

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

Information for Parents



**Mountaineering
Council of
Scotland**

Representing and
Promoting the
Interests of all
Mountaineers

Children...

Hill Walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

Introduction

This guide is produced by the MCofS to help you as parents be more aware of what hill walking, climbing and mountaineering in Scotland is all about, so you can make informed decisions about your child's participation.

It is intended to help you as parents understand and accept the risk inherent in the activities, the relationship between the different disciplines and the need for the development of personal experience in order to progress from one to another; your responsibilities as a parent; the laws relating to the activity and where your child can get started, gain skills, progress to other disciplines and excel.

The information will empower you as a parent to decide whether those you are entrusting your child's welfare to are doing so in a responsible manner, as well as giving you a basic understanding about the sport to help you know what skills, equipment and experience you would need if you wish to introduce your child to the different disciplines yourself.

Remember that hill walking, climbing and mountaineering are excellent activities for children when they are introduced in a responsible manner; they help keep children fit; they can be both competitive or not; they instil a great appreciation of our natural world; and they are actually fun!

Kevin Howett
Development Officer

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Cover: Robert (aged 12yr) Scrambling on Pymy Ridge, Coire An T-Sneachda, Cairngorms
Photography by: Alastair Lee (Posing Productions)

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Getting Children Active

With an increasingly inactive society and the government's drive to encourage active participation, hill walking, climbing and mountaineering, can often be activities that appeal to children who are less attracted to more mainstream competitive sports. They offer physical and mental challenge; they can be non-competitive as well as competitive; they can be highly fulfilling at whatever level they are practiced; and they offer a life-long activity.

Because they take place, on the whole, in the natural environment, children can not only gain an appreciation of our wonderful countryside and wildlife, but in seeking out new venues, they will travel to some of the most beautiful parts of our country and the world, encounter other cultures and will make friendships that can last a lifetime.

The Importance of Risk

The MCofS Participation Statement

This statement is equally applicable to parents and young participants:

“The MCofS recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement”

As a parent, you should be aware of the MCofS Participation Statement and that this is especially important when making decisions about allowing your child(ren) to undertake any aspect of mountaineering and hill walking, and who they undertake them with.

You should understand that although it is impossible to remove all the risk from these activities, some activities are more hazardous than others, some less suited to younger children than others and that learning to climb involves learning to manage risk - an important life skill in itself

Different Disciplines - Different Risks

Like many other sports or activities there are numerous different disciplines within walking or mountaineering. People may specialise in one or more of them or they can progress from less hazardous to more hazardous as experience and skills are developed. The MCofS recommends a progressive approach to the different elements of our sport where gaining experience in one area can significantly help you to be safer and more experienced in another. This is especially important when introducing your children to the activity.

The following list of different activities is not in chronological order, however, it will give you some idea of the relative risk involved in each discipline specifically in relation to your child(ren). More detailed information about the disciplines and how to progress from one to another can be found on the [Getting Started pages](#) of the MCofS website.

They are:

- Summer Hill Walking
- Rock Climbing
- Scrambling
- Bouldering
- Winter Hill Walking
- Winter Climbing
- Mountaineering
- Ski-touring / Ski Mountaineering

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Summer Hill Walking

Walking improves general fitness. Low level walks can be a good start for children from a very young age. As they get a little older and gain more stamina, extending the walks into low hills is possible. Taking on larger hills (e.g. Munros) can be much more demanding with longer walks over rough terrain and children under 10yrs may struggle. This is especially so in poor weather, when, in Scotland, conditions on the summits can be 'wintery' even in summer. Care needs to be taken with children under 12yrs because most will find it difficult in cold, wet and windy mountain environments. You need to be aware of their lack stamina for long arduous walks because they may find it difficult to regulate their temperature and can get cold very quickly.

Skills required

Map reading and navigation skills are essential so as not to get lost. Judgement as to how the terrain and weather conditions may affect the days outing; how long the walk will take, and how difficult it will be etc. are important considerations in planning a day's walk in the hills.

Equipment Required

Good quality boots which are waterproof are recommended, along with warm and waterproof clothing. Hats and gloves for younger children can be very important even on a nice day - it's always colder on a hill!

Photo: Orienteering is a fun way of learning navigation for children and all the family
Photography by: Scottish Orienteering Association

Photo: Experienced walkers travelling into remote mountain country in Scotland for a 2 day expedition.

Photography by: Association of Mountain Instructors



Progression

Start on low level walks along good paths in summer conditions of stable calm weather. There are many such paths being opened up by local authorities around towns and cities across Scotland and local authority ranger services can give information. An excellent and fun way to develop map reading skills is to take part in a local orienteering event. See the Scottish Orienteering website at: www.scottish-orienteering.org and search for local events on the 'Scottish Fixtures' page. There are also links to local clubs here. Weekend and evening orienteering events are usually open to anyone and so you can simply turn up and have a go.



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On building up confidence in your map reading ability and on local walks, progress to popular small hills (up to about 1,500ft high) that are relatively close to the road, have well defined and marked paths and which take up to a couple of hours to complete. You will need to start using walking maps such as those produced by the Ordnance Survey and Harvey Maps Ltd (either 1:50,000 scale series or smaller scale of 1:25,000). Suitable hills would include:

Ben A'an (Trossachs), Dumyat (Stirling), Bennachie (Aberdeenshire), Beinn a'Bhragaidh (Easter Ross), the Pentland Hills (Lothian) and Falkland Hill (Fife).

Then progress on to longer walks to medium scale hills which can take some 3 hours to complete but which still have well defined paths to the summits such as:

Ben Vrackie (Perthshire), Ben Lomond (Trossachs), Stac Pollaidh (Wester Ross), Ben Ledi (Stirlingshire), the Cobbler (Argyll) and Cairn o'Mount and Morven (Aberdeenshire).

When more confident with navigation and having built up stamina so your child feels able to tackle longer days, you can look towards bigger and more remote hills. These can involve up to 5+ hours effort and often have poor rough paths. Tackle some of the Munros and Corbetts (see [A visitor's Guide to Munros and Corbetts](#)), many of which are not technically difficult and involve no scrambling or climbing such as:

Ben Lawers and Schiehallion (Perthshire), Ben Nevis (Scotland's highest hill near Fort William), Cairngorm (near Aviemore), Cruachan (Argyll) and even Goatfell (Isle of Arran).



Photo: Ben Vrackie, near Pitlochry: a good medium scale hill for children with a clear path.

Photography by: Kevin Howett

Some Munros (and some Corbetts) are more serious, have very poor paths (or none at all), are extremely remote, or entail scrambling or even easy climbing, or are ridge walks above steep broken ground and advice in the sections on Scrambling and Mountaineering should be born in mind before progressing to these. Examples would be:

Aonach Eagach and Crieise (Glen Coe), Cuillin Ridge (Skye), The Five Sisters (Kintail), Liathach (Torrison) and The Sannox Horseshoe and the A'Chir Ridge (Isle of Arran).

Finally, the next logical progression is to extend your trips into winter but bear in mind that teenage children and even young adults will find full Scottish winter conditions extremely difficult to cope with (see the Winter Hill Walking Section).

Photo: The highlands of Scotland can be very remote – don't underestimate them.

Photography by: Irvine Butterfield

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Rock Climbing

This activity is practiced with an array of technical equipment that is used as a back-up 'safety net' if the climber should fall, allowing a climbing partner to arrest the fall and prevent serious injury. It is usually undertaken as a team of two, although it can be a group. The climber ascending first is called the 'Leader' and trails a rope behind (being controlled by a 'second' on the ground), clipping it into protection devices which will hold them in the event of a fall (limiting the length of a fall and hopefully stopping the climber falling to the ground). The person controlling the rope on the ground through a belay device is said to be belaying and plays a vital role. Once the leader reaches the top of the crag/cliff, they attach themselves securely to the rock and then take over control of the rope and safeguard the other climber as (s)he climbs up attached to the other end of the rope. This is referred to as 'Lead Climbing'.

Often on smaller crags (and at climbing walls) it is possible to secure a rope from the top of the crag with the belayer either at the top (top-roping) or at the bottom (bottom-roping) and the climber always having a safety rope from above so a fall will be extremely small.

Climbing without using the technical equipment is called 'soloing' and leaves no margin for error as the consequences of a fall can be serious or fatal.

There are two types of climbing styles practiced in Scotland (and the UK): Traditional ('leader-placed' protection) climbing and Sport climbing. See the [climbing](#) pages on the MCoFS website for more information (also see [A visitor's Guide to Rock Climbing in Scotland](#)).

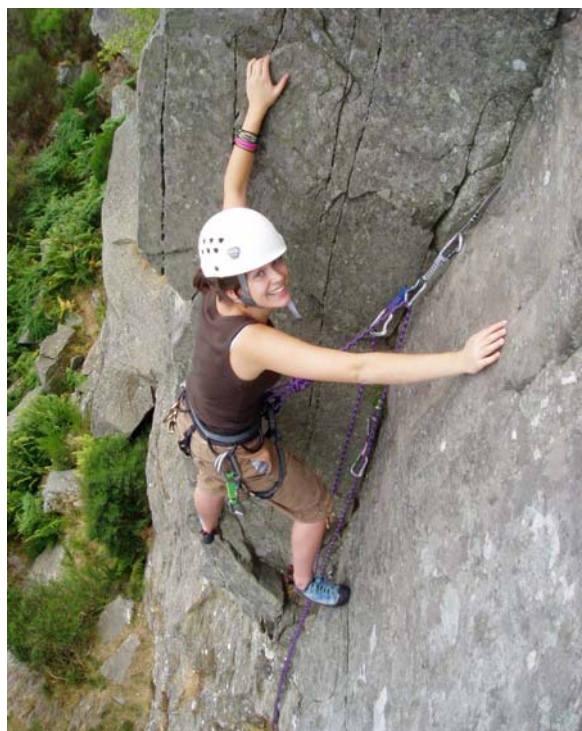


Photo: Rachael climbing 'The End' Grade Severe, Polney Crag, Dunkeld

Photography by: Kevin Howett

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Skills required

Using all the technical equipment correctly is a key safety skill: learning to belay is a vital skill and should not be underestimated, poor belaying is the biggest cause of accidents, particularly at indoor climbing walls. Physical skills such as preserving energy, getting rests on-route, route-finding (reading the rock) and finding a placing protection are all skills that come with experience and will make a climb safer.

Equipment required

Beginners can climb in normal footwear (non-slippery soles; tight fitting) but a pair of specialist rock shoes is much better. They can be bought to fit very small children, but can be expensive as they grow out of them so fast. Some shops do a returns / second-hand service - check your local outdoor shop. The main items of safety equipment include a harness, ropes, karabiners (or 'quickdraws' / 'extenders'), slings, 'natural protection' devices and belay devices. Helmets are a good idea, particularly for novices, and are essential for progression into winter climbing and mountaineering. Buying a full 'rack' of equipment can be expensive, so hire the basics at a wall first and if your child is keen to continue, buy harness, belay plate, helmet and rock shoes. Then build up a rack of the other gear for sport climbing (quickdraws and karabiners and a rope) before progressing to trad'.



Photo: Jonathan (13yrs) Leading a climb on gear for the first time

Photography by: Kevin Howett

Progression

Climbing can be relatively as safe or as serious as you wish to make it. Sport climbing is probably the safest discipline as protection devices (bolts) are pre-placed into the rock at regular intervals and potential falls should be short. In traditional climbing (also termed 'adventure' climbing) the leader needs to find cracks in the rock and place their own protection devices (leader-placed protection). A bolt's quality can usually be relied upon, whereas leader-placed protection is subject to many variables including the quality of the rock and the placement itself. Sport climbing is therefore a good introduction for children, although even this discipline is not 100% 'safe' and your child may get hurt when they fall off.

Photo: Jessica (10yrs) on a sport climb at Benny beg, Crieff

Photography by: Kevin Howett

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Indoor climbing walls have predominantly sport climbing style routes and walls are a great place to introduce children to climbing. To progress outdoors it is first best to find a small low-lying crag with few natural hazards (e.g. easy access to the top and bottom), that is sport style or one where top-roping can be easily set up. Learning how to place protection can be done at some main climbing centres: those supported as 'Regional Centres' by the MCofS must have 'Leader-placed protection' routes, and these can be used to practice placing gear (Check the [MCofS Walls Database](#)). After this, and once used to top-roping or sport climbing on natural rock (which is a very different environment to the colour-coded and obvious holds at a climbing wall), then progression to leader-placed protection on well protected traditional routes is a good start into adventure climbing.

Parents should encourage their children to progress slowly: your child(ren) should start on adventure climbs which are well protected - so a fall should be short (the guidebook description and the routes' grade give indications of whether they are well protected or not), and of a much lower grade than they are capable of, until they are confident in the reliability of the protection they are placing. Your child should be encouraged to stay well within their technical limits until they have built up extensive experience. Trying a route which is technically easy for them, but poorly protected will leave no error for margin and a fall will be much bigger and not be recommended. Children who are technically proficient will still need detailed advice and help in choosing the correct leader-placed protection to fit the cracks when they first start and will find it very different to sport climbing.

*"Trad' climbing is awesome,
I can't wait to do some more"
Aline (aged 12)*



Photo: Leading a Trad' climb and using leader placed protection (in this case a 'Friend') in a crack in the rock.
Photography by: Kevin Howett

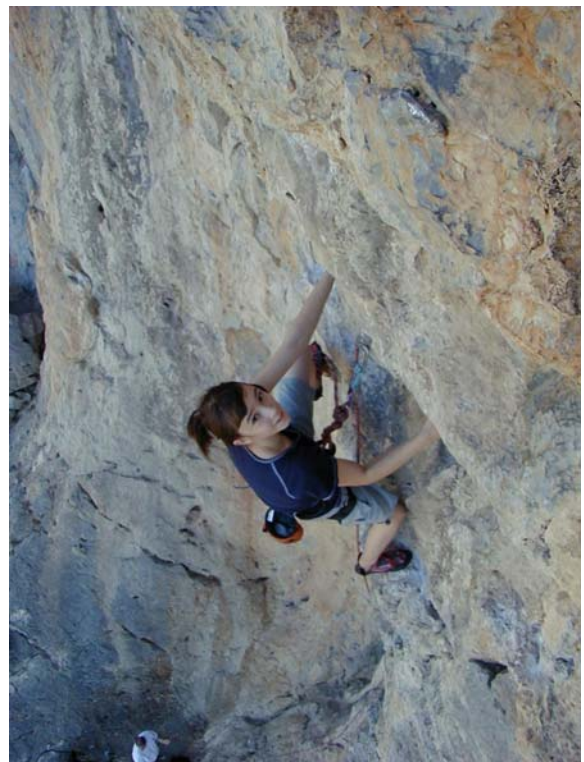


Photo: Natalie (13yrs) sport climbing on the route Atena F6b at Kalymnos, Greece
Photography by: Mark Garthwaite

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Scrambling



This is a mixture of walking and rock climbing in summer conditions; it is the ascent of steep sections of mountains where hands have to be used as well as feet. It is most often done without the safety of technical climbing equipment as scrambles are usually part of a longer walk on exposed ridges and rocky hillsides, where speed is important as part of a long day and carrying climbing equipment would slow you down.

Photo: A group of children scrambling together on a ridge in the Cairngorms using a rope for security on the hardest section

Photography by: Scott Muir

Scrambling can seem more appealing to children than climbing, however, scrambling is potentially the most serious discipline, as a trip or stumble could mean a very long fall. It is not recommended for beginners as climbing skills and mountain knowledge are best gained before attempting even easy scrambles. See the [Scrambling Fact File](#) on the MCoFS website.

Skills required

Normal hill walking skills including navigation need to be supplemented by route-finding skills (complex terrain!), climbing skills and competence in exposed mountain terrain.

Equipment required

Apart from the usual hill walking clothing; a pair of sturdy, tight fitting boots with solid edges are essential, a helmet is recommended and good tight fitting gloves with good grip for cold wet conditions can be useful. Travel light (its harder to scramble with a big pack on your back) with everything you need in a 'day-sack' (40ltr).

Progression

Like rock climbs, scrambles are graded for difficulty. Start on easy graded scrambles with easier climbing sections and easy descents once you have some experience of hill walking and basic climbing. Progression to harder more complex ascents where a rope becomes useful and descents may require abseiling is best done after you have mastered technical climbing skills.

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Bouldering

Parents will notice that this is an activity that comes naturally to most children from a very early age. It involves climbing on crags or boulders of rock no higher than about 7m. Many indoor climbing walls have dedicated areas for bouldering. It is possible to jump back down after completing most problems. The interest lies in trying to do the hardest moves possible over short vertical heights (or long sustained traverses), where the risk of hurting yourself when falling are very small. Falling off is a normal part of bouldering. Above 7m the level of hazard and risk of hurting yourself increases and bouldering starts to become solo climbing, which is a high risk activity. Bouldering can be a very social activity.

When bouldering it is easy for children (and adults) to get carried away and try to climb steeper and steeper rock with smaller sharp-edged holds. For most children up to about 12yrs this can be damaging to their developing fingers and more emphasis should be placed on less steep rock, vertical walls, slabs and balance techniques. As they get older, bouldering becomes one of the best methods of training for lead climbing, but excessive bouldering on tiny holds at times when children are maturing can lead to chronic finger and shoulder injuries and a mix of training techniques is best.

It is a year round sport (climbing shoe rubber is designed for maximum 'stick' between 0-5 degrees C) and there are many dedicated bouldering guides now available (including numerous on-line guides: see www.scottishclimbs.com or www.stonecountry.co.uk).

Skills required

There are few technical safety skills as there is no equipment to be concerned about. But, safety can be enhanced by becoming more aware of movement skills, learning to fall in control and looking after each other with a second person 'spotting' a boulderer to make sure they don't hit anything when falling off. See the [Bouldering Ten Commandments](#) on the MCoFS website.

Photo: Rory (10yrs) on a new boulder problem in Glen Lednock. Note the bouldering mats covering rocks below the problem.

Photography by: Kevin Howett



Equipment required

It is undertaken without any 'safety' equipment such as ropes and protection devices, and only requires a pair of rock shoes and a chalk bag (a pair of tight fitting 'trainers' will suffice to start with!). Bouldering above the hard ground can lead to injuries when falling off, but today, most boulderers also take along a 'bouldering mat' - a portable padded mat similar to a gymnastics mat, which is used to reduce the impact of a fall. Although expensive, they last for years and reduce wear and tear on the body (and the environment). But initially, when your child(ren) is just starting out, choose boulder problems which have good grassy landings. A piece of cloth to clean your shoes and a toothbrush to clean excess chalk from holds are worth carrying.

Progression

Bouldering is a full discipline in its own right and many boulderers never put a rope on. However, the physical performance levels gained from bouldering easily transfer to lead climbing, but until the skills of lead climbing are gained, your child(ren) should be prepared to drop the grade of climb (s)he operates at!

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Winter Hill Walking



Walking up hills in winter is a natural progression from walking in summer, but it is far more arduous, presents more hazards (less daylight, tougher walking conditions under foot, more difficult navigation, snow - blizzards, white-out, avalanche risk, substantially worse weather conditions), and requires extra skills as well as additional technical equipment to reduce the risks. For this reason the MCofS recommends people regard winter hill walking as a first step into 'Mountaineering', despite there being no need to have climbing skills.

The ability to withstand the much colder conditions, stronger winds and more difficult walking conditions is usually beyond most children until they reach mid teens or above. The weather can be 'arctic' in its ferocity in Scotland (particularly in the Cairngorms) and even teenagers will have trouble coping with it: the conditions on Scottish hills should not be underestimated; there have been fatalities amongst school and University students in the past.

Photo: Winter days out in Scotland are short
Photography by: AMI

Equipment required

Better clothing is required than in summer - warmer and fully water-proof and including waterproof trousers. You will need to carry more clothes and have spares of such things as gloves etc. Technical equipment such as ice axe and crampons and walking boots that will take crampons are required and the skills to use them properly need to be sought before they are required in anger. Head torches and batteries (& spares) will prove useful as days are short. There is much debate about the best length of ice axe, but less specialised, longer axes are usual.

Skills required

Using crampons on stiffer soled boots to travel over snow; using an ice axe to cut steps in snow and to arrest a fall / slide down a snow slope. Avalanche awareness is essential, and navigation is more complicated when the features of the hills are covered in snow or you get caught in a white-out (when visibility is so low its hard to tell the sky from the ground); techniques such as walking on a bearing become essential.

Progression

Start by choosing hills and routes you have done in summer and progress to other hills that are not too remote. Practice the use of ice axe and crampons as much as possible. Once gaining the technical skills and gaining experience of a range of weather conditions and different mountain terrain you can extend into more remote Munros and Corbetts that have less technical terrain. Making the next step to try more difficult hills (e.g. The Aonach Eagach Ridge, Glen Coe, and The Cuillin Ridge) will involve true mountaineering. For these, you will need to have climbing skills and equipment.

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Winter Climbing

In Scotland this involves a range of different styles of climbing. These and the various venues available are explained in [Winter Climbing in Scotland: A visitor's Guide](#) on the website. Essentially, there are two forms: 'Ice Climbing' (ascending mainly ice, snow and neve - hard snow) and 'Mixed Climbing' (ascending rock buttresses covered in varying amounts of ice and snow). Either can be encountered on a typical climb in Scotland. A more recent development has been the specialisation of an extreme form of mixed climbing known as 'Sport Mixed'. As it often ascends areas of very steep bare rock that do not hold ice and snow, but which lead to hanging icicles it has become known also as 'Dry-tooling'. More specialised equipment (ice axes and boots) has been developed for this.

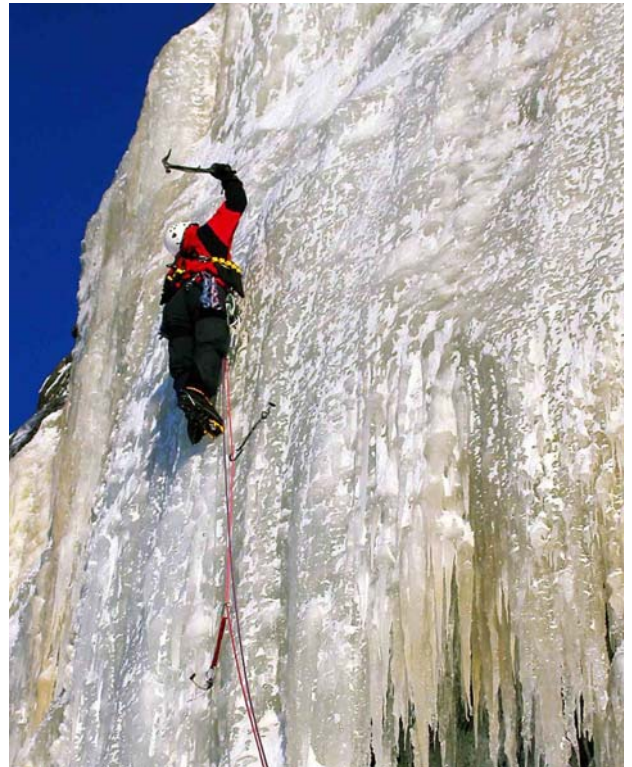
The equipment required for winter climbing is both heavy and potentially dangerous (sharp points!) and when combined with all the extra clothing etc. means a typical day-climbing sack can weigh up to 40lbs. Most venues are high in the mountains and require long walk-ins and so this activity is out of the question for most young people until they reach maturity (late teens).

Skills required

A combination of all the winter hill walking and rock climbing skills are required.



Photo: Climbing a frozen waterfall
Photography by: John MacDonald



Equipment required

For normal Scottish winter climbing the usual equipment used for rock climbing is required (harness, rope ['ever-dry' is best], helmet, karabiners (or 'quickdraws' / 'extenders'), slings, 'natural protection' devices and belay devices) along with fully stiffened boots, crampons, and ice axes. The shorter more specialised axes are best for climbing and crampons which are fully stiffened with either 12-point or mono-point styles. It is usual to carry a selection of pitons (pegs) and specialised ice protection such as ice screws, drive-ins and 'deadmen'.

Photo: Scottish Mixed climbing on Ben Nevis
Photography by: Simon Richardson

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Photo: Sport Mixed Climbing
Photography by: Scott Muir

Progression

Start children at an indoor wall which offers dry-tooling sessions (see below) or go along to the Mixed Masters competitions. Try real ice all year round (indoors!) at The Ice Factor in Kinlochleven, (a UK shoe sizes of 4 is the minimum - contact them first before you visit). When the weather is cold enough, there are several ice-falls close to the road. These have easy access and can offer good practice for novices. Other venues with relatively easy, but more complicated, access include the Northern Corries of Cairngorm and Aonach Mor, but Mountaineering skills are required here particularly concerning avalanche hazard.

Sport Mixed (Dry-Tooling)

Increasingly there are areas of the world where sport mixed has been developing, particularly the USA, Canada, Norway and Italy. The routes climbed are usually acutely overhanging (often cave roofs) and require high levels of physical strength. Despite the name, they are not all sport bolted, but have pegs and can require use of 'trad' gear and consequently can be very serious. There are differences of opinion amongst leading climbers in Scotland regarding venues suitable for sport mixed at present and the debate continues.

Specialised boots with 'crampon points' screwed direct into the soles and ice axes with more ergonomic handle designs for more multi purpose uses have been developed.

Photo: Climbing on real indoor ice at the Ice Factor, Kinlochleven
Photography by: Kevin Howett



Practicing indoors with ice tools on walls designed for sport mixed can be excellent training for normal winter climbing. It teaches axe and crampon control, precision and movement skills. Children can also participate and most find it as much fun as rock climbing, if not more so. Special axes and helmets with safety visors are recommended.

It is possible to try sport mixed outdoors in Scotland at any time of the year on one accepted and recognised venue at Newtyle Quarry near Birnam in Perthshire.

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Photo: winter mountaineering in Scotland
Photography by: Roger Wild

Mountaineering

This is the name for the activity that can be undertaken over mountains covering a huge range of scale, from Scottish, to Alpine, to the biggest mountain ranges of the world (e.g. Himalayan). In summer conditions in the UK it involves hill walking, scrambling and rock climbing activities; in winter in the UK it involves winter hill walking and winter climbing and many mountaineers also ski (Ski-mountaineering); and in Alpine and Himalayan Mountaineering glaciers and permanent snow fields need to be negotiated. The latter discipline includes 'Big Wall' climbing which entails multi-day ascents of big mountains (mixed terrain) or big rock walls when a climber will be living on the climb. The majority of climbs in Scotland are completed in one day, but in the depths of winter days are short and so walking in or walking out may often be done in the dark.

Mountaineering in Scotland in both summer and winter can be arduous, combining long days out, long distances covered and scrambling or climbing thrown in as well as all the added environmental hazards. This is all usually too demanding for children until they mature and can cope with the physical demands. Parents are best placed to judge when their children are capable, but they should have previous hill walking and climbing experience.

Traditionally many young people have their first experience of mountaineering in Scotland at University. But as the first student term coincides with the on-set of winter, initial meets can often entail full winter conditions. If students have no former experience, parents should encourage them to take a progressive approach to gaining skills and not tackle anything too ambitious in their first term: start with lower level walking that winter, before gaining climbing experience the following year and then trying mountaineering. (See the MCoFS advice to University Students and young people at www.mcofs.org.uk/winter-check-list.asp)

It is also at University where most young people start their progression to the Alps where they will contend with altitude and glaciers and there is a strong tradition of University students operating at a high level of achievement by the time they graduate. There are more remote mountain areas of the world where young adults can experience this style of climbing such as Greenland, but the remoteness and heightened hazard (as well as the cost) means most young people wishing to visit such places need adult support.

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Skills required

Mountaineering in summer in Scotland requires hill walking, scrambling and rock climbing skills. But in addition, to be able to climb long complicated climbs in a safe manner, speed is often as important as the use of technical safety equipment. Covering relatively easier terrain fast, allows a climber to complete the climb before being stuck on the hill as night falls (benightment), which itself can be problematical if it has not been planned for. 'Short-roping' / 'moving together' are essential skills to allow fast, but safe, movement on a long climb such as Tower Ridge on Ben Nevis. See the [Jack and Gill](#) story on the website.

Multi-day ascents are usual on Alpine climbs or bigger mountains and are planned for by carrying bivouac equipment, food and extra clothing. Usually if the climb itself will take more than 2 days more substantial sleeping arrangements are needed; port-a-ledges on big rock walls or tents on big mountains. These are often termed 'expeditions' and can involve long approaches. The length and difficulty of the climb will determine the amount of equipment you take; more food is required, water may need to be carried, stoves and sleeping bags become essential. Skis are often used to ease travel into and out of big climbs. They are especially useful in the Alps and Norway in winter and vital in areas such as the Tian Shan, Canada and Alaska. But many snowy mountains can be ascended on ski and this would be true ski mountaineering. This subject is complicated with many variable styles including advanced 'short ski' options where the skis can be carried attached to the rucksack whilst climbing - popular in the European Alpine regions.

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Equipment required

For summer mountaineering in the UK: summer hill walking clothing and rock climbing equipment including harness, ropes, helmets, slings etc.

For winter mountaineering in the UK: winter hill walking and climbing clothing and equipment. On occasions of heavy snowfall skis or snowshoes are useful.



Photo: Alpine Mountaineering
Photography by: Ray Wood

For Alpine / Big Wall: multi-day ascents require all necessary clothing and climbing equipment with additional overnight gear (bivi bags, sleeping bags, sleeping mats, headtorches) and food (stove, water, food). When on a Himalayan mixed big wall specialised tents are usually carried and when on a big rock wall specialised hanging port-a-ledge and tents are needed. Skis and snowshoes will often prove helpful.

Progression

Normally, British climbers will start walking and climbing in Britain, winter walking and climbing in Scotland and then progress to Alpine mountaineering (in France, Italy and Switzerland). Taking the skills and experience from here and applying them to the 'Greater Ranges' (North America, The Himalaya, The Karakorum, The Andes, Antarctica, Greenland etc) involves greater risk (bigger scale, lack of oxygen at altitude) and commitment (there are few opportunities for rescue) and many more specialist climbing techniques as the scale of the mountains and cliffs is huge and will involve multi-day ascents.

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Ski-Touring



Photo: Ski Touring in Norway
Photography by: Roger Wild

Skills Required

Skiing, obviously! If touring over remote terrain, good navigation is vital, and mountaineering skills such as avalanche awareness is vital.

Equipment Required

The most important issue is the need for skis bindings which enable the heel to be lifted to allow 'walking' on the flat and uphill, and a gripping system on the skis (wax or skins) to help you grip uphill. The binding can be 'free heel' or fixed for downhill sections. See the article on the MCoFS website entitled [Hut to Hut in Norway](#) for more detail about gear.

Progression

For children entering this sport, it is probably best that they gain skiing skills with downhill skis on normal piste slopes where the environment is more controlled (fewer mountain hazards). Children can start very young here. There are artificial skis slopes and even artificial ski-touring venues where it can be practiced. With the initial skills mastered here, tours at low altitude in forests (when the snow allows) can hone skills and be great fun for even young children. When older and with a bit more stamina, short trips into the Northern Corries of Cairn Gorm (close to the Cairngorm Mountain Ski area) would be a good next step, but before heading onto the higher plateau (even on seemingly good days) parents should be aware of the limitations described for mountaineering in regard to children being able to cope with extreme winter conditions.

This activity is distinct from the use of skis when mountaineering (ski-mountaineering) and involves often long touring routes at lower altitudes. Often done hut to hut (for example in the Alps and Norway), in Scotland there are many mountain areas with rounded hills with few cliff areas which are suitable for ski-touring (e.g. The Grampian Mountains and the Cairngorms) and there are many ski-touring clubs active in Scotland.

In a normal Scottish winter ski-touring would involve finding snow on the high tops and so would involve an element of mountaineering. But in a good winter when the snow lays at low altitudes, there are many forest areas with tracks offering ideal venues. Rothiemurchus Forest near Aviemore even has a way-marked ski-touring route. See the article [Scottish Ski-touring](#) by David Nichol on the MCoFS website.

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

Outdoor Activity and Children's Nutrition

Good nutrition is important in everyday life, but when a child engages in a strenuous activity then it is even more important to get it right. It becomes more complicated when considering what is appropriate whilst out on the hill or crag as access to shops at short notice is not always possible and everything required for the day must be carried. Although every child is different and needs to be catered for individually, some general hints can help make a day's activity enjoyable rather than a disaster for children:

Hydration

Like adults, children should be encouraged to drink liquids on a regular basis throughout the day. They will often refuse water unless the weather is very hot, but even on cold days they should hydrate regularly. Carrying various 'sport' or glucose drinks can help motivate them to do so, even cola! Hot drinks can be a very good idea and gives a good excuse to stop for a rest.

Food

"Little and often" is the key to success when walking or climbing with children. Children's stamina and ability to cope with poor weather rapidly decreases through lack of food and they require regular top-ups. This is easiest done by carrying a range of food bars that they like (there is no point carrying a muesli bar if they hate it, as it will not get eaten!). Cake bars or 'energy' bars are preferable to pure chocolate as they contain both sugars and carbohydrates, which are easily digested and release energy in the short and medium term, but do not contain fats which take longer to digest. A good example is the 'Jaffa Cake' - almost the best hill food you can carry - and almost universally loved by children! Sandwiches offer something more substantial, but when containing meat are less useful than spreads and cheeses as they take too long to digest. Hot soups can make a big difference to a child's motivation on a long hill walk, particularly in poor weather: vegetable, and tomato soups are perfect.

Take regular breaks and eat snacks and drink liquids throughout the day



Photo: getting the correct balance of food for the day and not having to carry too much weight is important

Photography by:
Kevin Howett

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

Child Protection and Parental Responsibility

As a parent, there are several different items to consider regarding protecting the welfare of your child(ren) when participating in mountaineering and hill walking with other adults:

- Your responsibility as a parent (informed consent)
- The suitability of any adult to be in charge of a child (child protection)
- The competence of those teaching / instructing / coaching a child (experience and/or qualifications)
- Legislation relating to the above

To many people the term 'child protection' is associated with sexual abuse, but as a parent, you will be aware that young people can be harmed by different forms of abuse and you should make sure you are happy that those taking care of your children do not exhibit the following towards your child(ren):

- Physical abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Neglect
 - Verbal abuse
 - Undue adult pressure
 - Bullying
 - Sexual abuse
-
- More detail is contained within the MCofS Child Protection Policy and Guidelines for Good Practice, for MCofS's activities and the activities of MCofS member clubs in relation to the supervision and safety of children.
 - The MCofS has a Child Protection Officer (The Senior Officer) who can give advice about these issues.
 - MCofS are signatories to the Scottish Government's '2006 Accord for the Protection of Children in Sport'.

Parental Responsibility

As a parent it is your responsibility to find out what the activity involves and how it is run and organised, what are the skills of those taking your child into their care as well as their suitability to be in charge of your child(ren).

Anyone taking another person's child climbing, walking or mountaineering with the parent's consent (written or verbal) is acting '*in loco parentis*'; acting as if they are parents. This requires them to exercise a duty of care that would be provided by a 'reasonably prudent parent'. But, equally, as a responsible parent you should decide if they are able to do that.

You should ask yourself:

Is this person capable? (are they technically proficient?)

Is this person suitable? (are they a good role model - e.g. use appropriate language / conduct?)

Is my child comfortable in this persons company? (does the person have a good rapport with my child?)

Is this person able to enthuse my child and give support? (is my child enjoying the activity?)

Find out What the Activity is all About:

It is the advice of the MCofS that parents who do not climb or are novice climbers themselves gain as much information about the activity as possible to satisfy themselves that they are happy with the event and those delivering it before consenting to their child(ren) participating with other people. The MCofS website has been designed to give as much general information about the sport as possible for beginners, including the participation statement, the risks involved, what the sport actually entails and what constitutes good practice. Read through the [Get Active](#) pages to get a taste of what it is all about. This publication is also a good starting point to help you make 'informed consent'.

Consider attending an event yourself, go to the local climbing wall, talk to other parents or even try climbing, hill walking or mountaineering. Gaining knowledge of the activity in this way allows you as a parent to take more responsibility for what your child(ren) do, gives you the confidence to support your child(ren) outside a structured course programme and have greater control over what your child(ren) do and how fast they progress in the different disciplines.

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

Communicate with your Child:

Encourage open discussion with your child about the activity and the adults who take the sessions, whether they are friends, club members, paid instructors / coaches or family members. This will help you find out more about what is happening, allowing you peace of mind or to make a decision regarding the suitability of those adults in charge.

Club Events:

If your child is attending a club event, bear in mind that although those in clubs may be very experienced themselves they will not be qualified in any way, and the 'instruction / coaching' of novices or children will not be their 'normal' duty. You should not expect club members to be any more competent at teaching, coaching or instruction than any other adult, but you should satisfy yourself that they are not reckless, they have proven personal experience and are able to communicate and relate well with children. They will be expected to uphold a duty of care as a competent parent would but you must satisfy yourself that they are competent. You should also ask the club about child protection issues explained elsewhere in this document. See the Chapter on *Where Children can Get Started* on page 23 for more information about clubs.

Friends and Relatives:

In the past, this was by far the most common method for children to gain an introduction to the sport and although the advent of indoor climbing walls and greater access through Local Authority initiatives provides greater opportunities to try the sport, having friends or family members able to help has many advantages. You should still make sure you are happy with the competence of your friend and that they would not abuse your child in any way, and it is recommended that you take part in the activity a few times to become confident in his/her ability.

Organised Courses:

If your child is attending an organised session at a climbing wall, outdoor centre or a course organised by any other body,

we would recommend that you confirm what the activity will entail and what qualifications instructors (either paid or unpaid) have which is relevant to the activity. As a parent you will also be asked to sign a *Parental Consent Form* for your child(ren) to participate; but you should only do so when satisfied with the above information (See the 'Qualifications' section below).

Adult Suitability for Supervision

This is the area of Child Protection that has been recently legislated for in regard to those people normally working with children (paid or unpaid). The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 includes anyone: "*whose normal duties include caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children*". Hence, all instructors operating in a professional capacity with children (at walls and schools and through Local Authorities) should have had disclosure checks completed to make certain they will not pose a risk to those children. You should ask for confirmation of this if it is not stated. See the [Child Protection Legislation](#) and the [MCofS Child Protection Policy and Guidelines for Good Practice](#) on the website.

Volunteers and Disclosure:

Note that in terms of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 if a parent is in attendance during an activity which is being taken by a volunteer whose normal duty does not ordinarily involve such work (for example the MCofS REALrock sessions or in a club setting where volunteer members offer their expertise and knowledge), and the volunteer is never allowed to be alone with your child, then there is no requirement for them to have a disclosure check. In such circumstances, as a parent, you should take responsibility for the safety of your child.

You should also note that 'Disclosure' is only one way of assessing whether the adult in charge of your child does not pose a risk and you should make the effort to find out more about them as you would a friend or acquaintance.

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

Ask yourself the same questions as posed above under 'Parental Responsibility' and if your child is attending an organised session by youth clubs, organisations such as Scouts or education establishments, the Scottish Government has prepared a 'Parent Checklist' of items you should consider and is available as a downloadable pdf at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/10/15502/11399>. It is also available on the MCofS website.

In the Event of Abuse:

As a parent, if you have any worries and wish to act on information you gain from your child, use the advice in the [MCofS Child Protection Policy, Guidelines for Good Practice](#). Equally, adult coaches / instructors (professional, volunteer, friends or family), who are confided in by children regarding any form of abuse should also take guidance from the MCofS Child Protection Policy on how to react and what to do next.

Competence & Qualifications in Instruction and Coaching

There are two issues that parents should take note of in relation to this subject:

- if those in charge of children are safe in their practices regarding the safe instruction of the sport
- if those in charge of children are competent in giving advice to children about physical training and coaching techniques

Technical Safety:

This first item is in regard to their ability to undertake the activity in a manner which is as safe as can be expected - that they will not be exposing children to any unnecessary hazard because of poor knowledge about technical equipment or the environment in which the activity is undertaken.

There are a series of National Awards which can be used to assess whether a person is competent in this field (see the Qualifications section below) but as there is no requirement in the UK to hold one of these awards in order to operate as a leader, instructor or guide, parents have to satisfy themselves that a person operating as an instructor is competent by virtue of their experience and knowledge and/or their qualification.

Performance Coaching:

This second item is in regard to their advice about training to get stronger or fitter as a performance coach in other sports would do. Currently there are no qualifications in performance coaching in climbing or mountaineering, but there are climbing specific coaches operating who give advice and they can be found in the national climbing magazines or on the web. These coaches tend to be elite climbers who are self-taught or have higher education degrees in sports science or PE. Some Mountain Instructors can also have personal experience in performance coaching which is not indicated by their Mountain Leader Training award. If you require performance coaching you should ask what experience / educational training they have and be satisfied they understand the subject. This aspect of child safety is becoming more relevant within sport climbing and the competitions scene and some particular points are highlighted below:

Photo: A group being instructed in belaying
Photography by: Roger Wild



Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

Over-training Injuries

Competition in climbing is a relatively young sport, but as in all types of competition with young people it is important that parents are aware of undue pressure, abuse, eating disorders through peer pressure and over-training issues: for example, young climbers competing in the British Championships cannot compete in the Youth Climbing Series to limit over-training and over competing injuries. There is some evidence now being provided regarding the injuries sustained by certain types of training and the MCofS can supply information and advice.

Additionally, allowing a child to use advanced training equipment such as 'Bachar Ladders' and 'Training Boards' particularly during growth spurts when they can be vulnerable to injury or allowing them to practice excessively on overhanging bouldering walls on tiny 'crimpy' holds can be damaging. Parents need to be aware of the potential risk and if their children are using such equipment or being encouraged to use such equipment by well-meaning adults.

Parents should be aware of unhealthy peer pressure



Photo: Fingers – vital for climbing - tendon injuries through inappropriate training can lead to chronic damage in young children

Photography by: Robbie Philips

Where Can Children Get Started

There are many different ways for children to get involved in the sport:

- **Doing it themselves (after reading about it in books)**
- **Being introduced by friends or relatives**
- **Visiting a local dedicated climbing wall**
- **Getting an introduction to the sport at school**
- **Attending a Local Authority session during the school holidays**
- **Joining a local hill walking, climbing or mountaineering club**
- **Taking a course at an Outdoor Centre**
- **Undertaking a Duke of Edinburgh Award**
- **Joining the Scouts or Guides**
- **Employing a freelance instructor, Mountain Guide or Coach**

Below is a selection from the above list highlighting some pertinent issues that parents should take note of:

Go Your Own Way

The level of risk involved in children simply going off and doing it themselves is obviously high as they do not have the knowledge, skills and experience to cope with all possible situations they may encounter. Children also tend not to recognise risk in the same way as an adult; can be completely unaware of the level of risk they are getting themselves into and unable to get themselves to safety. Getting a good basic introduction to the sport at the correct level for their ability, by either qualified or experienced adults, is preferable. With some guidance they can quickly learn how to recognise risk and learn how to manage it and with advice can progress as their skills increase, rather than jump into the deep end beyond their skills level. Talented children can quickly be out-performing most adults physically but it takes time, as they mature, for them to learn how to cope with stressful situations.

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

A parent is best able to assess their child's maturity, although a sports coach or an adult mentor taking them out on a regular basis would also be able to make such assessments. Ultimately children will want to undertake the activity on their own, or with their peers, and parents need to be certain that their children are sufficiently skilled at risk assessment and risk management as well as technically competent with the equipment to be able to cope with what they intend to do. A mixture of skills courses and going out with experienced adults is probably the best method of progressing to being self sufficient.

Friends and Relatives

This is a more traditional way of coming into the sport where those active in the sport take children 'under their wing' as mentors; usually friends of the family. This can be a very healthy way for a child to gain skills and experience and can be almost like having a personal coach! Such mentoring can mean a faster progression than taking a series of courses; it can help children learn how to recognise and manage risk faster as the level of risk encountered may be higher than a course can ever provide. Parents should satisfy themselves that they have trust in their friend to look after their child in such situations. The advice in this publication will help make that assessment.

Climbing Walls

A visit to a local climbing wall is now probably the first experience most young people have of climbing.

- Many Primary Schools across Scotland now have bouldering / traversing walls in their playgrounds.
- More and more High Schools are incorporating indoor climbing walls into their facilities and many are Community Schools which allow use of facilities by anyone living in the local community.
- There are over 30 dedicated indoor climbing walls available to the public in Scotland (see the [MCofS Climbing Walls Directory](#)).
- Some schools now take children to their local indoor wall as part of the curriculum or after-school activity.
- Local Authorities are increasingly offering introductory sessions at local walls, particularly in the school holiday breaks.

Some walls (particularly those associated with sport centres) may not offer instruction for novices, but the bigger centres offer:

- A warm environment free of mountain hazards
- Hire of technical equipment (harness, rock shoes, helmet etc)
- Instruction in safe climbing techniques
- Kids Clubs (where qualified award holders will teach children the basics, including belaying)
- Fun local climbing competitions
- A great way to meet other young climbers
- Some walls offer climbing sessions outdoors



Photo: EICA, Ratho near Edinburgh
The biggest indoor climbing wall in the world

Photography by: Kevin Howett

Safety at Climbing Walls

Although indoor walls do not have the environmental hazards of outdoor crags, they are not completely safe and parents should understand that the 'MCofS Participation Statement' applies equally at a wall. There are accidents at walls, always due to human error on behalf of those climbing as it is easy to become distracted.

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

If you do not climb yourself you will not be able to take your child into a wall but you can get a climbing friend to help, although it must be stressed that they will be responsible for the supervision of any children they sign-in as guests. Be aware that accident statistics at walls shows that bouldering is the cause of most minor incidents including fractures, but poor inattentive belaying when climbing long routes can be more serious with falls to the ground being longer so parents should be satisfied that anyone supervising their children are competent.

Look on the [Indoor Climbing](#) pages of the website for more information about what to expect at a wall.

Climbing Competitions

Although climbing in general (as described above) is non-competitive, climbing competitions are now popular across the world. They can be a great way for children to meet new friends and if you are a non-climbing parent, this gives you the opportunity to ask other parents' advice. Meeting other parents in this way can provide a network for helping each other and can help in making the next steps from indoor climbing to independent outdoor trips.

Competitions involve bouldering and lead climbing. There are local, national and international competitions. In Scotland and the UK they are conducted on artificial walls (usually indoors). Most of the major climbing centres operate their own series of competitions, usually bouldering, but some arrange lead competitions.



The MCoFS operates a regional Youth Climbing Series (YCS). These are FUN events open to any child between 7yrs and 16yrs regardless of ability or experience. The Scottish YCS, delivered by our Area Youth Coordinators and host walls has two regions and three rounds. The winners of these rounds make up two Scottish Teams that compete with teams from the BMC YCS in England and Wales to find British Champions.

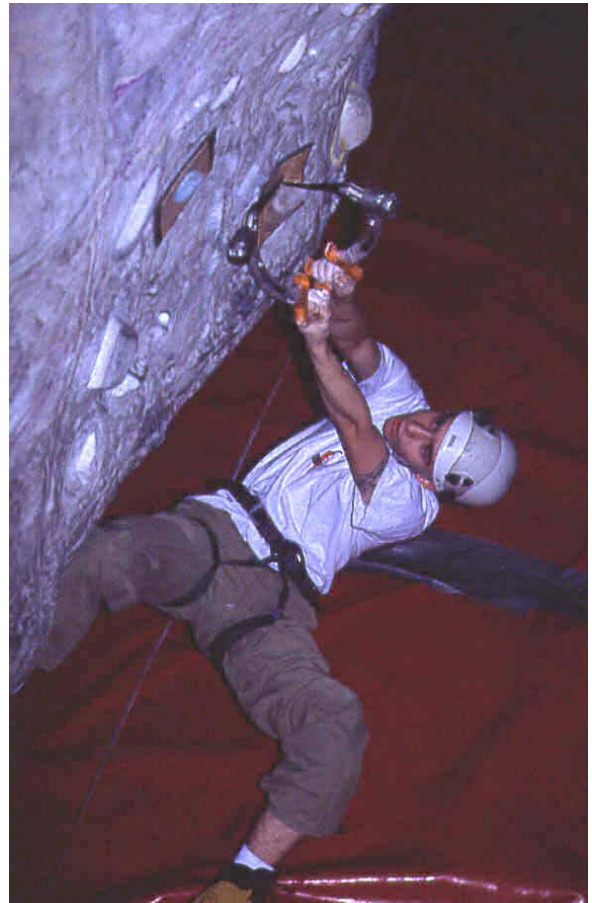


Photo: The Mixed Masters Competitions at Scottish Indoor Walls offer a great opportunity to try the techniques used in winter climbing

Photography by: Kevin Howett

In Scotland, there are annual 'Mixed Masters' dry-tooling events at some walls. These mimic mixed winter climbing and are becoming more and more popular. When held at The Ice Factor, Kinlochleven, they include real (indoor) ice! They are open to children and adults. Starting in 2008 there will be a Mixed Masters Series at several walls across Scotland.

Photo: The Scottish Youth Championships 2007

Photography by: Extreme Dream Climbing wall, Aviemore

Children...

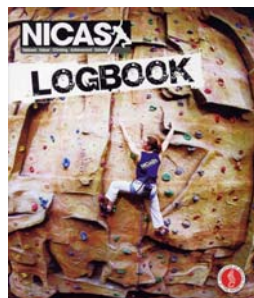
Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

There are British competitions (as Championships - one off competitions) operated by the BMC (the British Lead Climbing and British Bouldering Championships) which are used (along with 'Trials' events) to select the adult and young adult (over 15yrs) members of the British Team.

International competitions include a World Cup Series and Championships operated by the International Federation for Sport Climbing (IFSC) - a World Youth Championship is held annually and is the biggest single climbing competition in the world.

Full details of all [competitions](#) can be found on the MCoFS website

National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme (NICAS)



This is a National Scheme operated by the Association of British Climbing walls (ABC), which offers children a structured progression to gaining experience of climbing. The scheme is supported by the MCoFS. Not all walls operate the scheme as yet, but you can find out which ones do by looking on the MCoFS website.

Host walls running the scheme offer children tuition in different aspects of climbing, from complete novice, through five stages leading to an appreciation of lead climbing (sport style indoors). Children participating, fill in a log-book of their achievements throughout the scheme. The course covers technical skills, basic 'FUNdamental' movement skills as well as knowledge about the environment and climbing ethics and can be a great help to children wishing to take their climbing further. The scheme does not include climbing outdoors.

Scottish Clubs

Mountaineering, hill walking and climbing clubs in the UK are quite different to 'clubs' of other sports that parents may be familiar with through school, such as gymnastics and athletics. The latter are organised to accept children and coach them in the sport into adulthood using qualified sport coaches who also undertake child protection training.

Mountaineering, hill walking and climbing clubs are a group of individuals (usually over 18yrs) who have come together to enjoy a common pastime. They share the organisation of weekend or evening meets (with many meets being held in pubs!), including transport and accommodation (usually in club huts or bunkhouses). Some have equipment stores for member's use, some admit novices, others not. On a club meet there is often no dedicated leader and there is rarely any formal instruction. However, there can be very knowledgeable and experienced members of a club who are willing to share their knowledge with other like-minded, less experienced people, but operating on the basis that they all take responsibility for themselves.

As a result most such clubs are not geared up to admit children under 18yrs of age into membership or on events. Most Scottish clubs will only allow children to participate if their parents are members of the club. Most would expect the parents to take responsibility for their children, but they may be willing to help instruct if parents are also taking part and are always responsible for the child. Each club will be different and should be contacted individually.

If an affiliated club does admit children under 18yrs of age unaccompanied by a parent or guardian they are required to adopt the MCoFS Child Protection Policy and take note of MCoFS Guidance. The person responsible for organising / supervising the event with unaccompanied children is deemed in law as being 'A person in a position of child care' and will require a disclosure check. It is worth contacting the MCoFS to find out if any clubs are willing to accept unaccompanied children.

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

Courses and Freelance Instruction

The larger outdoor centres offer various level courses for hill walking, climbing and mountaineering. In Scotland the National Outdoor Training Centre operated by sportscotland is at Glenmore Lodge, near Aviemore, where a range of courses are available for children under 18yrs. Outward Bound centres (e.g. Loch Eil near Fort William) include elements of introductory climbing, as well as backpacking and hill walking in their multi-activity courses.

Parents can also employ the services of freelance instructors or mountain guides for single day or multi-day sessions to gain skills and experience. Not all freelance instructors cater for children, those that do, and if operating with unaccompanied children, should have disclosure and be licensed by the Adventure Activity Licensing Service (see below). A day session will cost about £120+. Parents should also ensure instructors have Professional Indemnity Insurance and it is recommended that Parents take out Personal Accident Insurance for their child. For more advice on employing an Instructor or Guide see the MCofS advice [Safety Guidance to Mountaineers Receiving Professional Instruction from Guides or Instructors](#) on the website.

Other Organisations

Scouts and Guides offer basic introductions to a whole range of outdoor activities including climbing and hill walking as part of their regular activities. Many climbers gained their first introduction here. Again, parents should satisfy themselves that 'Scout Leaders' are suitably qualified, experienced and disclosure checked and activities are licensed by the Adventure Activity Licensing Service (AALS - see below).

The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme (DofE) offers children the opportunity to be taught the basics in activities such as hill walking and climbing. Many schools operate the DofE; parents should investigate what their local school can offer and find out how the activities are organised, by who, and what experience or qualifications they have. As qualified teachers usually deliver DofE, they are already disclosure checked

Performance Coaches

Most sports have 'coaches' whose training involves gaining an understanding and knowledge of performance training techniques, human physiology, nutrition and other issues important to becoming physically better at a sport. It is important that 'coaches' operating with children have specific knowledge of children's physical development from early ages through puberty and into adulthood, and how training for physical performance must take account of these changes so as not to cause physical harm to growing bodies.

Currently there is no recognised coaching certificate specific to climbing. There are however, well known and elite climbers, many of whom have a sport science and/or PE background, who can offer private coaching, delivered at indoor walls. As a parent employing their services for your child you should gain as much information about their alternative qualifications in Sport Science, Teaching and Physical Education, as well as their personal experience / achievements and knowledge. You could ask for references from other parents whose children they have coached.

Performance Coaches operating in the UK include: The Coaching Consortium (10 top-class climbing athletes across Britain); The On-line Coach (Dave MacLeod); Extreme Dream Coaching (Scott Muir); Rock & Sun Performance Coaching (UK). Before engaging such coaches, gain information about their experience and knowledge and experience with children. They will however, inspire children from their own levels of performance and as great role-models - a pre-requisite for a good coach.

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

Licensing & Qualifications

The following information relates to the safe provision of hill walking, climbing and mountaineering activities and the standards of qualifications. Licensing is a statutory requirement in law. The MLT Awards are not required by law but they are a minimum guarantee of a person's skills and ability.

Adventure Activity Licensing

Those who provide instruction for payment to unaccompanied children must be licensed to do so by regulation in accordance with a Government Scheme introduced in 1996. The Scheme was introduced after a high profile accident involving children on a residential outdoor course led to fatalities. Responsibility for regulation lies with the Health & Safety Executive and the inspection and issue of licenses is done by the Adventure Activity Licensing Service (AALS). This applies to all providers undertaking activities outdoors. It does not apply to indoor climbing walls. A database of those holding a license is available from the AALS website. The license is your guarantee that the business or organisation has been inspected and adheres to minimum standards of safety.

Qualifications in Climbing and Mountaineering

The awards administered by the Mountain Leader Training Boards as the National Awards in the activities described in this publication are listed opposite. They indicate that an award holder has the minimum standards required to instruct or lead in a safe manner. Each award is specific to a different environment and to a specific level of activity and so as a responsible parent you should ensure that those taking charge of your child(ren) have the correct award for what they are doing

BRITISH MOUNTAIN GUIDES (BMG)

A Guide is assessed as an experienced mountaineer in the skills required for the provision of instruction and guiding services in climbing, skiing and mountaineering on rock, ice and snow in all conditions and all seasons at international standards. The award is administered by the British Association of Mountain Guides and is valid world-wide

MOUNTAIN LEADER TRAINING

See the MLTUK website for more information. The following is a brief guide:

Walking Group Leader Award

Leadership of walking groups in summer conditions in non-mountainous hilly terrain, known variously as upland, moor, bog, hill, fell or down.

Mountain Leader Award

The leadership of walking groups who wish to operate in mountainous terrain in the UK and Ireland in summer conditions.

Mountain Leader Award (Winter)

Leadership of walking groups in the hills and mountains of the UK and Ireland under winter conditions.

International Mountain Leader Award

A standard for the skills and knowledge required of those choosing to lead individuals and groups in the mountains around the world on trekking and mountaineering activities where the skills of alpinism are not required, i.e. off-glacier and permanent snow, and where the planned use of a rope is not required.

Climbing Wall Award (CWA)

Instruction in basic climbing systems based on top/bottom roping, belaying and some performance movement coaching at FUNDamental level on artificial climbing walls only.

Single Pitch Award (SPA)

Instruction in basic climbing systems based on top/bottom roping and belaying at indoor walls and specific low level easy access natural crags.

Mountain Instructor Award (MIA)

Instruction in more advanced climbing systems including lead climbing on outdoor crags and mountain cliffs (sport and trad, multi-pitch rock climbing), scrambling and other mountaineering skills in the UK and Ireland.

Mountain Instructor Certificate (MIC)

Same as for MIA but including winter climbing and winter mountaineering in the UK and Ireland.

Children...

Hill walking, climbing, Mountaineering

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland

The MCoFS is the representative body for climbers, walkers, mountaineers and ski-mountaineers in Scotland. The British Mountaineering Council represents England and Wales and the Mountaineering Council of Ireland represents Eire and Northern Ireland.

As well as representing our membership, which comprises 130+ mountaineering, climbing or walking clubs, and 2,000 individual members.

We 'work for Scotland's mountains and mountaineers' by providing a range of services, advice and information, including: representing rights to responsible access, activities relating to mountain safety, working with other mountaineering organisations and providing a range of membership benefits.

Our range of member services and benefits has been developed to cater for the differing interests of our members. Those applicable to children include:

- MCoFS Civil Liability Insurance
- Travel Insurance Schemes for climbing in the UK and abroad
- Personal Accident Insurance scheme
- A range of free or low cost publications and information leaflets about safety, the environment and Scottish mountaineering
- A free information service
- Discounts on Climber magazine and TGO
- Discounts on gear and clothing at many Scottish retailers
- The Scottish Mountaineer magazine includes children friendly news, articles and advice.

Website

The MCoFS website has been designed to give information on every aspect of walking and climbing for novices and experts, as well as the work of the MCoFS; new articles are regularly posted on the site. If you cannot find what you are looking for contact the Development Officer.



**Mountaineering
Council of Scotland**

**The Old Granary
West Mill Street
Perth PH1 5QP
Tel: 01738 493 942**

www.mcofs.org.uk



Feedback

The MCoFS welcomes feedback from children (and parents) about any aspect of our sport, our work and our activities. We welcome comments on what we can do better for children. Contact the Development Officer

Development Officer

The MCoFS employs an experience climber as Development Officer who coordinates / organises activities such as:

- The annual Scottish Youth Climbing Series (YCS) at host walls across Scotland
- REALrock sessions taking young climbers outdoors for the first time with host organisations
- Coaching sessions at host climbing walls / coaching advice
- Can give advice about any aspect of climbing, mountaineering and hill walking

Contact: kev@mountaineering-scotland.org.uk

Child Protection Officer

The MCoFS Senior Officer acts as the Child Protection Officer and can be contact for advice on the subject. Contact: davidg@mountaineering-scotland.org.uk

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

Further Information

British Mountaineering Council

0161 445 6111
www.thebmc.co.uk

Mountaineering Council of Ireland

00 353 1 625 1115
www.mountaineering.ie

UIAA (Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme)

+41 (0)31 370 1828
www.uiaa.ch

IFSC (International Federation for Sport Climbing)

www.ifsc-climbing.org

Mountain Leader Training UK

01690 720 272
www.mltuk.org

MLTS: 01479 861 248

MLTE: 01690 720 314 www.mlte.org

MLTNI: 028 4372 2158 www.mlte.org

MLTW: 01690 720 129 www.mltw.org

Association of Mountain Instructors (AMI)

01690 720 123
www.ami.org.uk

Mountain Leader Training Association (MLTA)

01690 720 129
www.mlta.co.uk

British Mountain Guides

www.bmg.org.uk

Scottish National Outdoor Training Centre

01479 861 256
www.glenmorelodge.org.uk

National Mountain Centre Plas-y-Brenin

01690 720 214
www.pyb.co.uk

Ireland's National Mountain Centre Tiglin

www.tiglin.com

Tollymore Mountain Centre Northern Ireland

028 4372 2158
www.tollymore.com

Outward Bound

www.outwardbound.org.uk/Home.htm

The Duke of Edinburgh Award

www.theaward.org/scotland/

Scouts (Scotland)

www.scouts-scotland.org.uk/

Girl Guiding (Scotland)

www.girlguidingscotland.org.uk/

Adventure Activity Licensing Service (AALS)

www.aals.org.uk/

The Association of British Climbing Walls (ABC)

www.abcclimbingwalls.co.uk

CHILDREN 1st

www.children1st.org.uk
www.childprotectioninsport.org.uk

ChildLine Scotland

www.childline.org.uk/Scotland

Websites:

www.davemacleod.com

Coaching in Climbing

www.climbingmasterclass.com

Coaching in Climbing

www.stonecountry.co.uk

Bouldering in Scotland

www.scottishclimbs.com

Climbing guides and forums

www.ukc.com

UK guides and forums

www.munromagic.com

All you need to know about Munros

www.walking.visitscotland.com

general walking in Scotland

www.harveymaps.co.uk

Range of maps of main areas of Scotland and a database of Munro and Corbett information (by I Butterfield)

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

Useful Publications

'Instructional' Books & DVD's:

Hill Walking by Steve Long
The Official handbook of the Mountain Leader and Walking Group Leader Schemes
Published by the MLTUK, £14.95, ISBN:

Rock Climbing by Libby Peter
The Official handbook of the Mountaineering Instructor and Single Pitch Award Schemes
Published by the MLTUK, £16.95, ISBN:

Winter Skills book by Andy Cunningham and Allen Fyffe
The Official handbook of the Mountain Instructor Certificate and Winter Mountain Leader schemes
Published by the MLTUK, £19.95, ISBN: 978-0-9541511-3-3.

Winter Essentials DVD
Published by the MCofS and the BMC

Alpine Essentials DVD
Published by the MCofS and the BMC

Water Hazards in the Mountains DVD
Published by the MCofS

'How To' Books & DVD's:

The Complete Guide to Climbing & Mountaineering by Pete Hill
Published by David and Charles (2008), £25, ISBN: 978-07153-2844-6

Rock Climbing (Essential Skills) by Pete Hill
Published by Cicerone (2007), £12.95, ISBN: 978-1-85284-529-2

Sport Climbing (Technical Skills) by Pete Hill
Published by Cicerone (2007), £12.95, ISBN: 978-85824-528-5

TradClimbing+ by Arian Berry and John Arran
Published by Rockfax (2006), £19.95, ISBN: 978-1-873341-91-9

SportClimbing+ by Adrian Berry and Steve McClure
Published by Rockfax (2006), £16.95, ISBN: 978-1-873341-86-5

The Complete Guide to Rope Techniques by Nigel Shepherd
Published by Francis Lincoln, £12.99, ISBN: 978-0-7112-2720-0

The Climber's Handbook by Garth Hattingh
Published by New Holland, ISBN: 1-85974-674-8

The Complete Climbing Manual by Tony Lourens
Published by New Holland, £19.99, ISBN: 1-84330-882-7

Need to Know? Knots by Geoffrey Budworth
Published by Collins, £9.99, ISBN: 0-00-719979-1

Go-Climb (+DVD) by Nigel Shepherd
Published by Dorling Kindersley, £9.99, ISBN: 1-4053-1502-4

Climb When Ready (DVD)
Published by the UIAA

The Hillwalker's Guide to Mountaineering by Terry Adby and Stuart Johnstone
Published by Cicerone (2003), £14, ISBN: 1-85284-393-4

Map and Compass, The Art of Navigation by Pete Hawkins
Published by Cicerone (2003), £12, ISBN: 1-85284-394-2

The Essential Hillwalker's Guide by Kevin Walker & Peter Steele
Published by Constable / Francis Lincoln, £??, ISBN:

The Backpacker's Handbook by Chris Townsend
Published by McGraw Hill, £11.99, ISBN: 0-07-142320-6

'E11' DVD by Hot Aches Productions
How the hardest traditional rock climb in the world was climbed at Dumbarton Rock

'On-sight' DVD by Posing Productions
The holy grail of adventure climbing ethos

'Elements' DVD by Pete Murray
A tour around Scotland's bouldering venues

Children...

Hill walking, Climbing, Mountaineering

NOTES: