



# ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH CLIMBING WALLS

## CODE OF PRACTICE



### PURPOSE & SCOPE

The climbing wall industry is diverse, ranging from large dedicated climbing centres to small club and school facilities. We believe that all climbing walls, regardless of size or purpose, should adhere to the ten points below. These should be the starting point for every climbing and bouldering facility. Many walls may choose to go beyond this minimum standard and become full ABC Members, committing to complying with the ABC National Guidelines. ABC National Guidelines are only available to aspirant and full members of the ABC and trade associates.

The purpose of this code of practice is to provide a minimum standard for all walls in plain English with pointers on where to get more detailed information.

This code of practice has been approved by the British Mountaineering Council (BMC).

### THE CODE OF PRACTICE

Principle	Requirements	Guidance
1. Walls must be fit for purpose.	There are two European standards applicable to climbing wall construction: <b>EN 12572 (parts 1 and 2)</b> . Manufacturers should provide the wall with an Operators Manual.	It may not be possible to know if your wall complies with the EN standards, however these are not retrospective. A competent Technical Advisor should be able to confirm that your wall is fit for purpose. The <b>ABC</b> can assist you in finding a suitable advisor.
2. Walls and all PPE equipment must be maintained and inspected.	Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for inspection type and frequency. The HSE provides practical guidance on how to apply relevant legislation (including WAHR, LOLER, PUWER).	A record of inspections for the wall, holds and matting should be kept. The frequency of inspection should be determined by usage and type of use of the wall. Equipment used should also be inspected (harnesses, ropes, helmets etc.) and this should be recorded. The <b>ABC Guidelines</b> offer advice on this; the <b>ABC</b> also run seminars and workshops on equipment inspection.



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3. All users must be made aware of and accept risks before using the wall.	Users must be given the appropriate information to give informed consent. The <b>BMC participation statement</b> is a general statement that climbing is inherently risky though in many cases, the user will require more specific information.	The use of standardised sign in or entry records is recommended by the <b>ABC</b> and templates are available for Aspirant Members. User's consent and understanding of the level of risk involved should be recorded.
4. The operator must have risk assessments for all activities.	If the wall employs more than five people, the risk assessment and a corresponding health and safety policy must be written. The HSE provides further guidance on risk assessments. Amongst other things, the risk assessment should cover all climbing activities, instruction and work at height, first aid requirements and child/vulnerable adult protection.	This is often seen as an onerous task – however it is vital to understanding the safe operation of your wall. Sample risk assessments are available to <b>ABC</b> Aspirant Members
5. Only competent users should use roped walls unsupervised. Novice climbers must be supervised by a competent person.	There are different methods for ascertaining competency to climb unsupervised, but in all cases, this should be documented.	Your Technical Advisor should be able to help you develop safe simple procedures for confirming competency. The <b>ABC Guidelines</b> offer advice on this.
6. Novice boulderers must receive a safety induction or be supervised by a competent person.	Due to the higher risk of injury from bouldering, the <b>ABC</b> recommends a safety induction for any novice boulderer wishing to boulder unsupervised.	The <b>ABC</b> have access to induction & training video's for bouldering inductions
7. All bouldering walls must have impact surface fit for purpose.	Walls built to <b>EN 12572</b> must have appropriate impact flooring.	Again it may not be possible to easily ascertain this. Your Technical Advisor should be able to confirm the suitability of your matting. The <b>ABC Guidelines</b> offer additional advice on this issue.



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8. All work at height including instructing, setting & maintenance of the wall must have emergency procedures & employ safe working practices at all times.	This is a legal requirement under WAHR and LOLER. The HSE provide additional guidance on employer responsibilities.	The <b>ABC Guidelines</b> offer additional advice on this issue. The <b>ABC</b> also have detailed Route setting Guidelines and also run workshops on this topic
9. Instruction must be carried out by an appropriately qualified instructor.	There are national qualifications available through Mountain Training UK. Qualification through experience is recognised by the HSE as is site-specific training.	Numerous climbing wall specific and relevant awards now exist – CWA, CWLA, SPA . In addition the <b>ABC</b> also run seminars and courses that cover an extensive range of relevant CPD.
10. Operators must take steps to ensure that the general use of the wall and the points above must be monitored and reviewed regularly.	The <b>ABC</b> requires that this is the minimum commitment that is necessary to join the Association	It is within the ability of every wall operator to achieve, and indeed exceed, the requirements of this Code of Practice. Walls that are able to confirm that they do are welcome to join the <b>Association of British Climbing Walls</b> .

TA = Technical Advisor – the Association can assist you in finding a suitably competent advisor

HSE = Health & Safety Executive ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk))

WAHR = Working at Height Regulations

LOLER = Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations

PUWER = Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations

CWA = Climbing Wall Award

CWLA = Climbing Wall Leading Award

SPA = Single Pitch Award

CPD = Continuous Professional Development