Scotland website](#)
- [ClimbScotland website](#)
- [Glenmore Lodge website](#)