venture out

Adventurous Activities courses | Guided Trips | Outdoor Education | Corporate Events

Organisation: Venture-Out
Location: Various indoor fixed climbing walls / trees / mobile climbing wall / bouldering
Risk Assessment for sessions run by suitably trained staff.

Reviewed by Ian Sheldrake 1st October 2025

Hazard	severity	Likelihood	Control Measures	Residual Risk Rating
Medical conditions and allergies	Low to med	Low	Medical declaration on booking forms Participants alerted to strenuous nature of climbing. Instructors in pre-session briefing ask participants to inform them of any changes to the medical conditions since signing the form. Climbing walls have first aid provision and staff who are trained to help with emergencies. Emergency contact details are brought to wall with instructor, or they are available by phone call.	low
Lack of competence/experience/ bravado of minors under 16	Low	Med	competent supervision from an experienced instructor appropriate route grades explained and used. Rainbow holds (use anything) offered as an escape option for continuing to climb up or down.	low
slipping off wall	Ankle twists Ankle break	Low to med Low	Users usually jump of rather than slip of (especially on easy routes with appropriate footwear. Risk sport participation (disclaimer) signed to make participants aware of their responsibility for their own safety.	med
Climbing equipment - Harnesses, slings, belay devices and karabiners	severe	low	Equipment visually checked before and after use (in accordance with BMC guidelines). Once excessive wear or defect is detected item is retired. Participants all properly instructed in how to use the equipment. Participants do buddy checks. Instructor enforces buddy checks and monitors	low
Collision with others	Low	Low	Control of numbers in supervised sessions Explain vigilance and climbing etiquette (giving way to climbers above etc).	low
Damage caused by jewellery	Low	Low	Require participants to remove rings – show them how they catch on holds	low

			and damage the ring. Chains – explain how they can tangle (allow them to tuck them under clothing). Remove dangling earrings (pendants and hoops). Studs permitted as are face piercings.	
Inappropriate footwear	Low – foot slips on easy routes usually result in the climber just falling flat against wall. Slight bruising possible	Med – training shoes will only work on large holds & easy routes	User common sense – they usually stick to holds they can use or lower off if they can't progress. climbing in bare feet is not permitted. Climbing shoes can be hired for participants who want to progress	Low
Lack of supervision during organised sessions/courses	Low	Low	Only qualified instructors employed by Paddles Away UK Appropriate ratios for given group ability or activity adhered to Group etiquette explained and enforced.	Low
Ratio of supervisors to participants	Low	Low	Numbers controlled by booking system, set by course administrator, governing body regulations, maximum 1:8 for roped climbing and bouldering, 1:12 if bouldering with spotters.	low
ability of participants	Low	Med	Qualified coaches used, coach knowledge, planned sessions to create appropriate duration, activities and challenge for ability level.	low
Physical preparation/fatigue	Low	med	Adequate warm up and cool down time programmed into each session.	low

Climbing with ropes

Hazard	severity	Likelihood	Control Measures	Residual Risk Rating
Abrasions, cuts and rope burns	Low	Low	Correct belaying procedure taught and monitored, Belayers backed up if necessary	Low
Hair or clothing caught in belay device	Low – low injury but severe effect on progress	Low – med	Pre-session checks on hair and clothing, monitored. The climbing wall operating procedures demand that their staff be informed and used if a climber needs to be rescued.	low
Objects falling from climber onto belayers	Med	Low	Pre-session checks – participants must empty pockets of mobile phones, money, smoking equipment etc. Climbers must not have equipment clipped to their harness gear loops Inform participants not to stand under climbers from their group or other people	low
Harnesses coming loose during session (after toilet)	Severe	Low	Buddy check system used and enforced. Instructor monitors After lunch or other break, or toilet break, all climbers are checked.	low
Belayer dropping climber	Severe	Low	Experienced belayers only permitted or those under supervision,	Low
Climber slipping or falling off route and banging into wall	Low	Med	Appropriate footwear Climbing shoes available for hire Rainbow holds used if necessary	Low to med
Climber and belayer not attaching to rope correctly	Severe	Low	Correct attachments and buddy system taught and enforced If climbers cannot manage to retie a figure of eight then this is either done for them each time or a screw gate karabiner is used on a figure of eight bight. Instructor monitors buddy checks	Low
Climber freezing on wall – not allowing lowering off	Low	Low	Protocol for arriving at top of wall and being lowered off is practiced by climbers on a low wall or off a low / first runner before progressing onto higher walls	Low
Climber unclipping top rope when topping out	Severe	Low	Climbing walls have two top clips, one is usually a oval nut locked clip unable to be undone without spanner. If this is not the case, instructor vigilance is usually enough – watching when a nervous climber approaches top. Instructors usually come to back up the lower off anyway	Low
Belayer not controlling or locking off the dead end of rope	Severe	Low to med	Correct 4-point technique is coached on the ground before novices try for real. Instructor vigilance is usually enough – watching a nervous or clumsy belayer and having the climber slow down to allow belayer to work at a slow speed. If this slower speed does not help belayer can be backed up by two others	Low

			If this is still too clumsy then the belayer is replaced (they will usually be relieved not disappointed) Instructors always come to back up the lower off of any climber with inexperienced groups	
Belayer unable to lower climber correctly (too fast)	Med to severe	Low	Inexperienced belayers are always backed up by instructor when the climber approaches the top. Instructor backs up the dead rope and coaches correct lock off position and lower off positions for slow, smooth, controlled lower	Low
Belayer unable to keep up with climber	Med to severe	Low to med	Correct 4-point technique is coached on the ground before novices try for real. Instructor vigilance is usually enough – watching a nervous or clumsy belayer and Instruct the climber to slow down to allow belayer to work at a slow speed. And not to climb when the rope is slack above them. Try different partners	low
Climber bouncing down wall when lowering off	Low	Low	Correct descent technique demonstrated and practice on low wall first (lean back, walking down, legs wide, looking down) Explain the risk of ankle damage	Low
Belayer too light to belay a heavier climber	Med to severe	Med if climber is a lot heavier than belayer	belay/ballast bags must be used when necessary. Belayer is attached to these via a lark's foot sling **to the belay loop** Belayer is supervised and backed up during lowering off until Instructor is confident, they can manage.	Low
Solo climbing, inc. use of cow tails/slings	Severe	Med	Solo climbing on rope wall is prohibited by all climbing walls	low
Lead climbing			Lead climbing would only be run by qualified Climbing Wall Development Instructor or above	

Bouldering

Hazard	severity	Likelihood	Control Measures	Residual Risk Rating
Jumping / sliding / falling backwards off wall	Low to med	Low to med – climbers more usually step backwards off rather than fall off. Sliding down more common with poor footwear	Traversing walls have impact matting and climbers are not to climb above 50cm (i.e. not to touch top of traverse wall with hands) Bouldering walls have crash matting underneath, ensure that this has not moved to leave a gap between wall and matt. Teach climbers how to climb up half-way then look around and jump down – controlled jump.	low
Falls up to 2m	Med – crash matts are more than deep enough to absorb fall, but bad landings cause ankle injury or landing on someone	Med	Experienced users only permitted or those under supervision, crash mats in place. User risk explained and controlled jump down demonstrated from lower heights. No safety equipment (harness with metal gear) is worn whilst bouldering.	low
Falls over 2m	Severe	Very unlikely	Bouldering walls used do not normally enable climbers to get their feet higher than 2m. Bouldering on climbing wall without ropes (soloing) is not permitted at climbing walls	low
Bouldering under rope climbers	Severe	Very unlikely	Bouldering on climbing wall without ropes (soloing) is not permitted at climbing walls	low
Falling off onto people / people falling on to participants	Med	Low	Controlled jump offs practiced and demoed (involves looking around first) Climbers also warned about walking or climbing under or near others above them.	low
Incorrect spotting	Low	Low	Spotting involves someone standing under another climber ready to push their back up to straighten them during a fall to ensure they land on their feet, not their back. Coaching on how to do this without trying to catch the climber and judge when the climber is too high for the spotter to control this. If in doubt, spotter is discouraged from continuing	low

Notes

- All coaches should be aware of Venture-Out's emergency procedures prior to delivering any sessions.
- It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure equipment is safe and appropriate for use prior to each session.
- It is the responsibility of the coach to alert Ian Sheldrake of broken or damaged equipment, or injury or near miss and to record this information in the Accident and Emergency book. If unclear how to complete this then contact Ian immediately for support.
- If the coach is unsure of any relevant safety-related matters the problem should be resolved prior to coaching session.
- This is an adventurous sport and some risk is assumed by participants. Removal of all risk is not only impossible but detrimental to the development of participants. However risk versus benefits have to be considered.