

Cliffhanger Top-Rope Assessment Criteria

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Rope climbing is primarily a partner's activity, however situations may arise that require check off of an individual without a partner. Following induction, instructors should follow the usual check off steps, practicing belaying on the ground with the customer until they have achieved a high level of competency. Once competency has been achieved staff may act as the climber, climbing initially to a height where feet are maximum 2m from the ground. If the belayed continues to demonstrate a high level of competency staff may climb higher at their discretion

The Climber must:

- Remove any jewellery (especially rings), tie long hair back
- **Remove phones, other loose items from pockets and leave these on the ground**
- Untwist the ropes prior to climbing
- **Correctly attach 2 x carabiners into belay loop of their harness in opposing directions**
- Perform a buddy check on belayer:
 - identify correct attachment
 - squeeze tests carabiners
- Get acknowledgement from the belayer that they can start climbing
- Climb at an appropriate pace for the belayer
- Maintain an appropriate body position when descending

The Belayer must:

- Remove any jewellery (especially rings), tie long hair back
- Not take any pictures while belaying
- Correctly attach the ground anchor carabiner into the belay loop of their harness
- Perform a buddy check on the climber:
 - identify correct attachment
 - squeeze test carabiners
- Inform the climber that they can start climbing
- **Hold the brake rope at all times, hold it down when the climber is pausing**
- **Keeps rope tight at all times**
- **Instruct the climber to stop in case of issue**
- When the climber is coming down
 - Tension the rope
 - Hold the brake rope down
 - Lower the climber by holding the brake rope down and let the rope slide through in a controlled way

Common belay errors

- Hand positioned with knuckles underneath the break rope, rather than on top. This is a much weaker grip position.
- Reaching around the rope, rather than across (this is acceptable if performed correctly, however for most new climbers learning the standard 5 step method this will feel awkward).
- Thumb facing downward on non dominant hand when grasping climbers side of the rope (while belaying). Makes pulling downward less ergonomic.
- Pulling downward with the non dominant hand, rather than upward with the dominant hand. This can cause accidental locking of the device and make pulling through slack difficult.
- “Jumping” the dominant hand up the break rope and not bringing the non dominant hand across.
- Not lowering the break rope immediately into the locked position after pulling up. This may present as simply a delay in locking the break rope, or in more severe cases be such that steps 3, 4 & 5 are all taking place with the break rope unlocked.
- Beginning to lower the climber prior to ensuring they have let go of the wall

Participant struggling to grasp belay method

If staff find themselves in a situation where a climber is struggling to grasp the belay method they make take the following course of action:

- Try explaining in a different way, utilizing different terminology and or practice techniques
- Simplify to 4 step method
- Ask another staff member to step in and try to assist (often a change in personnel can be effective at breaking the cycle of misunderstanding).
- If all options have been exhausted staff may complete the check off under the condition that the participant is provided with extra supervision throughout their climbing session, until such a time as they are deemed competent. When this is the case, participants should be given a 1 day belay certification only and a note must be added to their profile that their belaying needs to be re-checked and closely monitored.