

# GYM TO CRAG



CLIMBERS  
FOR CHRIST

## **IN THIS BOOKLET**

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# Chapter 1:

## The Purpose Of This Booklet

**\*WARNING: Climbing is Dangerous\***

*This booklet offers information and ideas (not advice) intended as a resource and reminder to help reduce your risk when climbing. All climbers need proper training and equipment, and to take personal responsibility for their choices. Many of the tips & explanations here are appropriate only for those with prior experience or training. As such, in-person instruction from a qualified instructor is strongly recommended for any technique that, if you do it wrong, could result in serious injury or death.*

*If you use any of the ideas or information presented here, you acknowledge that the content may be incomplete or out of date, and you agree that Ladies Climbing Coalition, Climbers for Christ, and other named organizations in this booklet are not responsible or liable for any injury (or worse) that might result from you using these techniques.*

**Purpose:** To provide a free resource for climbers new to outdoor climbing. It serves as an introduction to the various types of outdoor climbing in order to reduce barriers of knowledge and technical language and to promote safe and sustainable climbing practices (especially in areas where no free gym-to-crag courses exist). While this booklet may be useful for climbers everywhere, there is a specific emphasis on resources for climbers in the Southeastern United States.

### **Acknowledgements**

Southeastern Climbers Coalition  
Ladies Climbing Coalition  
Climbers for Christ

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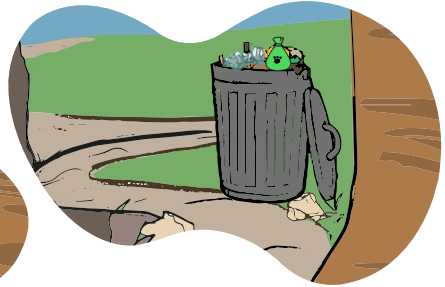
# Chapter 2:

## Know Before You Go

Each climbing area has its own rules and regulations. Take some time to research the climbing area ahead of time and understand local ethics by checking the area's website, picking up a local guidebook, dropping by a local gear store, or checking in at the park visitor center. Here are a few things to research before heading to the crag.

### Parking

As climbing grows in popularity, parking can be a serious barrier to access. Sometimes parking lots are full or it is unclear where to park to get to a climbing area. Following parking regulations is crucial for maintaining positive relationships with land managers. Carpool if possible if you are going to a popular area, and if the parking area is full - consider going somewhere else.



### Closures

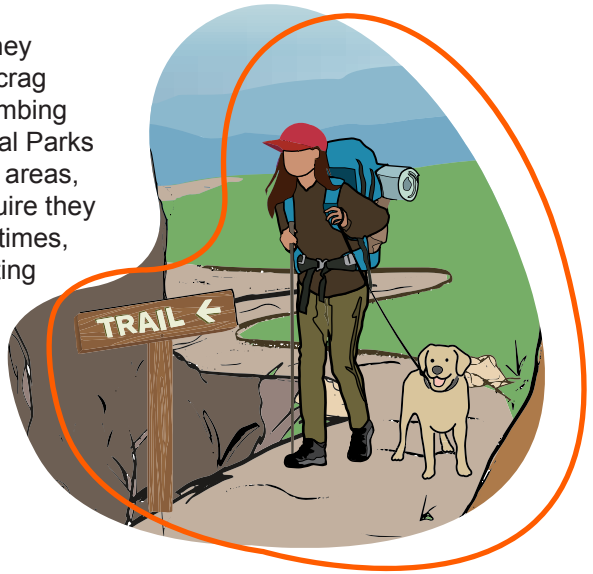
Some climbing areas may experience seasonal or permanent closures, such as for nesting bird species, protected plants, or managed hunts. It is important to know if there are any active closures and avoid these areas to be a good steward of all the residents or locals of the area. Some areas may require permits as well.

### Waste Disposal

Check to see if the climbing area has permanent toilet facilities or trash receptacles. When it comes to human waste disposal, the ethics vary depending on climate, proximity to water and other factors. Read up on Leave no Trace principles and be prepared to pack out ALL of your waste by keeping a WAGbag and a small trash bag in your pack.

## Dogs

Crag dogs are fun, but they can cause issues at the crag or boulderfield. Some climbing areas, typically in National Parks or some privately owned areas, do not allow dogs or require they be kept on a leash at all times, especially if there is hunting allowed in the area. Know the rules and the local ethic and consider leaving your pup at home. Always keep your dog under control to avoid conflict.



## Trail Etiquette

Trails are a tool to minimize impact on the surrounding land. Stay on trail to prevent erosion, and avoid placing your belongings on sensitive cliffside vegetation. When you get to the cliff or boulder field, be sure to keep your gear contained in one spot out of the way to avoid blocking the trail.



## Camping + Campfires

Look up appropriate places to camp before you head out, as some climbing areas do not have onsite camping. Some places may require a reservation in advance.

Those cold bouldering sessions make building a fire sound really good! BUT some places do not allow open fires on their property. Always follow camping and fire restrictions to maintain positive land manager relationships.

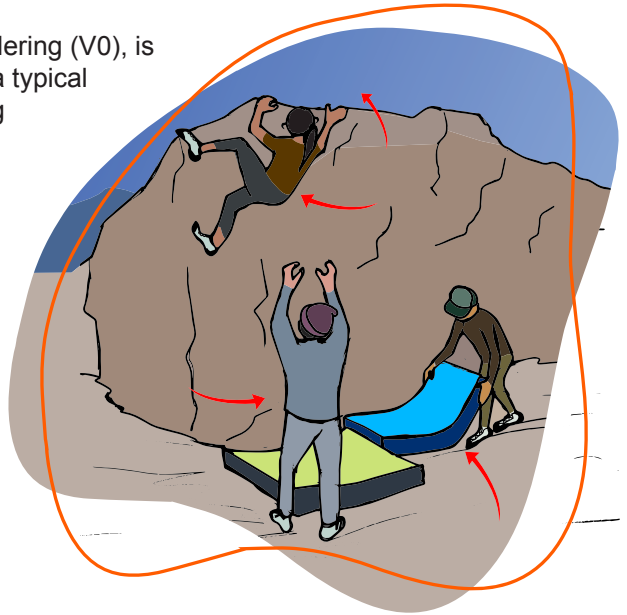
## To Learn More

- “Climbing Areas” page of the SCC website: [seclimbers.org](https://seclimbers.org)
- Mountain Project
- Guidebooks
- Local gear store
- Fellow climbers
- Park/climbing area land manager website
- Social media
- Local climbing organizations
- The Access Fund / American Alpine Club

# Chapter 3: Bouldering

**Bouldering is a form of free climbing that is performed on small rock formations (boulders) or artificial rock without the use of ropes or harnesses. The United States uses the V-Scale to display grades.**

The entry grade for bouldering (V0), is significantly higher than a typical entry grade rope climbing (5.6 or 5.7) and is more equivalent to a 5.10 on a rope. Bouldering tends to have more powerful movement and/or be more overhung, but less technical skillset required.



## Topping Out

Rather than being lowered off a rope climb by your partner, the expectation in bouldering is often for you to “top out.” This means that once a climber reaches the top of the climb, climbers will bring themselves up over the edge so that they are on top of the boulder. This could involve a technique called “mantling.” When one mantles, one positions one hand palm down and pushes against it. A climber may do this with hooking a heel or toe up on top of the boulder for more leverage. Once you’ve topped out, your goal is to get down safely. Always scope out the way off the boulder before climbing up. Sometimes, climbers will be able to walk off it, and other times they may need to execute a “down climb” to get down. Depending on where you are, the level of difficulty varies, so always decide if it’s something you want to do beforehand! If according to the guidebook or online resource, topping out is not required or recommended, downclimbing is necessary.

## **Pad Placement**

The purpose of a crash pad is to come between you and the ground in the event of a fall. Placing a pad directly under a climb may not always allow you to accomplish this. It is important to place the pad(s) where the climber is most likely to fall. Ideally, you have more than one pad if that location can change throughout the climb; this way you can protect each location all at once. You can also move a pad as the climber progresses through the climb and between each climb, and the location in which they would fall changes.

## **Active Spotting**

The purpose of spotting is not to catch someone who falls, but to ensure they land on the crash pad. In order to accomplish this, a spotter may want to look at the climber's hips; our hips are our body's center, and where they go, the rest of the body will follow. If a climber falls, a spotter should actively try to ensure the climber lands on the crash pad. This includes using one's hands as a blockade to stop the outward movement and contain where the climber falls. It also means that a spotter may need to actively push the climber forward to break the outward movement and ensure the climber lands on the pad. When spotting, be careful of your own fingers - actively ensure they are turned downward so falling climber does not jam them or bend them backward and injure you ("hands like spoons, not forks!")

# Chapter 4:

## Outdoor Roped Climbing

Broadly defined as “Free Climbing”, this is climbing rocks outside using your own hands and feet utilizing ropes, personal protection equipment and a belayer (person attached to the other end of the rope) to provide safety from a fall.

*Of all the types of climbing, roped climbing involves the most complex systems. Climbing, while awesome and exciting, is also inherently dangerous. The more you know, the more you can mitigate the risks involved. Obtain training in these systems before venturing out on your own!*

### 3 Subcategories of roped climbing:

**“Sport”** - relies on protection from falls using permanently installed **“bolts”** and anchors.

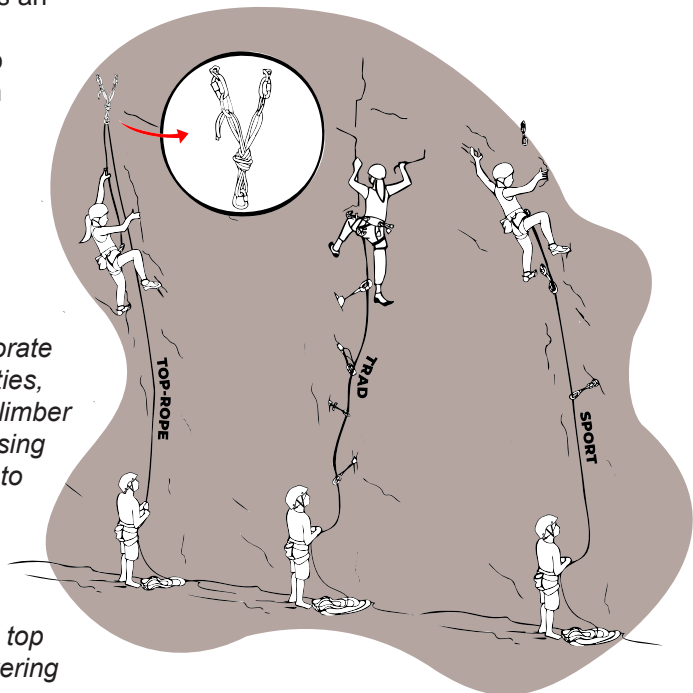
**“Trad”** or Traditional - relies on climbers carrying their own removable gear to place as protection during the climb.

**“Top-Rope”** - utilizes an anchor set up at the top of the cliff/crag to secure the rope from above. Often it does not require a “lead” climber.

*Often simply referred to as “TR-ing”*

*Both Sport and Trad climbing may incorporate top-roping opportunities, but rely on a “lead” climber to ascend the rock using sport/trad protection to arrive at and set the anchor.*

*Regardless of the type of climb, a secure anchor at the top is required when lowering*







## Sport Climbing

In addition to **Your Basic Climbing Gear**, sport climbing requires some additional gear for leading the climb and setting an anchor (attachment points for the rope) to use the permanent 'bolts' installed in the rock.

### Here's the basics:

- "Quickdraws" - 2 carabiners attached together by climbing-specific webbing which are used to attach the rope to the bolt hangers while ascending. (see picture)

Typically 10-12 quickdraws are required for most crags, but check guidebooks or Mountain Project to find out how many you need. Don't have enough quickdraws? *Have your partner bring some too!*

- Anchor material to set up a top rope (i.e. long slings, webbing, or even static rope, depending on how far back anchors or trees may be from the edge)

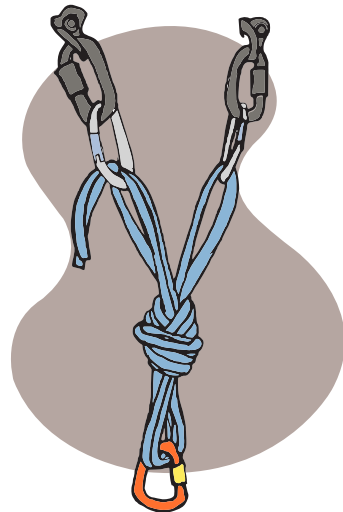
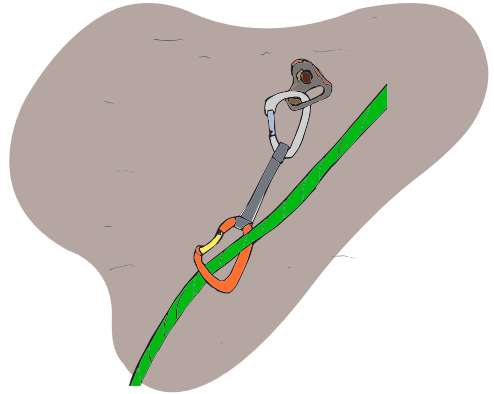
*Many options exist, typically including webbing or cordellette and 4+ carabiners (locking preferred)*

**Purpose:** to set up the climb for others to follow, alleviating wear on bolted anchors (see section on local ethics)

- Personal tether + locking carabiner

*Tether may be nylon webbing (i.e. a "double" runner = 120cm long nylon loop) or a specifically designed "Personal Anchor System"*

**Purpose:** To attach oneself to the anchor while setting up an anchor or preparing to lower.



## Trad Climbing

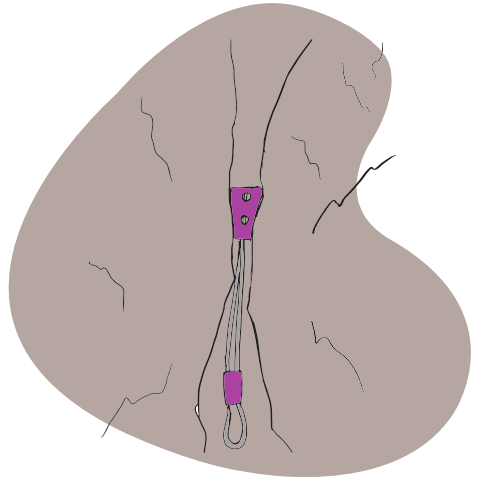
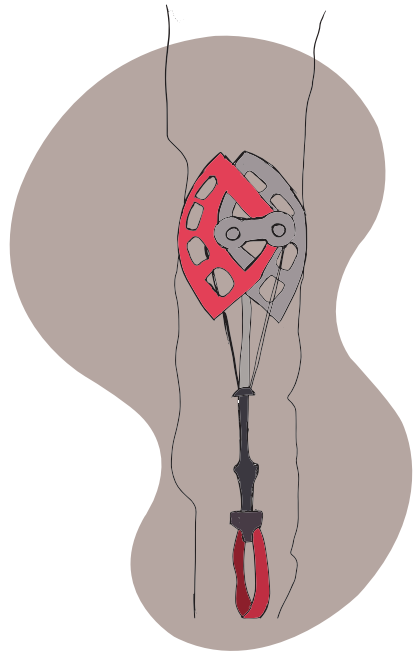
In addition to **Your Basic Climbing Gear**, Trad climbing requires more complex gear & climbing knowledge. Trad climbing gear takes practice to place safely as there are no permanent bolts in the rock- all points of protection are placed by the climber. Additionally, it is more expensive to obtain the gear. These are both excellent reasons to hire a guide, take a course, or learn from an experienced climber. But trad climbing also opens up many new possibilities at local crags and in desert & alpine environments!

- A “Trad Rack” - which includes cams (spring-loaded camming devices, like Black Diamond’s “Camalots”), wired nuts (aka “stoppers”), and similar removable protection. How much you need depends on your experience and the type of routes being climbed. (*Guidebooks will often describe a “standard rack” for the climbing area.*)

- A “Nut Tool” for removing stuck gear is essential!
- Quickdraws (used to extend protection)
- Slings (used to extend protection)
  - Typically needed in standard lengths of 60cm and 120cm
  - “Alpine Draws:” 2 carabiners + 60cm sling:

**How-to:** <https://www.climbing.com/skills/the-alpine-quickdraw/>

- Personal tether + locking carabiner (see additional notes in “Sport” section above)



## Top-Rope:

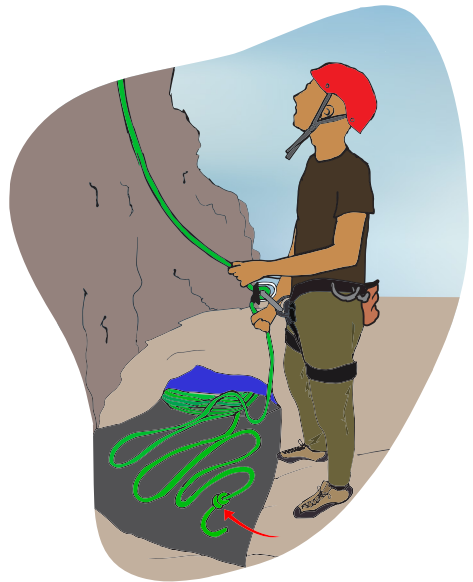
Top-roping (or “TR-ing”) is an excellent way to get into outdoor climbing. Many crags have TR routes (and some are exclusively TR) and the setup requires less equipment. You need **Your Basic Climbing Gear** and the following:

- Anchor material:
  - Climbing-specific webbing, static rope, or 7-8mm diameter cordellette
- 2-4 locking carabiners
- ATC-style device + backup (prussik or autoblock sling) if you are rappelling to the base of climb; *note: this requires more training!*

## Crucial Considerations for Outdoor Roped Climbing:

- Go with a partner who you know and trust (get to know them in a gym or with other climbers first!)
- “Know Before You Go” - what types of climbing exist in your area? What routes suit your ability and experience? What is the recommended equipment for the routes you want to do? What are the local ethics? What does access look like? Is there a local climbing coalition that could help you determine these answers? Are there local guides you could hire for both knowledge of the area and help in developing your skill sets?

- Double-check all your gear! Is it built for climbing? Is it in good condition? Is it clean and fully functional? (Check your gear before each trip. Inspect your belay loop on the harness, sharp edges on carabiner and belay devices, wear and tear on slings and quickdraws.
- And bring the right gear for the type of climbing!



## **Type-Specific Considerations:**

### **Sport:**

- *Do you have the right amount of gear to do the climbs you want to do?*
- *Be aware of local seasonal closures and conditions*

### **Trad:**

- *Are you going with an experienced trad climber, mentor, or guide? (If not, reconsider!) You will be following and climbing on their rope and placements.*
- *Do you have the right equipment for the routes? Is it fully functional and clean?*

### **Top-Rope:**

- *What are the local crag ethics? Is it top-rope only? No top-ropes using vegetation? Etc.*
- *How long does your anchor material need to be? (Are there bolted anchors? Or natural anchors like trees and rocks? Will you need a short length of cord or webbing or a longer static rope to ensure your anchor is over the edge of the cliff?)*

# Resources

## Climbing Types/Definitions:

- [NPS- types of climbing](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/climbing/types-of-climbing.htm)  
(<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/climbing/types-of-climbing.htm>)
- [REI - types of climbing](https://www.rei.com/blog/climb/types-of-rock-climbing-explained)  
(<https://www.rei.com/blog/climb/types-of-rock-climbing-explained>)
- [REI- climbing ethics](https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/climbing-ethics.html)  
(<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/climbing-ethics.html>)

## Know Before You Go:

- [Southeastern Climbers Coalition- climbing areas](https://www.seclimbers.org/climbing-areas/)  
(<https://www.seclimbers.org/climbing-areas/>)
- [Mountain Project](https://www.mountainproject.com/)  
(<https://www.mountainproject.com/>)
- [Leave no Trace](https://Int.org/rock-climbing-and-group-use/) (<https://Int.org/rock-climbing-and-group-use/>)
- [Climbers Pact](https://www.accessfund.org/learn/the-climbers-pact) (<https://www.accessfund.org/learn/the-climbers-pact>)
- [Access fund Gym to Crag](https://www.ontarioallianceofclimbers.ca/downloads/2014_GymPoster_vHR.PDF)  
([https://www.ontarioallianceofclimbers.ca/downloads/2014\\_GymPoster\\_vHR.PDF](https://www.ontarioallianceofclimbers.ca/downloads/2014_GymPoster_vHR.PDF))
- [Basic Gym to Crag article](https://hikethepla.net/gym-crag/)  
(<https://hikethepla.net/gym-crag/>)
- [Climbing Tech Tips article and video info](https://climbingtechtips.com/gym-crag-transition-series/)  
(<https://climbingtechtips.com/gym-crag-transition-series/>)
- [The Access Fund's "Climbers Pact"](https://www.accessfund.org/learn/the-climbers-pact)  
(<https://www.accessfund.org/learn/the-climbers-pact>)
- [AAC Gym to Rock resource](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15MjtOAHlYdL5VUsxwKqPZiFt-mBfA53C)  
(<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15MjtOAHlYdL5VUsxwKqPZiFt-mBfA53C>)
- [AAC Resource video page](https://americanalpineclub.org/know-the-ropes)  
(<https://americanalpineclub.org/know-the-ropes>)
- [Types of Climbing Defined](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/climbing/types-of-climbing.htm)  
(<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/climbing/types-of-climbing.htm>)

## Technical Books

- *Mountaineering: the Freedom of the Hills* by The Mountaineers
- *Climbing self rescue: Improvising Solutions for Serious Situations* by Molly Loomis and Andy Tyson
- *Climbing anchors* by Long and Gaines
- *AMGA single pitch* by Gains and Martin

## Further Education and Training Resources

- *Local Gym programs*
- *Local Climbing Guide Companies*
- *American Mountain Guide Association (AMGA) training and online resources*
- *Professional Climbing Instructors Association (PCIA) training*
- *Professional Climbing Guides Institute (PCGI) training*