

SCSU Climbing Wall Skills Test & Belay Certification

Climbing Wall Skills Clinic Curriculum: 90 minute program

Purpose: The purpose of the Climbing Wall Skills Clinic is to help beginning climbers develop technique and experience in belaying skills. In order to belay, independent of climbing wall staff during open wall hours, participants need to show consistent competency in the skills listed below. Completion of the initial course does not necessarily warrant a belay card. Climbing Wall Student Staff reserve the right to develop follow up expectations for participants who need more practice before a card is issued.

Goals of a Belay Clinic:

At the end of a belay clinic participants must be able to demonstrate the following in order to receive a belay certification card.

1. How to properly fit a harness and double back all buckles.
2. How to properly tie the bowline on a bite with a stopper back-up knot.
3. How to attach two locking carabiners to the harness, opposite and opposed.
4. How to properly load the ATC belay device.
5. How to properly connect the belay system to the belayer harness.
6. How and when to use proper climbing commands.
7. How to belay according to the SCSU protocol. (see handout)
8. Proper belay technique without a climber tied in.
9. Ability to take the slack out of the belay system appropriately.
10. Proper belay technique while a climber ascends.
11. Ability to manage and provide safe & controlled descent.
12. The ability to properly catch a climber during multi-stage falls.

After verification of competency in these areas instructors are required to complete a copy of the Belay Certification Test, which is then attached to the participants waiver form and kept on file. Both the instructor and the student must sign and date the test.

Equipment needed for Clinic:

- Dynamic climbing rope
- Belay device
- Auto Locking Carabineer
- Harness
- Belay Clinic Test & Checklist

Climbing Commands:

Belay is a French sailing term that means to hold fast.

1. "On Belay?" Climber is asking the belayer if they are ready to begin the belay process
2. "Belay is on!" The belayer checks the participants harness, knots, carabiners & rope. When this survey is done and slack retrieved, the belayer responds.
3. "Climbing?" The climber notifies the belayer that they are ready to ascend the wall.
4. "Climb on!" The belayer replies to the climber that they are aware they are going to ascend the wall and are prepared to take up slack.
5. "Slack" The climber states this when they want the belayer to loosen the belay.
6. "Tension" The climber states this when they are expecting to fall and want the belayer to be prepared with a tight belay.
7. "Falling" The climber states this if they are aware that a fall is eminent to give the belayer an opportunity to prepare themselves.
8. "Take" The climber has completed the climb and would like the belayer to lower them to the ground.
9. "Set" The belayer is prepared to lower the climber to the ground.
10. "Off Belay." The climber is in a secure position on the ground and would like to be removed from belay.
11. "Belay is off." The belayer has removed the climber's rope from the belay device and the climber is free to remove themselves from the rope.

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Harness points:

Why it is important to wear a properly fitted harness.

- If a waist belt is not over the hips and tight, the harness will restrict the diaphragm from moving. It is also possible for a person to slide out of their harness if they were to flip upside down.
- Webbing that is not doubled back through a buckle has the possibility of becoming unthreaded.

Properly fitting a harness:

1. Waist belt must be above the hip bones and tight
2. The purple belay loop is located in the front and centered
3. All buckles must be doubled back
4. Phrases to help beginners remember to double back:
 - Red is Dead – if there is red showing on the buckle it has not been doubled back
 - If the buckle looks like an “O”, for open, it has not been doubled back. Buckles will resemble a “C” if they are closed.
5. At least three inches of webbing must be showing after a buckle has been doubled back to ensure that a buckle does not become unthreaded.
6. Leg loops should be snug but not restrictive of movement
7. There should be no twists in the waist belt or leg loops

Properly attachment to a harness:

1. Tie a figure 8 into the working end of the rope.
2. Tie a stopper back-up knot above the figure 8.
3. The stopper back-up knot should be tied as close as possible to the figure 8.
4. At least three inches of rope should come out of the top of the stopper knot.
5. Clip the rope to the strong point(s) of the harness using two locking carabiners or one auto locking carabiner.

Points of emphasis

- Tie a clean and neat knot every time. This does not increase the strength of the knot however; it is much easier to recognize an improperly tied knot when knots are tied cleanly and neatly.
- The bowline on a bight will have four sets of parallel ropes and will NOT slide if tied properly.
- A stopper knot will have parallel lines on one side and an “x” on the other if tied properly.
- The bowline on a bite should be clipped to the harness with two carabiners opposite and apposed or one auto locking carabiner.
- The stopper knot should be tied as close to the bowline on a bite knot as possible.

Belay Technique:

There are many ways to belay, most of which are safe, however, the method we teach during our belay clinics is the method we require patrons use while in the climbing wall and on Outdoor Endeavors sponsored courses/events. Staff must communicate to users the importance of communication between the climber and belayer. Staff must create a learning environment where participants can give feedback and indicate their comfort level with belay skills.

Hands-Down Method

1. Hold the break end of the rope with your palm down and thumb toward the belay device.
2. Feeding hand grasps the rope at about face height with your pinky toward the belay device.
3. Use the Pull, Brake, Slide (PBS) method of belaying, begin by pulling rope through the belay device with your brake hand.
4. At the end of each stroke pull the break hand down to the lock-off position
5. Place your non-brake hand under your brake hand.
6. Slide your break hand back up the rope to its original starting position within 2-3 inches of the ACT.
7. Return your feeding hand to its original position.
8. Repeat sequence.

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Notes: Use the phrase Pull-Brake-Slide to help students remember the sequence. Emphasize that hands should be kept at least 2 inches away from the belay device to avoid being pinched.

Rules of Two

- 2 Hands on the rope
- 2 Feet on the ground
- 2 Eyes on the climber
- 2 Inches away from belay device

Back-up belay

1. Stand off to the side of the belayer.
2. Hold the end of the rope coming out of the belay device with both hands and around the back and below the buttocks.
3. As the belayer takes in rope, slide the rope through your hands so there is appropriate slack between you and the belayer. A “smiley face” length of rope provides enough for safe back-up and ease of management for the belayer.
4. During a fall the back-up belayer will lower their body and maintain firm grip on the rope around their body.
5. In the event the belayer fails to hold a fall, the back-up belayer arrests the climber’s descent. Maintain the back-up belay during the lowering process as well.

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Climbing Wall Skills Test

Name: _____ Date: _____

Before testing out at the end of a belay clinic, participants must have paid \$20.00 for the clinic, completed & signed a waiver and have meet the skills competencies required by the climbing wall policies & procedures. As you belay and climb, a Climbing Wall Student Supervisor or Student Staff will use this checklist to verify that you properly perform all safety procedures. The manner in which you belay and climb during the test is the manner in which we expect all users to behave whenever they use the facility.

Before the Climb

It is the climber's responsibility to make an obvious visual check of:

The Climber

- ___ Figure 8 on bight w/stopper knot
- ___ Harness buckles
- ___ Carabiner oriented properly
- ___ Initiates climbing commands

The Belayer

- ___ Carabiners locked
- ___ Belay setup ___ Harness buckles
- ___ Attachment point to harness
- ___ Belayer is properly backed up
- ___ Belayer has proper hand positioning
- ___ Initiates climbing commands
- ___ Pre-climb checklist
 - Knot & carabiner combo
 - Harness check
 - Rope orientation
 - Hazard check
 - Ground management check

During the Climb

- ___ Belay technique is smooth and consistent
- ___ Rope tension is appropriate
- ___ Back up belay is appropriate
- ___ Hand placement is consistent
- ___ Engages climbers
- ___ Rope is managed appropriately
- ___ Climbing commands are used effectively (i.e. slack, tension, take, belay off)
- ___ Belayer pays attention to the climber throughout the climb.
- ___ Brake hand never leaves the rope.
- ___ Belayer arrests multi-stage falls appropriately
- ___ Belayer reverts to "ready" or brake position consistently

After the Climb

- ___ Climber is lowered in a controlled descent
- ___ Belayer disengages when "belay off" command is received

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

SCSU Student _____ SCSU Faculty/Staff _____ Other _____

Pass _____ Fail _____

Climbing Facility Staff: _____ (Please print)