

Rappel Weekend – Instructor Handout

Notes:

- All student rappels are to be done with some sort of backup.
- Instructors and assistants should be encouraging—rappelling is frightening at first!
- Ensure no hair or clothing is caught this year – stress staying clear of the rappel device gate!
- Send students in small groups to the free rappel station, but only after they are comfortable rappelling and have rappelled with an extended device and an autoblock.

Skills Learned:

- Have helped build a rappel station
- Coil and throw a rope for a rappel; know when to lower a rope instead
- Rappel directly from a belay loop with no back-up
- Rappel with an extension and appropriate back-up friction hitch
- Rappel using a Münter hitch
- Join two ropes (or two ends of one rope) and rappel on them
- Stop midway using a leg wrap, and stop a partner using a fireman's belay
- Rappel a free-hanging section of a cliff

Suggested agenda:

- 1. Have students build a SRENE toprope anchor as a group**
- 2. Explain rappelling on level ground (far away from the cliff edge)**
 - a. Describe why rappelling is necessary.
 - b. Explain and build a rappel anchor using webbing or cord and a rap ring or quick-link.
 - c. Describe the basic process for rappelling. Also explain the leg wrap, rappelling calls (yell ROPE! twice, with a pause in between), and the importance of smooth rappels (stressing that many rappel anchors are often weaker than top rope anchors).
 - d. Allow students to practice rappelling on level ground (using an anchor far from the cliff edge). This is for students to understand the mechanics before doing it vertically.
- 3. First rappel –non-extended without backup - to get a feel for rappeling**
 - a. Have students build (as a group) an appropriate rappel anchor near the cliff edge.
 - b. Explain and discuss throwing and lowering ropes, the middle mark, and end knots (including the disadvantages) The BCMC officially endorses tying end knots as the norm, not the exception. Also discuss and demonstrate pulling the ropes, stressing the hazards that occur and the importance of untying end knots.
 - c. Have each student rappel off their belay loop with no friction hitch. During the rappel, students should perform a leg wrap, and another student should practice using a fireman's belay to stop a rappeler. Students should be given a toprope backup for this section
- 4. Second rappel – extended rappel with autoblock backup**
 - a. Describe the process for rappelling with an extension and an autoblock on level ground. Demonstrate what happens when the autoblock hits the rappel device and stress that the autoblock is only secondary to control over the rappel.
 - b. Have each student rappel with an extension and an autoblock. Students should be given the option of a toprope backup, but a toprope backup is not necessary. If no toprope backup is used an instructor or assistant **must** check the setup.
- 5. Third rappel – joined rope rappel and Münter hitch rappel**
 - a. Explain using the Münter hitch instead of a rappel device and demonstrate utilizing the level ground anchor from before.
 - b. Explain joined rope rappels and the appropriate knots. The AMGA and BCMC officially endorse the flat overhand bend (aka the EDK) for joining rappel ropes.
 - c. Demonstrate the Münter hitch rappel.
 - d. Have each student join two ropes (or the ends of one rope) with a flat overhand bend, coil and throw the rope(s), and rappel using a Münter hitch.