



# Rock Walls and Climbing Walls

Recreational activities are pillars of summer/winter camp, summer school, and recreational center experiences. They provide an opportunity for socialization and learning in a fun setting. These activities also provide an increased liability and potential for staff and/or participant injury. The safety of participants and staff should be standard operating procedure. It should be completed to the highest professional standards and in line with federal, state, local, and accrediting agency guidelines. The following checklist template provides a high level oversight to assist with your activity structure. Your organization is responsible for the development of your own written program guidelines and policies for the oversight of your activities. Through consistent management and preventative programs, exposures can be reduced to help ensure a safe recreational experience.

## Equipment Installation, Inspection and Maintenance Guidelines:

- Should adhere to the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA)
- Defective equipment should not be used.
- Proper installation, inspection and maintenance of wall and climbing equipment by trained and certified personnel and contractors.
- Proper installation of landing material in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.
- The wall should not be accessible to others when supervision is not provided. May be provided with a barrier and lockable entrance.
- Rocks should have a comfortable grip.
- Be aware of the climbing wall's weight limit as it pertains to the climbers who will be using it.
- Stay up to date on climbing equipment alerts to make sure equipment is not subject to any safety-related recalls.
- Closely inspect climbing walls and all equipment in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and guidelines for operation, repair, maintenance and set-up. Examine auto-belay cables, especially near pulleys, for wear, broken wires, 'fish hooks' (burrs/broken strands of wire cable), and deformation in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

## Rules and Guidelines for Supervisors and Climbers:

- Proper training and certification of personnel to supervise and train climbers.
- Rules should be written, posted, verbal and fully understood by climbers. Rules include age requirements and Personal Protective Equipment required (proper shoes, helmets, etc.). A signed form is an indication that they have been read, understood and accepted all rules.
- Training should be provided to all climbers via written and hands on instruction. The climbers should be tested for understanding.
  - How to fall
  - Correct technique
  - Take small breaks during climbing if needed
  - Observe experienced climbers

Recreational/Camp Activities: Specialty Care Services

- Don't allow climbers to use their personally owned climbing equipment (except climbing shoes).
- All climbers should sign a waiver before climbing
- Climber's age should be determined by the wall manufacturer for children and adults.
- No food or drink allowed near the climbing area.
- Climbers must remove any jewelry before climbing
- Encourage climbers to warm up/stretch before using the wall.
- Do not go higher than permitted.
- Practice correct techniques. Proper climbing is safe climbing, and it is important to utilize correct technique while climbing and belaying. Keep three points of contact with the wall at all times and avoid hanging or swinging on the wall. Belayers should always keep two hands on the rope and maintain eye contact on the climber at all times

### Training for Supervisors and Climbers:

- Supervisors: Require all staff members who assist climbers to complete an annual wall-climbing safety training.
- Climber: Require every climber to participate in a training session before using the wall to include basic skills, review of belay commands, general climbing safety. Training should include a demonstration of proficiency skill in both climbing and belaying.
- Practice falling:** Falling is part of climbing and is likely to happen to everyone who climbs regularly. The best way to make sure belayers and climbers are prepared to respond to an actual fall is to have everyone participate in a practice fall. This gives the belayer warning, so they know to be ready and safely belay the fall.

### Equipment and Harness Use and Ongoing Inspection:

- All climbing equipment should be inspected according to manufacturer's instructions including an inspection right before use. Any discovered deficiencies must be corrected before use.
- Harnesses should be worn according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Harnesses should be secured correctly, and supervisors should ensure climbers have their harnesses on correctly and that no one tampers with their harness while climbing.

### Supervision of Climbers:

- The wall must be supervised by an adequate number of adult staff at all times.
- Limit climbing wall capacity according to the number of walls and their weight limits
- Supervisors must pass a belay certification course (ex. Professional Climbing Instructor's Association)
- Climbers must be visually inspected by a supervisor before climbing to make sure their safety belt is worn correctly.
- Proper belay and climbing commands should be used with every climber ( i.e., "On Belay," "Belay On," "Climb On" and "Climbing").

## Additional Resources:

[Climbing Wall Association](#)

[Outdoor Recreation Coalition of America \(ORCA\)](#)

[American Society for Testing and Materials \(ASTM\)](#)

[American Mountain Guide Association](#)

[Professional Climbing Instructors Association](#)

[Consumer Product Safety Commission Bulletin for Mobile Rock Walls & Climbing Walls](#)

Providing solutions  
to help our members  
manage risk.®

For your risk management  
and safety needs, contact  
Nationwide Loss Control  
Services: 1-866-808-2101  
or [LCS@nationwide.com](mailto:LCS@nationwide.com).