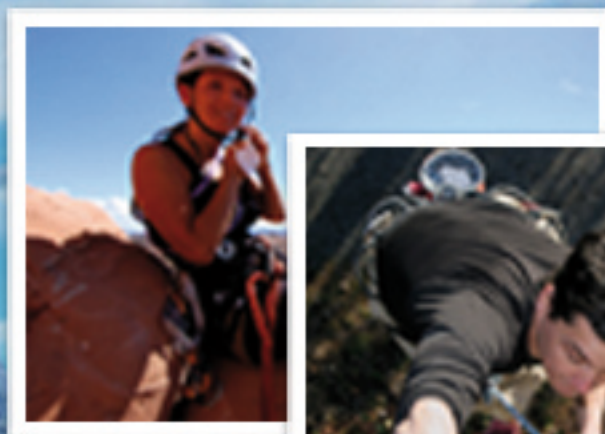


Rock Climbing

from **A**
to **Z**



a Resource for
All Skill Levels



Rock Climbing from A to Z:

a Resource for All Skill Levels



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Synopsis

Introduction

There are many adventure sports out there today, some of them being just for recreation, and others as serious as any other sport. Rock Climbing is one of those adventure sports that really requires you to be tough, both physically and mentally. It isn't anybody's sport.

Climbers need to be perfectly fit, physically, using the muscles in their arms and legs to pull themselves up the challenging rock formations, and mentally, controlling their hands and feet accurately, getting proper grips to get to the top.

Rock Climbing is quite dangerous. In fact, it is one of the most dangerous adventure sports. The element of danger is always present, even with all the safety equipment specially made for rock climbers. You'll find that most rock climbers practice the sport for personal satisfaction, taken as a challenge, just to see that they can overcome it.

History of Rock Climbing

Rock climbing originated more as a necessity to people who needed to scale great heights, rather than an adventure sports, though it quickly evolved to the latter. It began towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century, primarily in Lakeland, England, Elbsandsteingebirge, Saxony in eastern Germany, and the Dolomites in Italy, and a few more places.

As time went by, the sport began to gain popularity, and by the end of the Victorian era, more than 60 rock climbers would gather at the Lakelands' WastWater Hotel during the holidays.

Rock Climbing gained more popularity over time, and people were inspired by the efforts of great climbers of the 1900s, such as Oskar Schuster. In the year 1903, the Elbsandstein region saw more than 500 active rock climbers. There were many famous rock climbers during the time.

The American Oliver Perry-Smith, Rudolf Fehrmann and W. Hünig Rock were some of the climbers to set new standards to Climbing, and new difficulty levels for the others. In 1906, they ascended the Teufelsturm, one of the most difficult routes at that time, rated VIIIb.

Soon, people started forming rock climbing clubs, and by 1930, over 200 clubs were formed in the area. In the Dolomites, the first solo rock climber was a 17 year old named Georg Winkler. His ascent of Die Vajolettürme in 1887 encouraged rock climbing to be taken up as a sport in the Dolomites.

Rock Climbing has its origin in mountaineering, and for a long time, was considered as a part of it. It was not until recently that it was acknowledged as a sport by itself. Initially, Rock Climbing was used by mountaineers as training grounds, to practice before their actual expedition, or to improve their skills. It started gaining more light, and by the 1950s, it became a sport by itself.

Rock climbing in today's world has many different variations and styles. It isn't limited to just the rocky areas. Artificial walls are also available for climbers. A lot more equipment, safety and otherwise, have been made specifically for rock climbers.

The sport has also become more widespread, and is practiced in a lot more places in the world. Rock climbing routes are graded according to difficulty. Since its popularity did not spread simultaneously throughout the world, most countries have their own unique grading systems. Along with development came variation. There was the advent of indoor rock climbing, climbing with or without ropes.

Safety was given utmost importance as well, and as the routes became harder to climb, the safety factor was considered more. Special equipment was designed to ensure the safety of the climbers. Climbers are almost fully dependant on protection equipment or 'pros', for their safety.

Rock Climbing Styles

Not only did rock climbing gain increasing popularity throughout the world, but with it came a lot of variations as well. The two main branches would be Traditional Rock Climbing and Sport Climbing. There are tons of other variations as well.

Traditional "Trad" Climbing:

Traditional rock climbing, commonly referred to as 'Trad' climbing, is basically freeform rock climbing. The climbers don't use any special equipment and artificial tools during their ascent, aside from a few safety measures. Climbers use only their limbs to help them climb upwards. All equipment used is only for safety.

'Trad' climbing puts the safety of the climbers completely into the tools they use, and where they use it. Hence, it also has the name 'Adventure Climbing' in Australia. It relies extensively on the Climbing Gear used. Trad Climbers have racks to carry different length slings, protective equipment or 'pros', and emergency spare carabiners.

→ Why Trad Climbing?

You may ask why one would choose 'trad' climbing. Well, there are several reasons, or advantages to Trad climbing. For one, there isn't any set route to take.

The climber may explore any possible route he can find, or make for that matter. It is also a good way to get familiar with the use of equipment.

Trad climbing can test the climber's judgmental skills. The correct use of the pros is the only way to ensure the safety of the climber, and there's no better place to test that, than nature itself.

Rock climbing is usually done as a team. Hence, it helps to improve the coordination and teamwork between the team members, the leader. All these qualities are essential to a Rock Climber, to ensure the safety of not only him, but his team mates as well. If the pros are placed in a faulty area in the rock, it could be fatal. So mastering the use of the equipment is essential to a safe rock climbing experience.

Sport Climbing

Sport climbing, unlike trad climbing, has a preset route for the climbers to take, with permanent anchors and bolts that are fixed to the climbing surface.

Sport climbing involves a rope hooked to the climber, with the loose end held by the belayer. The climber will find bolts along the climbing surface, which he can use a QuickDraw to hook the bolt and the rope. This ensures that the climber is protected if he should fall. On a normal rock climbing route, there is an 8ft gap between two bolts.

On top of the route is an anchor. This can hold equipment, and provides two points where the climber can use the last of his pros.

When the final anchor is used, by clipping it to the rope, a process called 'cleaning', where all the equipment used by the climber is taken out on his way down, is commenced.

Sport climbing is much safer than Trad climbing, and it gives more importance to the athletic and gymnastic aspect of rock climbing. Using certain techniques and 'moves' is common in Sport climbs. Sport climbing focuses more on developing the climber's flexibility, stamina and strength.

→ Why Sport Climbing?

Sport climbing is one of the most popular types of rock climbing today, even though it is relatively new. One main reason for the popularity of Sport Climbing is that it is the safest rock climbing style.

Its danger level is extremely low when compared to its brothers such as trad climbing, bouldering, etc. You can depend on the tons of bolt for support, hence reducing the risk of falling to the ground. This allows the climber to concentrate fully on his ascent route.

When sport climbing, the climber practically gets a full body workout, from stamina to strength to flexibility. It is also a cheaper alternative to the other climbing styles. It uses minimal amount of equipments, without compromising the safety level. Although less in number, each piece of equipment plays an important role in ensuring the safety of the climber.

Because of its safety level and low risk of injury, it's a great place for beginners to start. It gives beginners a chance to develop their skills with a reduced risk of hurting themselves.

Bouldering:

Bouldering is basically a variation of rock climbing. In bouldering, you get only about twelve feet off the ground whereas in Rock Climbing, you get a lot, lot higher. Bouldering also requires total body control, physical endurance and upper body strength, much more than what is required for Trad or Sport climbing.

Bouldering allows climbers to perform moves which can't be done while trad climbing, as they might be dangerous to do at a higher altitude.

In bouldering, the climber takes a boulder route, as the name suggests. These boulder routes are referred to as 'problems'. It may sound simple, but climbers need to perform special moves to get through a problem. It's not as easy as it sounds. The climber will need intense practice and training to pull off these moves.

Bouldering doesn't use, or require, most of the equipment used in Rock Climbing. Ropes, Carabiners, Harnesses... none of these. It only requires good rock climbing boots to scale better, chalk to get a better grip, a chalk bag to hold the chalk and crash pads, of course, to soften the landing if the climber should fall.

For many years, Bouldering was a part of Rock Climbing, which was in turn part of Mountaineering. In the late 1950s, a climber and gymnast, John Gill, who is considered the father of Modern Bouldering, brought Bouldering to light, and made it a sport on its own.

Bouldering has made its way through the extreme sports ranks, and is gaining more popularity as a sport which develops endurance, stamina, fitness and creativity. Bouldering is basically for Adrenaline junkies, people who aren't afraid to take risks and adventurers, maybe for a few fitness freaks as well.

→ Why Bouldering?

Bouldering doesn't only require physical strength and stamina, but also creativity and the ability to think quickly to solve boulder problems. It's also a great motivation for physical fitness.

Bouldering needs physical and mental strength, and maybe even a bunch of tries to solve a particular problem. It's great motivation to get you to work out.

Bouldering is also the perfect sport for a thrill seeker. There's never a moment during the course of the problem, where you can't get hurt, or the risk of getting injured is zero. This factor attracts daredevils from all around to give it a try.