

Climbing (Single Pitch) and Abseiling



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Introduction

This factsheet looks to give the facts a person would need to know to run Single Pitch Climbing 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 Single Pitch Climbing?

A Single Pitch Climb is one that can be completed without any intermediate stances, and from which the climber can safely walk off unroped from the top, or can be safely lowered to the bottom of the climb.

Abseiling involves the descent of a rope using a friction device to control the speed of descent. It is popular as an activity on single pitch crags, from structures such as bridges and as a method of retrieving equipment stuck on a climb.

What is a Single Pitch Climbing 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 Single Pitch Climbing Permit is required for all Single Pitch Climbing and abseiling activities.

Levels of Permit

There are two levels of permit available for Single Pitch Climbing. These are:

- Top Rope Climbing
- Lead Climbing

Definitions of Top Rope and Lead Climbing can be found later in this factsheet.

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

Types of Permit

There are three types of permit available for Single Pitch Climbing. These are:

- **Personal** – Allows a young person (under 18) to take part in Climbing with others with a personal Single Pitch Climbing permit.
- **Leadership** – Allows the permit holder to lead Single Pitch Climbing for a single group.
- **Supervisory** – Allows the permit holder to remotely supervise more than one Single Pitch Climbing group.

Permit Limitations

- **Personal** – If you hold a personal Single Pitch Climbing permit you can go Climbing with others who hold a personal Single Pitch Climbing permit. It does not allow you to go Climbing with anyone not holding a Single Pitch Climbing permit.
- **Leadership** – If you have a permit to lead Single Pitch Climbing you can lead one rope system at a

time. Details of group sizes for Single Pitch Climbing can be found in POR.

- **Supervisory** – If you hold a permit to supervise Single Pitch Climbing then you can supervise up to three rope systems at a time. You should remain in a position to be able to effectively supervise and assist all rope systems. You remain responsible for all the groups you are supervising, but can designate someone with the appropriate skills to be the rope leader of each group.

Designations

When supervising more than one rope system the holder of a Single Pitch Climbing supervisor permit needs to designate a rope leader for each group. This rope leader can then act as the belayer. This designation lasts only for the current activity while the permit holder is supervising.

People designated as rope leaders should hold the skills, including being able to competently belay, and be responsible enough to lead the rope system that has been set up. There is no problem with making young people rope leaders if they are up to the role, and it can be used as a useful development tool.

Further Definitions

Top Rope refers to a climb where the climber is belayed either by a person at the top of the climb, or by a person at the bottom of the climb when the rope runs from the belayer through an anchor at the top of the climb.

Lead Climbing refers to a climb where the climber places protection devices into the rock face, or uses pre installed protection devices, to clip their rope into as they climb

Useful Links

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

[FS120086](#) Commercially Led Activities Index

[FS120100](#) Adventurous Activity Permit Scheme