Climbing (Challenge Courses/Towers - High Elements)

An Element That Requires The Use Of A Belay In Normal Operation

SECONDARY - INTRAMURAL 2023

- Permanent Installation on a School or Commercial Site.
- Consult **Risk Management**.
- This activity page must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed on this page. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult **Outside Activity Providers**.
- Also consult **Climbing (General Procedures)**.

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe for use (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters). Students must be encouraged to report equipment problems to the teacher.
- All equipment must be inspected by qualified on site ropes/challenge course personnel prior to activity to determine that all equipment is safe for use.
- All equipment must meet current **Association for Challenge Course Technology** (ACCT) standards.
- Helmets that are commercially and specifically manufactured for climbing must be properly fitted (as per manufacturer's guidelines) and properly worn by all students who are leaving the ground or are below any activity in use.
- Belay devices must be connected with a locking carabiner rated at 22kN/2200kg/4945lbs., where commercial friction or camming devices are used.

- Climbing ropes must be compatible with the chosen belay device and the climbing activity.
- Climbing harnesses (sit, sit/chest, or full body) appropriate to the age and/or body size of the climber must be used.
- For all indoor installations, mats (for example,, Velcro utility mats, wrestling mats) must be in place at the ascending and descending points. Mat thicknesses:
    - cross-link foam 5cm (2'')
    - open-cell foam 5cm (2")
    - polyurethane 5cm (2")
    - dual-density 5cm (2")
    - mats of equivalent compaction rating as determined by manufacturer

*Refer to the **First Aid** section for first aid equipment requirements.*

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Clothing and footwear appropriate to the chosen activities and environmental conditions must be worn. Open-toed shoes, (e,g, sandals) are not permitted. Loose clothing not is permitted. Tops with drawstrings are not permitted.
- No sharp objects are to be worn or carried in pockets.
- Exposed jewelry is not permitted.
- Long hair must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

Facilities

- Determine that all facilities are safe for use. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the teacher.
- Challenge course activities that are selected must be appropriate for ability levels, age and size of students.
- All challenge course elements must have been installed, or have passed an annual professional safety inspection, by a qualified Challenge Course Professional as defined in the most current edition of **The Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT)** Challenge Course Standards or equivalent.
- All challenge course elements must meet the ACCT Standards that are in place at the time of installation.
- All challenge course elements must be inspected annually by a qualified Challenge Course Professional, using the most recent edition of the ACCT.
- This inspection must be documented in a written report in accordance with the ACCT.
- Necessary maintenance/changes to the elements noted in the report must be addressed.
- All challenge course elements must be inspected by qualified site personnel prior to use.
- The challenge course must be managed and operated in accordance with the most current ACCT, including having a designated Challenge Course Manager who is responsible for overseeing the staffing and operations of the challenge course.
- The challenge course must be used in accordance with the current Challenge Course Professional's recommendations.
- Treed courses must be inspected annually by a professional challenge course vendor and dead limbs and any live branches that might be considered hazardous must be removed.
- Any live branches that may be considered a hazard must be removed.
- All courses built in trees must have an adequate thickness of wood chips at the base of all elements.
- Treed courses must not be used in high winds or thunder-storms.
- When running takes place off school site for a warm up:

- Teachers must do a safety check 'walk through' in order to identify potential problems prior to initial use of route or course.
- Teachers must outline to the students the route or course (for example, notice of areas to approach with caution) before the start of the run.
- Teachers must determine that students are not crossing busy intersections unless directly supervised.

Environmental Considerations

- When environmental conditions may pose a risk to student safety (for example, thunderstorms [lightning] or student(s) with asthma, triggered by air quality), teachers must take into consideration their school board/school's protocols and procedures related to:
  - environmental conditions (consult **Weather**); and
  - insects (for example, mosquitoes and ticks [consult the school/school board's protocols and/or regional Public Health Department's website]).
- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, sun burn, heat stroke).
- At all times the school board's weather and insect procedures are the minimum standards. In situations where a higher standard of care is presented (for example, outside activity providers, facility/program coordinators), the higher standard of care must be followed.

Special Rules/Instructions

- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult **Medical Conditions**.
- Students must not participate in the activity until they receive information on concussion prevention specific to the activity, inherent risks of the activity (for example, outline possible risks and ways to

minimize the risks), and procedures and rules for safe play. Students must receive instruction on the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.

- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for communication with parents/guardians, the location of an off-site activity, means of transportation, supervision ratios, and parent/guardian permission.
- Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression.
- A proper warm-up and cool-down must be included.
- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- Completed medical forms for each participating student must be accessible.
- Prior to the first lesson, teachers must inform climbing instructors of students who have special needs.
- Risks involved with each activity and how to lower the risk of an injury from occurring must be communicated to students.
- Activity and course elements that are introduced must be based on skills that are taught and appropriate for the age, ability level, language and and experience of the students.
- Students must be allowed to select a challenge at their comfort level, including the choice to not participate. Teachers, instructors and supervisors must be aware of the possibility of peer pressure and make sure no student is coerced into participating.
- Students must be made aware of expectations as they relate to:
    - behaviour;
    - emergency procedures;
    - signal to assemble; and
    - boundaries for activities.

- The site must have a written Policies and Procedures Manual for the management and operation of all challenge course activities. This manual must include an Emergency Action Plan consistent with the most current **ACCT Challenge Course Standards**.
- Students waiting at the top of rappel towers must be outfitted in proper fall protection or a barrier must be put in place.
- A method of rescuing a tired/stuck climber must be available (for example, ladder, scaffold, top-rope belay).
- Individuals who have been trained and can demonstrate the required instructor skills and who are 16 years of age or older can assist with instruction but must be directly supervised by a qualified instructor.

Belaying

- Programs may be offered utilizing the following fall protection operating systems:
    - **Climb Only**
    - **Full Belay**
    - **Auto Belay**
    - **Participatory/Team Belay**
    - **Individual Lanyard System**
- Programs are required to follow the ratios related to the Grade Level and fall protection operating system as indicated in the Supervision section.
- A qualified instructor must check the harness and connection to the Fall protection operating system for any student prior to him/her leaving the ground.
- The fall protection operating system utilized must be one that was installed and recommended by a qualified Challenge Course Professional.
- The climber-to-belayer weight ratio must be taken into consideration when determining the number of buddy belayers necessary in any non-ground anchored system. In most conventional top-roped belay systems, an approximate climber-to-belayer weight ratio is 1:1.

Full Belaying

- When students are belaying, an introductory lesson, incorporating the following elements must precede top-roped climbing:
    - must be identified as challenge course specific;
    - must be identified as specific to the belay system/device being used;
    - must include instruction and repeat practice on:
        - correct use of harness
        - correct use of knots and tie-in points
        - concept of top-roping
        - correct use of belay device/system
        - general principles for belaying with the specific system
        - lowering procedures with the specific system
        - communication and the climber/belayer contract
- When students are belaying, a system/ technique that will not allow the climber to ground-fall in the event that one of the belay team members becomes incapacitated, must be incorporated.

Participatory Belay/Team Belay

- Students may participate as part of a Participatory/Team Belay when:
    - a locking assisted braking device is used AND an instructor lowers the climber, OR
    - an instructor's hands are on the brake rope at all times.

Individual Lanyard Systems

- Students must participate in a ground school which prepares them for the course.
- Students must be directly supervised at all transitions between elements and each transfer of lanyards, unless using a mechanical control system.

- Students must not use lanyards for fall arrest (for example, transferring anchor points while climbing vertically).

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- On site supervision by both a teacher and two qualified instructors who must be present for all aspects of the program. If the teacher is a qualified instructor, then another teacher and qualified instructor are required.
- Constant visual supervision must occur when students are on the challenge course.
- The level of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.
- A volunteer could assist in the supervision of physical education activities. Examples of volunteers are educational assistants, retired teachers, co-op students, parents/guardians, early childhood educators, and teacher candidates. Refer to your school board's policy regarding volunteers. These volunteers must be accompanied by a supervisor.

Supervision Ratios

- After the introductory lesson, the following ratios must be maintained:
    - Climb Only: 1 instructor per 1 active line
    - Full Belay: 1 instructor per 2 active lines
    - Participatory/Team Belay: 1 Instructor per 2 active lines (3 active lines can be used only if the location of the 3rd line is in close proximity for constant visual supervision)
    - Static/Self Belay: 1 instructor per 5 participants
- Student may participate in part of the belay process if:
    - a locking-assisted braking device is used;

- constant visual supervision occurs; and
- a qualified instructor lowers the climber.

Qualifications

Applicable to All Installations

- Instructors must be trained in, understand, demonstrate and adhere to a directly relevant skill set for Challenge Courses/Towers – High Elements. A relevant skill set is a described set of skills developed by recognized Challenge Course Professionals.
- All instructors must be at least 18 years of age or older to teach the introductory lesson and/or be an instructor.

Applicable to Permanent Installations at a Commercial Site

- All instructors must hold a current certificate demonstrating successful completion of training from an accredited, recognized, challenge course professional training company.
- The site must have a Challenge Course Manager. The role of the Challenge Course Manager is to make and implement necessary decisions about programming and risk management. The Challenge Course Manager must either have a Challenge Course Manager Certificate or have knowledge and skills equivalent to the course content (for example, knowledge/training relating to staff training and supervision, program administration, development of policies and procedures, risk management, maintenance and inspection, ANSI-ACCT standards and other relevant standards).

Applicable to Permanent Installations on School Sites

- Instructors for permanent school sites must hold a current certificate (within the last 3 years) demonstrating successful completion of a training workshop that directly addresses the climbing activities they are teaching (for example, Toronto District School Board Guidelines and Standards for Indoor Climbing in-service program).

First Aid

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult **Sample First Aid Kit**)
- A working communication device (for example, cell phone) must be accessible.
- On school site: Follow the school's first aid emergency response (consult **First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response**) and the school board's concussion protocol (consult **Concussions**). An emergency action plan and response to deal with evacuations and lock downs must be followed and communicated to students.
- Off school site: At least one instructor or an individual responsible for providing first aid must have current First Aid qualifications equivalent to or exceeding St. John Ambulance Emergency First Aid with CPR Level C + AED.

Definitions

- **Auto Belay:**
    - Auto Belay is a mechanical fall protection system where the student is connected to a self-retracting lanyard that controls their descent.
- **Climb Only:**
    - Climb Only is when only the instructor belays students.
- **Full Belay:**
    - Full Belay is when students belay other students using a top rope belay.
- **In-charge Person:**
    - Some activities refer to an "In-Charge" person. While the teacher is in-charge and responsible for the overall safety and well-being of students under their care, sometimes there are other personnel who must be identified as "In-Charge" related to specific situations (for example, a pool lifeguard). In activities where an "In-Charge" person is designated, that person, in consultation with the teacher, must make final decisions regarding safety of the students
- **Individual Lanyard System:**

- An Individual Lanyard System is a system where the student is directly connected to the anchored safety cable via a pair of lanyards. There are two types of control systems:
    - Human control system: is used to manage continuous connection to the life safety system
    - Mechanical control system: is used to manage continuous connection to the life safety system (for example, SmartBelay, Clic-it, Bornack)

- **Participatory/Team Belay:**
    - Participatory/Team Belay is when students participate in a belay team with an instructor belaying other students using a top rope style belay.

- **Supervision:**
    - The vigilant overseeing of an activity for regulation or direction. Activities, facilities, and equipment have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
    - The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education designate three categories of supervision, Constant visual supervision, On-site supervision, and In-the-area supervision. The categories take into consideration the risk level of the activity, the participants' skill level and the participants' maturity. The three levels of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that an activity requires and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.

- **Supervisor:**
    - A supervisor is defined as a teacher, vice-principal or principal with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board. The supervisor is legally responsible for the students.

- **Types of Supervision:**
    - **Constant Visual Supervision:**

- Constant visual supervision means that the teacher is physically present, watching the activity in question. Only one activity requiring “Constant visual” supervision may take place while other activities are going on.
- Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practising relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For high jump, the teacher is at the high jump area and is observing the activity.
- Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For parachute, the intramural supervisor is at the event and is observing activity.

- **In-the-area Supervision:**
  - In-the-area supervision means that the teacher could be in the gymnasium while another activity is taking place in an area adjacent to the gymnasium. In-the-area supervision requires the teacher to be readily accessible.
  - In-the-area supervision occurs:
    - in activities in which students may be out of sight for periods of time and the location of the teacher is not nearby (for example, alpine skiing, cross-country running). At least one of the following criteria must be in place:
      - The teacher is circulating
      - The location of teacher has been communicated to students and volunteers
    - in single activities and those that may be combined (for example, other in- the- area activities such as badminton, table tennis, handball – wall) with the following criteria in place:
      - The teacher must be circulating between the activities and readily accessible

        - The teacher informs students of the location of the activities

    - Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practising relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For distance running, the students are running around the school and at times may be out of sight.
    - Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For a scavenger hunt, the students are running around the school grounds and at times may be out of sight.

- **On-site Supervision:**
    - On-site supervision entails teacher presence but not necessarily constantly viewing one specific activity. Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (for example, equipment room) to the gym is considered part of “on-site supervision”.
    - Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practising relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For a relay, the students are practising on the track and can be seen by the teacher who is with the high jumpers.
    - Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For relay games, the students are participating on the playground and can be seen by the intramural supervisor.

Last Published
Fri, 01/26/24 02:15 pm