



Climbing and Abseiling

Scheme



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW
Girlguiding

Registered charity number 306016

Useful information

Name:

Membership number:

Address:

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Telephone:

Email:

County Outdoor Activities Adviser

Name:

Address:

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Telephone:

Email:

Introduction	2
Scope of the scheme	2
Stages of the scheme	2
Frequently asked questions	3
How to use this resource	4
Syllabus	5
1 Knowledge and currency	5
2 Personal climbing	5
3 Safety	5
4 First aid	6
5 Preparation	6
6 Equipment	7
7 Ropework and belaying	9
8 Abseiling	10
9 Group management	11
Notes for Trainers/Assessors	13
The role of the Assessor	13
Assessment criteria	13
Managing the assessment	13
Afterwards	14
Forms	15
Logbook sheet	15
Instructor Assessment Form	16
Renewal Form	18
Notification of Training Course Form	19
Scheme levels table	20
Further information	22
Useful websites	22
Useful publications	22

Climbing and abseiling are popular activities for members of Girlguiding. This scheme aims to ensure these activities are delivered safely while enabling more of our members to take part.

Girlguiding recognises Mountain Training UK (climbing National Governing Body) qualifications such as the Climbing Wall Award (CWA), Single Pitch Award (SPA), Mountain Instructor Award (MIA) and Mountain Instructor Certificate (MIC). For further information about using these qualifications with Girlguiding members please see the *A to Z of Activities* in *The Guiding Manual* on the Girlguiding website (www.girlguiding.org.uk/guidingmanual). Members or non-members with any of these Mountain Training UK qualifications are also encouraged to take an active part in this scheme by training, assessing or monitoring standards.

Scope of the scheme

The Girlguiding Climbing and Abseiling Scheme enables those who don't have a Mountain Training UK (MTUK) qualification to gain the Girlguiding scheme qualification at Level 1 or 2 which will enable them to instruct Girlguiding members in climbing and/or abseiling activities.

This scheme is primarily concerned with good practice leading to safe enjoyment of the activity. It is the combination of technical skill, experience, group management and personal quality which forms the basis for effective supervision.

For the purpose of this scheme:

- the instructor of a climbing or abseiling session is the person in charge of the session
- you may supervise up to 12 Girlguiding members
- you may use assistants. However, they are additional to the group and you must always be present
 - assistants cannot be used to increase the ratio of participants to instructors
- you can operate up to three climbs or one abseil system and you must not divide your time between activities.

Due to the large number of different types of climbing walls, abseil towers and crags this scheme has very specific standards and locations where activities may take place. Please see the table on page 20 for further information. You must also operate only at approved locations, details of which are available at www.girlguidesclimbing.wordpress.com. If there is a site that you would like to use with Girlguiding members, but it hasn't been inspected, please email the details of the site to outdooractivities@girlguiding.org.uk detailing the request for a site inspection.

Stages of the scheme

The scheme usually consists of:

- prior experience
- two-day (minimum) training course
- consolidation of experience
- one-day assessment
- renewal of qualification every five years.

Exemption from training courses and/or the consolidation period may be granted where there is evidence of sufficient experience.

Training

All trainee instructors at Levels 1 and 2 are trained by MIA or MIC holders or by SPA holders who have been approved by an MIA or MIC. Anyone running a training should complete the **Notification of Training Course Form** (page 19) which is approved by the Girlguiding Climbing Technical Adviser before the training can take place.

Levels 1 and 2 training assume you have basic ability as a climber. The training does not involve any written reports concerning your performance; this is left to the assessment stage. The trainer will give verbal comments to each trainee instructor, offering constructive advice as appropriate, and will recommend the amount of experience to be gained before assessment.

Assessment

Assessments at Levels 1 and 2 are carried out by MIC or MIA holders.

Before you attend an assessment you must:

- have attended an approved training course
- have gained further experience
- be proficient in the use of climbing walls and abseil towers in the opinion of the Trainer/Assessor
- be at least 18 years of age (you can have completed the rest of the scheme before your 18th birthday).

During an assessment you are assessed in accordance with the syllabus requirements. The Assessor completes the **Instructor Assessment Form** (page 16) in one of three ways: pass, defer or fail. Your Assessor may select the option to defer if you have demonstrated knowledge of the syllabus, but there was one area of weakness. You must be reassessed on this weak area within an appropriate period of time as determined by your Assessor.

Exemption

If you have completed the training for the Climbing Wall Award, including the additional abseil module training course, you are exempt from doing the training of this scheme at Level 1.

If you have completed the training for the Single Pitch Award (SPA) provided by Mountain Training UK (MTUK) you are exempt from doing the training at Levels 1 and 2. In all other cases there is no exemption from the training as this element of the scheme includes material which might be unfamiliar to you and you may be more likely to fail at assessment. Girlguiding considers this training to be a vital part of the scheme. Other local qualifications may be considered for exemption by the Girlguiding Climbing Technical Adviser, but will not necessarily be granted.

Renewals

All Level 1 and 2 qualifications must be renewed every five years. To renew your qualification you should complete the **Renewal Form** on page 18 and scan and email it to outdooractivities@girlguiding.org.uk or post it to Girlguiding Headquarters with the additional information as listed on the form. It can also be downloaded from www.girlguidesclimbing.wordpress.com > Syllabus. You will be notified if your qualification has been renewed. If it has not been renewed there will be an explanation of the further training/assessment which is required and the reasons for this (the most common reason for a renewal being declined is insufficient logged instructional experience).

Instructing Girlguiding members

The Guiding Manual outlines the qualifications which are required by an instructor to lead a climbing or abseiling session with Girlguiding members. Please visit www.girlguiding.org.uk/guidingmanual > Activities > A to Z of Activities > [Climbing on a purpose-built structure](#) (and/or) [Climbing in the natural environment](#).

All persons taking part in guiding activities must be aware of and agree to abide by the Girlguiding Safety and Safeguarding Policy, further details of which are available online at www.girlguiding.org.uk/guidingmanual > Policies > Safety and Safeguarding > [Safety and Safeguarding Policy](#).

Frequently asked questions

Who devised the scheme?

This scheme was devised by the Girlguiding Climbing Technical Adviser along with Girlguiding volunteers and staff members.

What does the Girlguiding Climbing Technical Adviser do?

The Climbing Technical Adviser gives Girlguiding advice on technical issues and accepted good practice within the type of climbing/abseiling activities offered by us.

In addition, the Technical Adviser is responsible for:

- co-ordinating site inspections for Level 1 and 2 venues
- monitoring the quality of training courses provided at Levels 1 and 2

- carrying out spot checks on the quality of training and assessments
- approving other local climbing training schemes, if appropriate
- approving SPA, MIA or MIC holders to run training courses.

Who do I approach with questions related to the scheme?

General questions relating to Girlguiding regulations and procedures as well as technical questions about climbing and abseiling and this scheme should be directed to staff in the Leadership Development Team at Girlguiding Headquarters (see page 22 for contact details). If you are a Girlguiding member you can also find out more information from www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members' area > Building your skills > [Outdoor activities](#).

I hold an SPA, MIA or MIC, how can I help Girlguiding?

SPA holders may instruct Girlguiding members within the scope of the SPA at any suitable sites. These do not need to be inspected as SPA holders are expected to use their experience and knowledge in choosing sites. SPA holders may also be able to run trainings for this scheme, but need to be approved by an MIA before doing so and should additionally complete the **Notification of Training Course Form** on page 19.

MIA/MIC holders may instruct Girlguiding members within the scope of the MIA. Again, sites do not need to be inspected at this level as instructors are able to determine what is suitable. MIA/MICs can also run trainings for this scheme (providing they complete the **Notification of Training Course Form**) and can act as Assessors for the scheme. They play an important part in ensuring the standards are maintained.

Does my local qualification and/or training exempt me from the requirements of the scheme?

This scheme ensures a high standard of instruction in climbing and abseiling. Bearing this in mind, equivalent local climbing schemes that are well structured and delivered by those with the appropriate qualifications and/or experience may be recognised by Girlguiding.

To approve local schemes the Girlguiding Climbing Technical Adviser must see all the relevant documentation and may need to talk to the operating authority.

Please email outdooractivities@girlguiding.org.uk for further information.

If I take my Brownies/Guides/members of The Senior Section to a company offering climbing or abseiling on crags or rock outcrops, what do I need to check?

For information, please see www.girlguiding.org.uk/guidingmanual > Activities > A to Z of Activities > [Climbing in the natural environment](#). Alternatively, please email your questions to outdooractivities@girlguiding.org.uk.

How to use this resource

The requirements of Levels 1 and 2 are similar in many cases - however the emphasis during your training course will differ and so will your experience. Look out for which level each requirement is for. Requirements for both levels may be approached differently.

Many of the requirements have notes to help you. These are not exhaustive, so please refer to the **Further information** section on page 22 to find out where to get more detailed advice.

1 Knowledge and currency

Levels 1 & 2 a) Keep up a level of climbing and/or instructional activity sufficient to be up to date and maintain personal competence.

Note: The best way to keep up with current practice is to go climbing and to talk to other climbers.

A level of personal skill is a great asset to instructors. A qualification is useful only if you are fluent in your instruction, ropework and group management.

Levels 1 & 2 b) Keep up to date with current practices by climbing, reading publications such as magazines, newsletters, British Mountaineering Council (BMC) and Mountain Training UK (MTUK) publications and talking to other climbers and group instructors.

Note: If you hope to lead and instruct others in climbing and/or abseiling you should show an interest in the sport yourself and generally be aware of current developments. These take place quickly, so if you operate in isolation you can keep abreast of current news by reading climbing magazines etc (see page 22).

Level 2 c) Have an understanding of the various sub-sports within climbing.

2 Personal climbing

Levels 1 & 2 a) Be able to climb confidently using a basic three point of contact style, with good use of holds and balance.

Levels 1 & 2 b) Be able to climb up or abseil down to a participant in need of assistance.

Note: It is not a requirement of the scheme that you be able to climb at a high standard. However, be aware that you should be able to do what you are asking others to do. In exceptional circumstances, it may also be necessary to climb and abseil in order to deal with a rescue or other situation and you can expect to demonstrate this. You will not be expected to climb up, unroped, to a climber needing assistance. Climbing more than a few feet off the ground unroped at most sessions should not be part of normal practice for instructors. You are required to show simple demonstrations of climbing technique at ground level.

Level 2 c) Understand that abseiling at crags is a sensitive issue with both other climbers and environmental groups, for example abseiling is not permitted on Southern Sandstone crags due to the fragile nature of the rock. Sites must be chosen with due care and consideration to other users, for instance your chosen site for a group abseil may be a popular climb with only a few handholds and these may be damaged by abseilers' feet thus spoiling the climb for others.

3 Safety

Levels 1 & 2 a) Understand the importance of ensuring your own safety as instructor.

Note: You must ensure your own safety at all times. You will be of no use to participants if you are injured and unable to do anything. Your practices will also set a good example to the group you are instructing.

- On abseil towers and any other structures always tie yourself on.
- On climbing walls or crags do not make a habit of soloing around or up and down to climbers. This is bad practice as it makes the participants feel they are underachieving and affects their confidence. It also takes your attention away from the group, and could result in a fall for you which leaves the group unsupervised.

Levels 1 & 2 b) Be aware of the need to warm up and how to avoid injuries.

Levels 1 & 2 c) When demonstrating, wear a safety rope (abseil towers) and follow Girlguiding requirements for wearing a helmet. Check that participants are wearing suitable clothing for the activity and that loose clothing cannot snag the system.

Please visit www.girlguiding.org.uk/guidingmanual > Activities > A to Z of Activities > [Climbing on a purpose-built structure](#) (and/or) [Climbing in the natural environment](#).

Note: Check that long hair is tied back, neckerchiefs and draw cords tucked out of the way or removed and all jewellery is removed. Be aware of the problems associated with body piercings (for example, navel piercings should be removed or at least covered safely). Check there are no loose items in the participants' pockets.

Level 1 d) Be aware of the site rules governing the use of different locations.

Note: Instructors must comply with wall or tower rules even where these exceed Girlguiding guidelines. For example, some climbing walls only allow instruction of anyone by SPA holders with a maximum number of participants. Check out any rules before your visit.

Levels 1 & 2 e) Understand the importance of checking all equipment that group members will be using and develop the habit of rechecking during the activity.

Levels 1 & 2 f) Be familiar with Girlguiding guidelines on current climbing and abseiling practice, maintenance of equipment, climbing or abseiling locations etc. Please visit www.girlguiding.org.uk/guidingmanual > Activities > A to Z of Activities > [Climbing on a purpose-built structure](#) (and/or) [Climbing in the natural environment](#).

4 First aid

Levels 1 & 2 a) You must hold a current 1st Response certificate (ie completed or refreshed within the last three years) as a minimum or hold a current first aid qualification that contains all the requirements of 1st Response.

Note: If your certificate is not available or is out of date, your qualification may be deferred (ie a full pass will be issued when the certificate is presented, see **Deferments** page 14). Your Climbing and Abseiling qualification is only valid while you have a current first aid certificate.

Levels 1 & 2 b) Be aware of the nearest first aid provision and hospital accident and emergency department. Carry a mobile phone whenever possible. Give the number to the home contact (see *The Guiding Manual* for more information on home contacts: www.girlguiding.org.uk/guidingmanual > Activities > Additional information > [Home contact](#)).

5 Preparation

Levels 1 & 2 a) Find out the age and ability of your group prior to the climb; this may affect the choice of venue or location.

Note: Check whether there is any restriction on the age range at your chosen venue and check the required instructor-to-participant ratio.

Levels 1 & 2 b) Be able to select a venue, specific climbs and equipment appropriate to the group. Have knowledge of the chosen venue, preferably by climbing or abseiling there before taking the group.

Note: Visiting or climbing at the location beforehand is an invaluable aid to improving the quality of experience for the participants and the safety levels - you will be aware of the hazards of operating at the location and be better able to manage the group accordingly. At Level 1, instructors select the climbing walls and there should, in a good wall, be climbs suitable for all abilities.

Level 2 c) At Level 2, instructors often underestimate the difficulty of 'easy' climbs to new students. Ideally, a location will have several very easy climbs in close proximity for straightforward supervision. These locations can be hard to find, but the Girlguiding climbing website may be of some use here (www.girlguidesclimbing.wordpress.com).

Levels 1 & 2 d) Check if there are any access difficulties.

Note: Do you need to pre-book? Do the wall owners or operators stipulate minimum qualifications? Do they require that you show proof of liability insurance? At Level 2 check whether parking is available and whether it has been a problem in the past with landowners to gain access. Is the crag on private land and if so, has permission for the group to enter been granted? Do participants need to cross roads?

Levels 1 & 2 e) Prepare an equipment list.

Note: For Level 2 only: Check what is available and what is needed at the crag. For example, some crags will need longer static rope slings as belays may be well back from the edge.

Levels 1 & 2 f) Ensure that parents' permission to undertake the activity is obtained using the **Information and Consent for Event/Activity form**. Leaders can download this from www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members' area > Resource library > [Forms](#).

Note: Ask the participants' parents to give details of any medical conditions that you should be aware of.

When seeking consent, parents must be given full details of the activities to be undertaken using straightforward language, that is not too technical or specialist, to avoid misunderstanding.

Levels 1 & 2 g) Ensure that a home contact is appointed and that all details of participants are available to her.

6 Equipment

Levels 1 & 2 a) Have knowledge of equipment available and be able to select the appropriate equipment for the group and activity involved.

Note: While this is a large area of knowledge and will be covered in all training courses and assessments, some general points are as follows.

- Helmets must bear the CE mark.
- The need for chest harnesses when participants do not have a defined waist, particularly for girls aged 11 and under.
- Type of harness - these might be chosen for their ease of use or range of size and adjustability. There are several good harnesses available, notably from Petzl, Camp and DMM. Note the manufacturer's comments about misuse of gear loops and any other aspect of each harness.
- Type of karabiner - steel or alloy and shaped according to its intended use and the amount of wear anticipated.
- Ropes - full (single rope nominal 11mm), bearing the CE mark, dynamic climbing ropes should be used for climbing and static abseil rope for abseiling.

Levels 1 & 2 b) Understand the importance of equipment being the correct size.

Note: Size is important as people vary greatly in size and some equipment is sized, for example, a set of harnesses won't be usable for every group member.

- All harnesses (chest and waist) must fit tightly.
- Helmets must fit snugly, ie without falling off when the head is shaken or tilted.

You must carefully check and adjust all equipment. This is a common area of oversight and often assumed to be unimportant. Take care and time over this at the beginning of a session and check each participant before each climb or abseil for loosening belts or straps etc.

Levels 1 & 2 c) Be aware of types of equipment that are no longer considered to be safe or appropriate for personal or group use.

Note: Some outdated types of equipment are still occasionally seen in use. Hawser laid rope, for example, is not considered safe for use with groups. Climbing belts (as opposed to harnesses) must not be used.

Levels 1 & 2 d) Be able to maintain and store all equipment.

Note: Equipment must be stored in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. In general the life of equipment will be up to three years, dependent on the level of use, if used and stored correctly. However, be aware that you must check and maintain equipment frequently. With heavy use a rope might last as little as two weeks, even without any misuse. Equipment must be stored in dry conditions away from sunlight and contact with any chemicals or oil etc.

Levels 1 & 2 e) Be able to recognise when equipment is worn out or too old and must not be used.

Note: Dispose of any equipment as recommended by the manufacturer and check all equipment as outlined below.

- Ropes - check for fraying, sheath slippage, core showing through, feeling misshapen in the core.
- Harnesses - watch for fraying, especially at key points such as the waist belt and attachment point. Minor frays, (up to around 20 per cent of the width) may be monitored carefully, but these will expand rapidly and it is better to dispose of them straightaway.
- Karabiners - these will generally last longer than nylon equipment. However, they can wear if used to run ropes through as distinct grooves can appear. Any burrs which could cut ropes mean the karabiner should be disposed of. Check the movement of gates and so on. Belay devices have similar wear properties and must be checked in the same way. It may be useful to use steel karabiners with the type of instruction in Level 1 as they wear better and they don't need to be carried on a harness so weight is not such a consideration.

- Slings - check regularly for fraying.
- Helmets - check for chipping, cracks, damage to the chin strap, the cradle coming away from the inside and the cradle adjustment wearing out or breaking.

Levels 1 & 2 f) Keep a record of usage and age of equipment.

Note: It is useful to have even a simple record of the date of purchase of equipment. It is easy to forget how old equipment is when it is used frequently. If you have a lot of equipment you may want to develop a more sophisticated system to log equipment in and out to record its usage. In this case, equipment should be numbered and each use recorded with comments. Most equipment stores will already have such a system in place. The important factor is that each unit, store or instructor should have an appropriate level of system - if you only use your own equipment you will know it better and be aware that something is wearing out, whereas multiple users need a more detailed and accurate system of recording. Remember: if in doubt, check the manufacturer's website.

Levels 1 & 2 g) Understand the correct use of the following equipment:

- climbing helmet
- sit harness
- body harness
- chest harness
- karabiner
- belay device
- abseil friction device
- dynamic kernmantel rope
- static kernmantel rope
- tape sling
- accessory cord.

Level 2 only:

- rope protector
- carpet edge protector.

Note: Familiarise yourself with the magazines and books available so as to gain as wide a spectrum of knowledge of equipment as possible (see **Further information**, page 22).

Levels 1 & 2 h) Be aware that equipment failure due to misuse is a major cause of accidents.

Note: There are many possible types of misuse of equipment and the training courses and assessments discuss these in detail. There are many points to note with group work - the following list illustrates a few common examples.

- Some climbing harnesses come supplied with a belay loop which seems like a good idea. However, if inverted this loop will be attached by a tiny tape only and participants have been known to continue belaying or tying in with this. It is a good idea to dispose of these loops or at least the attaching tape so that the loop would fall off if inverted.
- Similarly, many climbing harnesses that are not designed for groups have gear loops for a rack of climbing equipment. Participants will often use these to tie on to the rope - they are not to be used for this purpose.
- Many instructors and participants use the abseil loops of some harnesses to belay from and tie climbers in with - some are not designed for this. Read the instructions for your harness carefully and see what you can do with each type. For example, Petzl Club harnesses have a loop which you can use to belay from and tie climbers in with.
- Side or cross-loading karabiners are designed to be loaded end to end along the back bar and must only be used that way. Loads or running ropes must never go across the gate.
- Figure-of-eight descenders have been widely used for belaying, but there is great potential for the descender to fall across the gate and break it with a levering action. Figure-of-eight descenders must only be used to belay in conjunction with a DMM Belaymaster karabiner or similar.
- Belay devices must be used correctly - the locking hand must be able to bring the rope in line as a continuation of itself in order to lock properly. Twisted ropes or belaying with the wrong hand will not lock properly.

7 Ropework and belaying

Level 1 a) Demonstrate the ability to set up safe and efficient anchors and belay systems for yourself and others. Connect yourself and others to the rope or system.

Note: This is a central part of climbing and abseiling instruction and safe anchors are crucial. You are expected to be able to assess the best choice of anchor and set this up with reasonable speed and efficiency. You should be able to operate so that participants do not have to wait too long to begin an activity (see **Group management**, page 11). A variety of methods are demonstrated on the training courses.

Normally you will be connected to the rope or system only at the top of an abseil tower for personal safety; during a climbing session you would not need to tie in as you will be on the ground. You must be able to tie in participants by using the rope directly and by using a karabiner on the harness, and appreciate the reasons for using either method. It is also important to tie into each type of harness correctly (the manufacturer's instructions indicate this).

Level 1 b) Demonstrate a variety of belay techniques and choose the most appropriate for different situations.

Note: You should be able to choose between the merits of different systems and devices for belaying. It is also useful to have some knowledge of those methods not recommended for groups (for example, body belays) so that you can appreciate the merits of the systems you use yourself.

Types of belay device include:

- belay or Sticht plate (sprung/unsprung)
- Italian hitch
- figure-of-eight descender
- ATC/DMM Bug/Tubular or similar
- gri-gri
- single-rope controller and others.

Types of belay system include:

- instructor-only belaying
- Italian hitch belaying in teams
- belaying using a variety of devices in teams
- walk back belays
- incorporating ground belays
- peer belaying.

Level 1 c) Set up bottom rope systems. If they are already set up, check that they are safe.

Note: Peer belaying - there are a number of different forms and safe methods of peer belaying. However this has always been the main area of concern for safe group climbing and accidents resulting from poor practice do occur.

Main causes of accidents as determined by the Health and Safety Executive (www.hse.gov.uk) are:

1. Management assuming too much of newly qualified instructors.
2. A momentary lapse of concentration on the part of the instructor.
3. Inappropriate focus of attention by the instructor.

There are several different methods of peer belaying such as 'bell-ringing'. It is important to understand the advantages and disadvantages of each method and to select the method appropriate to the location, group experience, group age, size and so on.

Levels 1 & 2 d) Understand the advantages and disadvantages of directly tying the harness or belt on to the rope or indirectly using a figure-of-eight in the bight and a karabiner.

Levels 1 & 2 e) Appreciate the advantages and disadvantages of indirect and direct belays.

Levels 1 & 2 f) Be able to teach belaying to groups in a methodical and clear manner, and to give clear and logical instructions.

Levels 1 & 2 g) Understand how to use ground anchors for the belayer and how to improvise if these are not available.

Level 1 h) Ensure that the descent from the wall is safe and controlled.

Level 2 i) Demonstrate an ability to choose suitable and sound anchors at the crag. At this level this involves the use of trees, stakes, bolts and occasionally other man-made anchor points only. Climbing protection such as nuts, camming devices etc are outside the scope of Level 2 and must not be used under any circumstances by Level 2 instructors.

Note: Choice of anchor points - in many cases these will be obvious. Anchors should be directly above climbs/abseils and as high as possible. It is crucial that you pay great attention to the selection of your anchors.

Examples

- Trees may be old, roots hollow and branches weak. Trees close to the top of crags are by definition growing in thin soil.
- Stakes and bolts - who placed them? How do you know? How old are they and what is happening beneath the surface? Don't take it for granted that just because it's man-made, it's fine. Corrosion can mean that these are weakened very quickly.

Level 2 j) Demonstrate an ability to set up anchors in order to:

- position the belay karabiner directly above the line of the climb
- utilise multiple anchor points and equalise tension
- optimise the finishing point of the climb
- minimise erosion of rock and rope drag.

Level 2 k) Understand the correct use of the following knots and be able to tie them and demonstrate this to others.

- Figure-of-eight (including in the bight and re-threaded).
- Italian hitch.
- Double stopper knot.
- Overhand knot.
- Clove hitch.
- Bowline.
- Tape knot.

Level 2 l) Be able to set up both top and bottom rope systems.

Levels 1 & 2 m) Be able to supervise groups belaying themselves. Understand that it may be necessary for you to hold the dead rope as a precaution (see peer belaying, page 9).

Level 2 n) Ensure that the descent from the crag is safe and controlled. It is suggested that the climber is lowered off except on Southern Sandstone crags - due to the fragile nature of the rock (see 2c, page 5).

Level 2 o) Ensure you are adequately belayed when at the top of a crag.

8 Abseiling

Levels 1 & 2 a) Understand the need for separate, secure anchor points for both the abseil rope and the safety rope.

Levels 1 & 2 b) Be able to set up a releasable abseil system, release it under load, set up a safety rope and be able to lock it off when releasing the abseil rope.

Note: The releasable abseil enables you to deal with problems when the abseiler is part of the way down the abseil. The weight during an abseil is mostly on the abseil rope; should the abseiler, for example, entangle her hair in the figure-of-eight descender it would be extremely difficult to release the hair unless her weight could be taken off of the rope. The releasable system uses a simple knot at the top of the abseil rope on the anchor which can be released under load - usually a locked off Italian hitch. The weight of the abseiler is taken on the safety rope, the abseil rope released from tension, and either the problem sorted out or the whole abseil rope/abseiler lowered to the ground.

This procedure must be practised until you can do it smoothly and with confidence. Should an abseiler get stuck in the figure-of-eight or have any other problem she may be in some pain and it is necessary to release her from the situation quickly. For Level 2 the arrangement at crags is far more complex than on towers and practice sessions should be held on prior visits where possible; only in this way will you be able to foresee the problems for your group that may arise.

Levels 1 & 2 c) Be able to belay in a safe manner using a variety of belay devices.

Note: In practice it is best to use an Italian hitch to belay when abseiling. Be aware that most belay devices must be operated from behind if the rope is to be locked off; if the abseil rope is above your head as on most towers then you will not be able to get behind the device. An Italian hitch is locked from the front, so it is the ideal method of belaying, but there are some locations where this differs and you should be able to use the most appropriate method.

Levels 1 & 2 d) Understand that direct belays are much safer than indirect.

Levels 1 & 2 e) Be able to give clear methodical instructions to the participants on how to abseil.

Note: It is vital to understand that problems can be avoided by preparation prior to the abseil.

- Give clear instructions - explain what the abseiler is expected to do, and that she should keep her fingers, hair etc away from the descender.
- Clear away any potential for getting loose parts caught - long hair should be tied back (or tucked into the back of a shirt), very loose clothing tucked in, long chinstraps on helmets (if worn) tucked away. If an abseiler is nervous she may curl her upper body forward towards the descender, increasing the risk of snags. Encourage her to adopt the better posture of leaning her head and shoulders back a little.
- **For Level 2 only:** Selection of a good take-off area. The belay should be high relative to the abseiler to facilitate an easy start. This is the crucial part of an abseil, both technically for you as the instructor and psychologically for the participant. If there is an easy take-off with a high belay, you are close by and there are convenient small ledges for the feet, the whole process should be easy for everyone.
- Fit harnesses correctly - an abseiler turning upside down (most common at the top) could come out of a loose harness. Ensure the harness fits tightly over the hips and use a chest harness if the abseiler is very slim, young, has no hip shape, or is very large. It is a good idea to be able to tie a simple chest adaptation with a sling (a Parisian Baudrier) in case the situation arises and you don't have a chest harness.

It is vital that you can see the abseiler for the whole of her descent. In some cases an acceptable alternative to this would be to have a capable assistant (ie an adult with some experience) on the ground where she can see and communicate with the abseiler. You may encounter serious problems at some stage if you cannot see and communicate with the abseiler. Imagine trying to describe how to untwist a stuck rope when you can't see it and the abseiler doesn't understand the words you're using such as 'descender'. She may be frightened and unable to see your reassuring face.

Level 1 f) Understand that sometimes participants will need to be belayed up ladders; be able to set up a safety rope for this purpose.

9 Group management

Levels 1 & 2 a) Be aware at all times of what all members in the group are doing and be able to manage them while they are involved on the climbing wall, abseiling or waiting.

Levels 1 & 2 b) Give clear instructions to the group as to where they may go within the area.

Dangers must be pointed out to them.

Note: Awareness of the group is vital. It is important not to get too involved with any one climber at the expense of the rest. Frequently a climber having problems making a move will demand attention; if you stay at the bottom or climb a few feet and encourage that person then you cannot see the other ropes or climbers. It is better to stand behind the group where you can see everyone and just go forward to deal with problems as they arise. Be aware that an unoccupied group may well wander off into other areas. This can be an important safety issue and frequently young people can be seen happily clambering about while the instructor is preoccupied with the real climbing or abseiling session. So, please make sure you do the following.

- Before the session, define strict areas where participants may and may not go.
- Ask other adults to supervise participants who are not actively involved or are between activities.
- Occupy everyone. Participants won't wander off if they have something interesting to do.
- For **Level 2** only: It would be helpful to have a capable adult assistant (wearing a helmet if necessary) at the bottom of the abseil. She can speed up the session by untying abseilers and sending karabiners etc back up on the safety rope, reassure nervous abseilers from below, and, crucially, ensure that abseilers don't wander off up the crag into dangerous areas. If abseilers have to walk back to the top then the assistant should show them the way or accompany them.

Levels 1 & 2 c) Ensure that group sizes are not too large (maximum group size is 12) and that there is an adequate instructor-to-participant ratio.

Note: In practice this will translate to three ropes when climbing, or when abseiling 1:1.

Level 1 d) Be familiar with, and demonstrate the use of, bouldering activities on climbing walls with groups; ie setting and demonstrating suitable problems, fielding students, maximum participation, etc.

Level 2 e) Understand the benefits of bouldering as part of climbing training and its use as a group management technique.

At Levels 1 and 2 instructors are assessed by an MIA or MIC holder. Visits by the Girlguiding Climbing Technical Adviser take place regularly to ensure standards are consistent.

The role of the Assessor

As an Assessor you must use your best judgement to assess whether the trainee instructor is safe with a group of young people within the parameters of the type of session permitted for her by the scheme. Ask yourself whether you would be happy with this person supervising a group of children you know. If you have any doubts at all about their ability, then you must fail the trainee instructor or defer her until you are happy. You must fill in the **Instructor Assessment Form** on page 16 to give your decision and reasons.

Assessment criteria

Trainee instructors must be judged in the areas described in the syllabus. Generally the type of things you are looking at are safety and technical ability, teaching ability and group management.

Comments

Comments should be made in the space available on the **Instructor Assessment Form** (please attach separate sheets as required). It is important that you give an accurate summary of the trainee instructor's performance.

Experience (logbook)

This is a crucial section of the assessment. It is vital that you are satisfied that the trainee instructor has a reasonable amount of experience and this is the hardest area to judge. Do this by:

- examining the logbook and discussing its contents with the trainee instructor to see whether you feel it is a true indication of her experience
- looking at the ease with which the trainee instructor works; does this reflect her experience and the depth of her knowledge? Please sign and date the trainee instructor's logbook.

Managing the assessment

Having seen the trainee instructor and made your decision, you may pass, fail or defer her. Whatever your decision, the experience should always be a positive one for the trainee instructor, so before and during the assessment make sure you do the following.

- Never interfere with the session or take over unless a serious safety issue necessitates this.
- Explain to the participants who you are and why you are there.
- Remember that trainee instructors will usually be nervous and may do things which they would normally not do. Serious matters such as undone karabiners or incorrect tie-ins cannot be overlooked. Give the trainee instructor a chance to rectify faults.

During the debrief, please bear in mind the following points.

- Criticism of the trainee instructor's performance must be constructive and helpful, with a view to improvement.
- Wherever possible give specific targets for improvement, for example 'you need to supervise for 20 more sessions before I see you again'. These targets could include suggestions for suitable courses to attend.
- Don't skip over the notes on the assessment form and just write 'well done' or similar comments - please give a precise, full description of the trainee instructor's performance with strengths and weaknesses expressed in a polite, positive way.

Passes

Congratulate the instructor, but remind her:

- of the strict remit of the award
- that she is still learning - warn against over-confidence
- to continue to update her skills and knowledge - keep skills fluent, read climbing news, observe other instructors, for example SPA holders, where possible
- that the qualification must be renewed (see page 3).

Deferments

Trainee instructors' qualifications may be deferred for many reasons and your recommendations for progress will vary widely. They may include the following.

- Logbook insufficient/more personal climbing experience needed - a certain number of climbs to be completed before re-submitting the logbook.
- Poor group management - be specific in your advice and give examples of what she should do, perhaps a certain number of sessions or hours assisting a more experienced instructor who will sign off her logbook.
- Poor on technical or safety points, for example lack of knotting skills, unable to set up a releasable abseil system - reassess that point in a one-hour assessment at a later date, after the trainee instructor has had time to practise.
- 1st Response/first aid certificate has expired - defer until a valid certificate is presented to you.

Failures

If a trainee instructor defers on several points then failing him or her is necessary; leniency wouldn't do anyone any favours, least of all the future participants.

- Handle this sensitively - some trainee instructors will place great importance on passing their assessments and be very disappointed to fail.
- Start the debrief either with a positive point to acknowledge their skill and achievement, or by asking the trainee instructor how she felt it went. Most trainees know if they have failed.
- Explain clearly why you failed him or her and discuss what their next steps could be.

Afterwards

It would be helpful to the trainee instructor if she felt that you were available for advice and help as appropriate. Please take the time after the assessment to go through what went wrong and what she should do next. If you are happy to give continuing support, give her your contact details.



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

Climbing and Abseiling Scheme logbook sheet

Date	Venue/crag	Route name	Grade	Category	Group details	Comments

Please note, you may also use the logbook sheets which are available to download from the Mountain Training UK website (www.mountain-training.org) - any format of logbook is acceptable.

Girlguiding Climbing and Abseiling Scheme: Instructor Assessment Form

Instructor's name:	
Country/Region and County:	Membership number:
If you do not have a Girlguiding membership number, please provide the following.	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone:	Email:
Location of assessment:	
Give a brief description of the venue:	
Date of assessment:	
Level being assessed (<i>please tick</i>): <input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Level 2	
Please use the space below to describe the trainee instructor's performance and ability to safely supervise groups climbing and abseiling within the scope of the relevant syllabus level.	
a) Currency of trainee instructor's knowledge. This should be up to date, and the trainee instructor should be confident with a fluid approach.	
b) Trainee instructor's ability to manage the group in all aspects.	
c) Technical ability - ropework, familiarity with equipment etc.	

I have examined the above instructor in the areas of the syllabus as listed below.

Knowledge and currency

Personal climbing

Safety

First aid

Preparation

Equipment

Ropework and belaying

Abseiling

Group management

I have examined the instructor's first aid certificate (minimum six-hour course) and it expires on:
Trainee aware of Girlguiding's Safety and Safeguarding Policy? (please tick)

I have graded the instructor a: (please tick) pass deferment fail
at: (please tick) Level 1 Level 2

Recommendations

This section must be completed for instructors who have been deferred or failed giving the reason(s) for your decision.

Signature of Assessor:

Date:

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Email:

Qualification(s):

MTUK no:

Once this form has been completed please scan and email it to climberscert@girlguiding.org.uk, or post it to Climbing Certificate, Girlguiding Trading Service, Atlantic Street, Broadheath, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 5EQ.



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Girlguiding

Girlguiding Climbing and Abseiling Scheme: Renewal Form

Instructor's name:	
Country/Region and County:	Membership number:
If you do not have a Girlguiding membership number, please provide the following:	
Address:	
	Postcode:
Telephone:	Email:
Qualification being renewed (<i>please tick</i>): <input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Level 2	
Date climbing qualification gained or last renewed:	Date first aid qualification expires:
Please include the following with this form. <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Log of the climbs you have taken part in or instructed in the last three years.● Copy of an up-to-date first aid certificate (minimum six-hour training).	
<i>I am familiar with the requirements of the Girlguiding Climbing and Abseiling Scheme and agree to comply with the rules and procedures contained in the scheme.</i>	
Signature:	Date:
Confirmation of renewal of qualification (to be completed by the Girlguiding Climbing Technical Adviser).	
Climbing qualification (<i>please tick</i>): <input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Level 2	
Date qualification renewed:	Date qualification will expire:
If qualification not renewed, please state the reasons why in the space below.	
Signature:	
Name:	Date:
Qualification(s):	MLUK no:
Please scan and email this form, with a copy of your logbook and valid first aid certificate, to: outdooractivities@girlguiding.org.uk , or post it to Leadership Development, Girlguiding, 17-19 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 0PT.	



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Girlguiding Climbing and Abseiling Scheme: Notification of Training Course Form

Please send this form to Girlguiding Headquarters at least four weeks before the date of your course. You will receive confirmation that the course may proceed.

Name of course:

Date of course:

Course director's name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Email:

Venue name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Email:

How many participants are you expecting?

How many approved Trainers will be running the course?

If additional Trainers will be running the course, please give their names and qualification(s) below.

Name:

Qualification(s):

Name:

Qualification(s):

I understand that the Girlguiding Climbing Technical Adviser or appointed person may wish to visit during the course.

Signature:

Date:

Approval slip (to be completed by the Girlguiding Climbing Technical Adviser).

The following course may be run in accordance with Girlguiding's Climbing and Abseiling Scheme.

Name of course:

Date of course:

Course director's name:

Signature:

Name:

Date:

Please scan and email this form to outdooractivities@girlguiding.org.uk, or post it to Leadership Development, Girlguiding, 17-19 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 0PT.

Scheme levels table

Each level has its own venue characteristics. It is the venue type which determines the requirements of the instructor. If a crag appears to comply with the criteria below it does not automatically follow that it will have been approved at this level, as site inspectors who are experienced instructors may identify hazards which are not immediately apparent. Always check that the crag you intend using is approved and at what level. Details of inspected crags are available at www.girlguidesclimbing.wordpress.com. Other activities or variations such as abseiling from bridges or trees must be approved by the Girlguiding Climbing Technical Adviser.

Levels	Level 1	Level 2	SPA	MIA or higher
Scope of level	Purpose-built climbing walls and abseil towers with fixed anchor points.	In addition to that of Level 1, single pitch climbs/abseils with in situ anchor points (trees, stakes, bolts, etc), have a safe route to both the top and bottom of the crag, suitable belays can be provided by using ropes, slings and karabiners.	In addition to that of Levels 1 and 2, single pitch climbs/abseils.	In addition to that of Levels 1, 2 and 3, multi-pitch climbs, scrambling and general mountaineering.
Site specific approval required	Yes	Yes	No	No
Does not include	Rock climbing on single-pitch or multi-pitch crags, outcrops, quarries, cliffs etc. Tidal sea cliffs, or any location where escape is not possible from the base. General mountaineering skills, such as are needed to approach and retreat from moorland and mountain crags. The use of climbing protection equipment such as nuts, camming devices etc. Venues not approved by Girlguiding. Single pitch climbs placing protection to set up belays.	Rock climbing on multi-pitch crags or crags higher than 25 metres (half the rope length). Sites with access to the sea, cliffs or tidal areas, or any location where escape is not possible from the base. General mountaineering skills, such as are needed to approach and retreat from moorland and mountain crags. The use of climbing protection equipment such as nuts, camming devices etc. Lead climbing for either instructors or participants. Placing protection to set up belays, tidal sea cliffs and venues not approved by Girlguiding.	Multi-pitch climbs, tidal sea cliffs and crags which involve mountaineering skills to gain access.	N/A

Scheme entry requirements	Experience at climbing / abseiling at scope of level. Minimum age 18 years at assessment.	Level 1 award or experience at climbing/ abseiling at scope of level. Minimum age 18 years at assessment.	As UK MTB requirements.	As UK MTB requirements.
Training	Two days.	Two days.	As UK MTB requirements.	As UK MTB requirements.
Exemption	SPA or higher, approved local scheme eg Southern Sandstone Award (subject to approval), SPA training gives exemption from training.	SPA or higher, approved local scheme eg Southern Sandstone Award (subject to approval), SPA training gives exemption from training.	As UK MTB requirements.	As UK MTB requirements.
Consolidation period	Yes - six months recommended.	Yes - six months recommended.	As UK MTB requirements.	As UK MTB requirements.
Assessment	One day.	One day.	As UK MTB requirements.	As UK MTB requirements.
First aid requirement	Minimum 1st Response/equivalent (current).	Minimum 1st Response/equivalent (current).	As UK MTB requirements.	As UK MTB requirements.
Re-approval	Logbook sent to Girlguiding Headquarters (every five years).	Logbook sent to Girlguiding Headquarters (every five years).	As UK MTB requirements.	As UK MTB requirements.
Trainer's requirement	SPA holder (who has been approved by an MIA as suitable to run a training course) MIA holder or higher.	SPA holder (who has been approved by an MIA as suitable to run a training course) MIA holder or higher.	As UK MTB requirements.	As UK MTB requirements.
Assessor's requirement	MIA holder or higher.	MIA holder or higher.	As UK MTB requirements.	As UK MTB requirements.

Further information

Girlguiding
17-19 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 0PT
outdooractivities@girlguiding.org.uk
www.girlguiding.org.uk

Useful websites

British Mountaineering Council www.thebmc.co.uk
Mountain Training UK www.mountain-training.org
UK Climbing www.ukclimbing.com

Useful publications

Rock Climbing: Essential Skills & Techniques by Libby Peter
Mountain Leader Training UK; ISBN 978-0954151119
This book is the official handbook of the Mountaineering Instructor and Single Pitch Award schemes.

The Mountain Skills Training Handbook by Pete Hill and Stuart Johnson
David and Charles; ISBN 978-1446300978
This book covers a wide range of topics but the climbing section is aimed at instructors and the illustrations are very useful.

Hill Walking by Steve Long
The official handbook of the Mountain Leader and Walking Group schemes; ISBN 978-0954151102
This is a general text about leadership aimed mainly at mountain leaders ie hill walking leaders. However, it is good general reading for outdoor groups and is highly recommended.

Magazines such as *Summit* (British Mountaineering Council) and *Climber* often contain useful information on techniques and access issues etc as well as interesting articles on all aspects of climbing.

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info@girlguiding.org.uk
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Girlguiding Climbing Technical Adviser: Steve Ranger
Project Coordinator: Susannah Hodge
Project Editor: Alison Shaw
Designer: Angie Daniel

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Readers are reminded that during the lifespan of this resource there may be changes to:

- Girlguiding policy
- legal requirements
- climbing practice

which will affect the accuracy of the information contained within this publication.

Although the term 'parent' is used in this resource, users should remember that what is said may apply to a carer or other adult with parental responsibility.

Although we appreciate that readers may be male or female, for ease of reading feminine pronouns have been used throughout.