



WINTER CHECK LIST

This information is for students and young people who are having their first winter adventures in the UK mountains. It may also be a reminder for more experienced mountaineers. The information applies to both walking and climbing routes.

Participation statement: Climbing, hill walking 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.

Mountain accident records show that risks are high in winter because of the weather, avalanche hazard, navigation difficulty and the technical skills for dealing with snow and ice.

Adopt a progressive approach to adventure and develop your skills incrementally by building on past experience

Preparation is crucial. Check the weather forecast. The wind speed and its direction are particularly important. Check the avalanche report. How does the detail relate to your route?

Is your route significantly further or harder than other routes which you have successfully completed? Consider doing an easier route. Research your route and identify any hazards.

Is your route realistic in the prevailing conditions? Can you get back before poor weather sets in? Poor weather might arrive earlier than expected. Is it likely to be dark?

Don't rely totally on someone else's experience or ability.

Have an alternative easier option in mind in case the weather and conditions are not as good as you expected and be prepared to turn back – it can still be a good day out!

Develop the technical skills for winter on less serious terrain first. Navigation, avalanche awareness, ice axe and crampons skills take time to acquire. Avoid over-reliance on other people.

Are you going onto steep ground? There may be people above you. Consider the consequences of snow, ice or rock being knocked down onto you, or someone falling off above you. If you're wearing a hat or balaclava underneath your helmet, check that the fit is still secure.

Essential equipment to take with you:

Boots (stiff soled); Crampons (that fit securely); Ice axe; Waterproof jacket with hood; Waterproof overtrousers; Gaiters; Spare layer (fleece top); Warm hat or balaclava; Mitts or Gloves (and spares); Compass; Map; Watch; Headtorch; Food & Drink; Emergency survival bag (polythene is OK); Whistle; First Aid Kit (small). Goggles make a huge difference in spindrift conditions - many regard them as essential.

You need sufficient clothing to be able to stop moving without getting too cold.

Your mobile phone won't stop an accident but it might make it easier to get help - so take it. Get an Emergency Procedures card from the MCoS and keep it in your rucksack.

Is your climbing partner or group as well equipped as you are? Do they share the same aspirations for the day ahead? Be wary of letting anyone turn back alone from a remote location or in difficult conditions.

Have you told someone where you are going? - and what to do if you fail to return. Be sure to inform them when you return.

The website www.mountaineering-scotland.org.uk provides information about the following:

- Mountain Safety Adviser
- Winter Essentials DVD
- Winter Skills handbook
- Winter lectures
- Avalax Avalanche card
- Emergency Procedures card
- Winter Skills courses
- Avalanche Awareness courses