

How To Rock Climb Outside (sport climbing)



First and foremost gear is the name of the game for this outdoor recreation activity.

You will need:

[Rock climbing shoes](#)

[Rock climbing harness](#)

[Chalk bag](#)

[Chalk](#)

[12 quickdraws](#)

[2 runners/slings](#)

[5 total screw gate locking carabiners](#)

[1 daisy chain](#)

[1 ATC, Jule or Pilot climbing device for belaying and rappelling](#)

[1 60 or 70 meter rock climbing rope \(dynamic\)](#)

[Rock climbing helmet](#)

Introduction

Indoor climbing gyms are great when it's 20 degrees and snowing, but now that the sun is shining and summer is here, you may want to get outside to climb that pitch you've stared at in wonder. Whether you have experience climbing indoors or no climbing experience at all, here are some tools and information to get you started.



Outdoor Rock Climbing

Climbing outside is the same as climbing inside, but there are a couple major differences. One, of course, is the weather, but the second, less obvious difference is how you protect

yourself when you're outside. Outdoor rock climbing, aka sport climbing, is where you use gear (quickdraws) to clip to bolts (see picture of circled bolts and quickdraws) attached to the rock wall.

If you go to a rock climbing spot and see a bunch of shiny things in a row going up the rock, these are likely bolts. Think of the bolts as rungs on a ladder leading you up the pitch, only these rungs will stop your rope and essentially "catch" you if you fall. These will allow you to climb with confidence and test yourself on harder and harder pitches.

We recommend going into your local indoor climbing gym and learn how to lead as well as belay. When you "belay" someone, you're holding the rope that will save their life in the event of a fall, and it's harder than simply giving the climber more rope as he or she scrambles up the pitch. When you "lead," you decide how to climb the face, especially if there's more than one way to climb it (and there usually is). When you hook into bolts with your rope, it's your partner's job to belay you and follow you up. You can learn these techniques from an instructor, an experienced friend, a guide or by taking a class. Some instructors will even offer outdoor classes.

You should also ask if the climbing gym or instructor will teach you how to "clean a route" for outdoor climbing, which means taking your equipment out of the anchors at the top of the route and threading your rope through the anchors to retrieve your gear so you can leave the route with all your gear in tow. Cleaning a route safely is an important step to climbing outside, as no one likes to leave gear or litter.

These classes will likely include how to tie your knots, including the figure-eight, double or single fisherman's knot along with stopper knots that will tie you into the rope and get you to the top.

Once you feel comfortable, you should purchase a rock climbing guide book written for your area. For our locals, this would be the [Leavenworth Rock](#) book by Victor Kramar or the book [Frenchman Coulee](#) by Brenden Sullivan and Jim Yoder. Or purchase both of these books and you will have our region covered for rock climbing. These books are essentially maps for the different rock formations in your area, with the routes located on the specific rock faces and what they are rated (aka how hard they are to climb). If you're unsure of

what guide book to buy, local bookstores typically carry the right ones for your area, or seek out your local library.

Once you are comfortable and confident in your abilities to safely lead climb, “clean” a climbing route, rappel and belay a climbing partner, you are ready to climb outside. If you are unable to get into a climbing gym to learn these, you can find more information about these activities at the base of this article. Even if you go learn to climb inside at a climbing gym, it is still good to review the videos attached to this article to make sure you are prepared to climb outside.

The Steps!

1. Purchase harness, shoes, chalk bag, chalk, belay device (ATC, Jule, Pilot), and rope to learn how to rock climb in your local climbing gym.
2. Once you can safely “lead” climb, belay, “clean” a route, you can purchase your rock climbing book for your local “crag”.
3. Now you can purchase your quickdraws, runners, screw gate carabiners, rock climbing helmet and daisy chain.
4. Now go outside with a climbing buddy and start rock climbing. Remember to bring rain jacket, food, water and sunscreen with you as well.

Videos

Come Prepared (Video by the American Alpine Club)

<https://youtu.be/-js25JBg9Sc>

How to Clean a Route (Video by the American Alpine Club)

<https://youtu.be/aDilZALfW9c>

How to Rappel (Video by the American Alpine Club)

<https://youtu.be/ZCZjMG7UjqQ>

Other Resources

More climbing articles to get you ready to climb outside

<https://americanalpineclub.org/know-the-ropes>

Disclaimer. Treat this information as recommendations, not gospel. Conditions change and those contributing this information are volunteers—they may make mistakes or not know all the issues affecting a route. You are responsible for yourself, your actions, and your safety. If you won't accept that responsibility, you are prohibited from using our information.

WENATCHEEOUTDOORS.ORG