

Caving



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Introduction

This factsheet looks to give the facts a person would need to know to run Caving for a group of young people, or to do it for themselves if they are a young person. It should be read in conjunction with the factsheet FS120084 Scout Led Activities Index, and Policy, Organisation and Rules (POR) of The Scout Association.

What is Caving?

Caving is the exploration of natural underground passages. It includes the activity commonly known as Pot Holing. It doesn't include man made underground passages except for the following which are classed as caves:

- Bagshaw Cavern
- Carlswark Caverns
- Layby Pot
- Oxlow Caverns
- Suicide Cave
- Christmas Cave Ogof Nadolic
- Poachers Cave Dyers Adit

What is a Caving Permit?

The adventurous activity permit scheme is designed to ensure that only people with the relevant skills and experience lead adventurous activities for the young people. Therefore all activities classed as adventurous can only be lead by someone holding the appropriate permit. Additionally young people (under 18) can take part in adventurous activities for themselves with personal activity permits.

A Caving permit is required for all activities going into a natural underground environment, except where that underground environment is an official

show cave. Caving permits are not required for man made caving simulators.

Levels of Permit

There are four levels of permit available for Caving. These are:

- Caving – No Vertical Pitches
- Caving with Ladders
- Caving with SRT for the leader
- Caving with SRT for the group

Definitions of SRT and Vertical Pitches can be found later in this factsheet.

Additionally, each of these permits can be further restricted (such as through specific caves etc) to end up with an individual permit to the level of the competence and requirements of any person.

Types of Permit

There are two types of permit available for Caving. These are:

- **Personal** – Allows a young person (under 18) to take part in Caving with others with a personal Caving permit.
- **Leadership** – Allows the permit holder to lead Caving for a single group.

Permit Limitations

- **Personal** – If you hold a personal Caving permit you can go Caving with others who hold a personal Caving permit. It does not allow you to go Caving with anyone not holding a Caving permit.

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- **Leadership** – A permit to lead Caving will allow you to take a group of no more than eight people and no fewer than four people (including yourself) into a cave. You must remain in the cave system with the group at all times and remain responsible for everyone within that group.

If you have a permit with SRT for the group then you can use SRT with your group up to the level of any restrictions on the permit. If not, this technique cannot be used. The same applies to permits that include the use of ladders for vertical pitches. If you have a permit with SRT for the leader you can use SRT yourself, but not for anyone else in the group.

Guidance

While maximum group sizes and minimum first aid requirements are defined for Caving, this does not mean they are always the most appropriate for each Caving trip you run. Depending on your risk assessment for each individual trip it may be decided to lower the maximum party size or require more specific first aid knowledge for certain trips. This risk assessment should also look at what would happen if the permit holder were to be injured and whether there is the need to have another competent caver in each group to deal with this situation.

When ascending or descending vertical pitches, sit harnesses and suitable cowstails with appropriate karabiners should be used rather than waist belts. And direct belay systems should be used rather than indirect belays that are only appropriate for emergency situations.

Further Definitions

Vertical Pitches refers to places that would require the use of Ladders or SRT for ascent or descent with a group.

SRT refers to Single Rope Techniques. This is a method to allow you to both descend and ascend vertical pitches within caving using a single rope and specialist pieces of equipment as found in a personal SRT kit.

Useful Links

[FS120084](#) Scout Led Activities Index
(References relevant Rules and guidance)

[FS120086](#) Commercially Led Activities Index

[FS120100](#) Adventurous Activity Permit Scheme