

Bouldering

Running a self-led session

What is bouldering?

At Scout Adventures our bouldering sessions use traverse walls. A traverse wall is climbed horizontally, not vertically. The wall is about 2.5m high and about 20m long. The fun and challenge of a traverse wall is making it from one side to the other, rather than to the top. Participants are never very far off the floor as they climb horizontally across, the wall, so no ropes or harnesses are needed.




Outcomes of a bouldering session

- Develop physical coordination skills and work on strength and flexibility.
- Solve problems and plan how to overcome challenges
- Work as a team and look after each other's safety

How to use this guide

This paper guide is accompanied by a series of videos to explain how to run a session of bouldering.

As a self-led session you are responsible for supervising the young people on your session but we've produced resources to help you plan and deliver a great session. It's your choice how many of these you use. Here are the options:

Option 1 Fully Self-led	Option 2 Using the Guide	Option 3 Virtual Instructor
 <p>If you are experienced in this type of session you can choose to run a session to your own plan. Just make sure you're doing the minimum stuff on page 19 of this guide.</p>	 <p>If you have a good idea of what you're doing but want some hints and tips on what to cover then follow the structure in this guide to help you run a structured session.</p>	 <p>If this is all new to you but you can supervise a group then there are a series of videos which you can show the group at key points in the sessions. Use them alongside this guide.</p>

Scan me!

Whenever you see a QR code in this guide it will take you to a video which will explain the next part of the session. This QR code will show you the pre-session briefing for teachers/leaders!



Bouldering Equipment

To run a bouldering session you'll need a few things:



Helmets

When on the bouldering wall or spotting participants must wear a helmet.



Games Equipment

You can add challenges and games using a variety of equipment










Phone/Tablet

If you want to use the virtual instructor then you'll need a device to play the videos.

Basic Session Structure

This is a great structure for you session – this guide has a specific section which gives you more information on each of these areas.

Session section	Approx. Timing
 Part 1 – Introduction An introduction to the session and how it works	5 Minutes
 Part 2 – Warm Up Getting ready to take part, and stretching out those muscles!	10 Minutes
 Part 3 – Spotting How to protect each other while traversing	10 Minutes
 Part 4 – Helmets How to fit helmets and kit up the group	5 Minutes
 Part 5 – Traversing – first goes First attempts and getting a feel for moving on the wall	15 Minutes
 Part 6 – Better Bouldering – developing skills Tips and hints to help improve your technique.	20 Minutes
 Part 7 – Games and Challenges Development activities to continue getting better.	25 Minutes

Part 1 – Introduction

Time: Approximately 5 minutes.

Equipment: None

Use this page to help introduce the Bouldering Session to your group. You can either use the Virtual Instructor video by scanning the QR code to the right, or you can use the information below to do your own introduction.



This QR code takes you to a video introducing the session to your group

Before you start

- Collect the bouldering equipment and helmets ready for you session.
- If the bouldering wall has mats then lay these down at the base of the bouldering wall if they are not already there. Complete a visual check for any unexpected hazards.
- Make sure your group are dressed correctly, this includes:



Empty any bulky items from pockets.



Remove watches, jewellery or similar.



Ensure any medication is accessible



Make sure that everyone has closed toe footwear

Introduce the Session

Use the introduction video or give your own introduction. The suggested content is:

- Bouldering is about developing your coordination and problem solving skills.
- This is a traverse wall – the challenge is to go along and not up.
- The skills you develop will help you to be a better climber, and improve your techniques.
- Over the next 90 minutes you will take part in lots of different games to learn how to traverse safely – and then how to improve. The session will look like this:
 - Warming up
 - Learning to spot and fitting helmets
 - Traversing for the first time
 - Better bouldering – adding some technique
 - Games and Challenges on the traverse wall.



Did they understand?

It is useful to regularly check if the group understood the information they were given, it can help you avoid problems later! Try asking them:

- What is the challenge of a bouldering wall?
- What does bouldering help you to develop?

This page is blank for double sided printing

Part 2 – Warm Up

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Equipment: Games Equipment (Cones, Balls, Etc.)

Use this page to help run a Warm up activity for Bouldering. There are some important things to be aware of in a warm up, and there are also some suggested games and activities on this and the next page.

Key Information for Leaders

- Bouldering involves a lot of muscle, arm and leg work – it can become quite tiring if people are not used to doing it. A warm up helps participants get ready.
- The warm up should be designed to increase the heartrate and get muscles working, you can then follow up with some simple stretches to prevent strains.



Be observant!

While participants take part in a warm up use this as an opportunity to spot who in the group might have problems later – if individuals are stiff, or unable to bend then they might need to adapt the challenges later in the session.

Example Warm Up Game 1- Valleys and Mountain

Time: Approximately 5 minutes.

Equipment: Sports cones

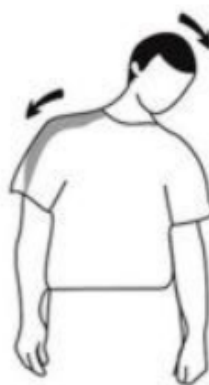
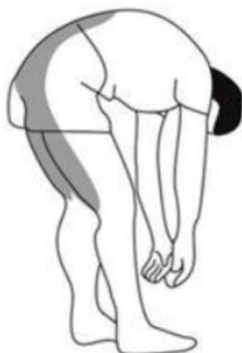
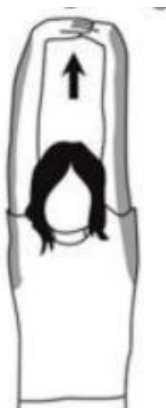


You can use any warm up game you like but this one works really well to get groups moving quickly and bending and stretching.

- Split your players into 2 teams.
- Spread the cones around the floor, making sure you have a mix of some being the right way up, and others upside down.
- Where the cone points upwards - it is a mountain, where the cone points downwards - it is a valley.
- One team must try to turn all the valleys into mountains. The other team must try to turn all the mountains into valleys.
- Give them a few minutes to run around flipping the cones. Make sure they don't move the cones or stack them together!
- When you stop, count up how many hills and how many valleys you have to find the winning team.
- You can run 2 or 3 quick rounds of this game to make sure everyone is warmed up – you could then follow up with some simple stretching.

Bouldering Warm Up - Continued

Example activity 2 - Simple stretches



Stretching safely

These simple stretches can help participants to prepare for bouldering. Only use stretching if you are comfortable supervising participants to do it safely.

Make sure you follow these simple principles if using stretching:

Warm up first. Muscles stretch more easily when warm. It can be as simple as marching in place with arms swinging for five minutes or dancing to a few songs. Moist heat packs or a warm shower are effective first steps, too.

Feel no pain. Stretch only to the point of mild tension, never to the point of pain. If a stretch hurts, stop immediately! Reset your position carefully, then try again. With time and practice, your flexibility will improve.

Breathe. Breathe comfortably while stretching, whatever you do, don't hold your breath while you are holding a stretch.

Reasons for Stretching:

- Reduce muscle tension,
- Increase your range of motion
- Avoid muscle strains
- Avoid joint strains
- Reduce the risk of back problems
- Prepare your body for strenuous exercise
- Improve circulation

Part 3 – Spotting

Time: Approximately 10 minutes.

Equipment: None

Spotting is the primary way that participants protect each other while on the bouldering wall. A spotter is a partner who moves behind the boulderer in a position ready to protect them if they fall off.

It is important that everyone can spot and know what it feels like if someone falls back.



This QR code takes you to a video explaining how to spot

The Spotting Position

- Feet shoulder width apart and turned 90° from each other.
- Knees slightly bent to act as a spring.
- Hands up at chest height with elbows bent to support a boulderer.



The Spotters job

The Spotters job is to gently guide the boulderer down off the wall if they slip– not to catch or grab them. Having a good spotter will increase the boulderer's confidence to try new and challenging moves!



Key Information for Leaders

- Good spotting is the most important tool you have to keep boulderers safe.
- Participants need to learn the spotting position and put it into practice so they are ready to use it – and so that you as a leader can see that they know how to do it.
- Either teach the group the spotting position or use the video to teach them, then play some games to reinforce the skill.

Spotting – Continued

Use these games to teach and reinforce the spotting position.

Learning the Position

Explain that Spotting (or ninja squirrels) is a stance which allows you to be very stable and protect another person if they fall. It is not designed to catch the person but to support them and guide them away from hazard while they regain their balance.

Check that everyone can get into the Spotting position. You could do this by giving them a task (walk like a chicken) then jumping into the spotting position when you shout “Hand up!”

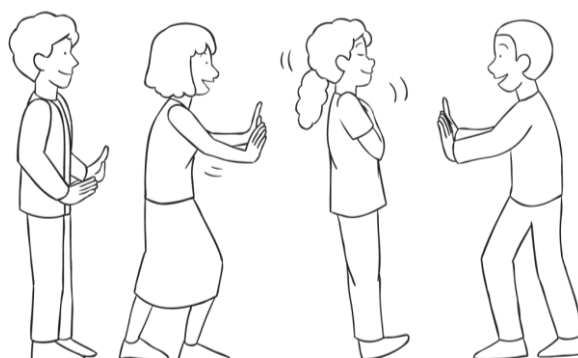


Tick Tock

This game practices the spotting technique and builds trust between groups.

Two participants take up spotting positions opposite each other about 1m apart. The third participant stands in the middle, arms crossed and feet together. They will keep their body straight and rock back and forth (like a grandfather clock).

The spotters will support and protect them gently pushing them back in the other direction.



Weeble Warble

This game develops the trust and spotting techniques from the Tick Tock game.

The group form a circles of spotters around the participant who will lean in one direction, be supported by one spotter then be pushed back in another direction so that they circle gently round the group.

Don't allow any rough pushes, if participants are being silly remind them that the game is about building trust.



Hands up!

When the group are traversing you must supervise them and make sure that the spotters are paying attention and are in the spotting position. The Make sure spotters understand that their job is to protect their partner.

Part 4 – Helmets

Time: Approximately 5 minutes.

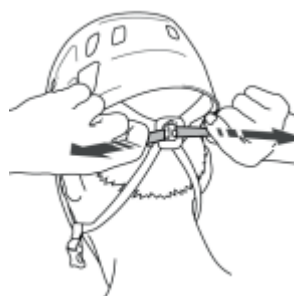
Equipment: Set of helmets

If a boulderer falls back from the wall then a helmet will protect their head from impact with the floor – this is also the job of the spotter, but with novice spotters it is good to have a backup. Using helmets allows you as the leader to identify when your participants are ready to boulder, so you can clearly see who is ready to participate.

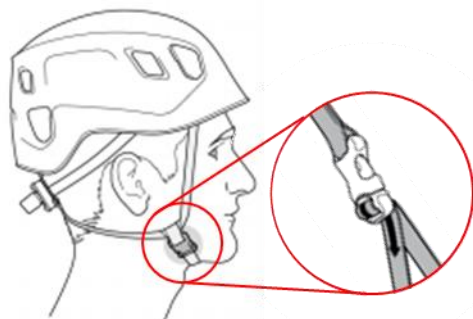


This QR code takes you to a video about fitting helmets

Fitting a helmet (Petzl Panga)



- 1 Make the helmet as big as possible by pulling on the orange tab at the back.
 - 2 Put the helmet on your head, then tighten it by pulling on the two webbing straps.
- ! Check for fit – the helmet should stay in position now if you wobble your head around – if the helmet moves it needs to be tighter.



- 3 Clip up the chin strap – it should make a “click” noise.
 - 4 Tighten it by pulling on the loose end of the webbing
- ! Check for fit – you should be able to just fit 2 fingers between the strap and chin



Helmets on!

Helmets are a great way of setting boundaries for the activity areas. If participants are on the mats (or inside the line for some walls) then they must wear a helmet – this helps you to know who's ready to participate.

This page is blank for double sided printing

Part 5 – Traversing - First Goes

Time: Approximately 15 minutes.





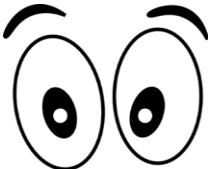

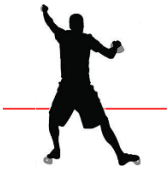

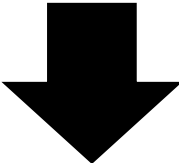
Equipment: Set of helmets


It's time for the group to explore the wall for the first time this is their opportunity to find out what it's like to boulder and find their own natural style and way of moving. It's not unusual for participants skip or step down a few times when they first start.



Instructions to the group

The challenge is to traverse across the wall without stepping down, but using any holds they like. You can start pairs one after the other from the end, or spread them out and tell them to loop back around again when they finish. Let everyone have 2 or 3 traverses.

Everyone		
		
Work in pairs – one traverses, one spots, and then swap over.	Wear a helmet in the activity areas (mats or inside the line)	Try to make it across without stepping down – but don't worry if you do – its practice!
Spotters		
		
Hands up! Be ready to protect your partner.	Watch what they are doing – if it looks tricky be ready to react.	Watch your footing, be aware of the mats.
Boulderers		
		
Keep your feet below the foot line.	Talk to your spotter – tell them if you think you're going to try a tricky move!	At the end of the wall step down carefully to the floor.

	Supervising your group - Hands up! When the group are traversing you must supervise them and make sure that the spotters are paying attention and are in the spotting position.
---	---

This page is blank for double sided printing

Part 6 – Better Bouldering

Time: Approximately 20 minutes.

Equipment: Set of helmets

It's time for the group to explore the wall for the first time this is their opportunity to find out what it's like to boulder and find their own natural style and way of moving. It's not unusual for participants skip or step down a few times when they first start.



Key Information for Leaders

- Your group will now have a feel for their natural ability and technique. Some will be great, some will need some help.
- Introduce some top tips to help them develop then give them another chance to traverse a few times putting the new techniques into practice.
- If you are confident you can demonstrate some of the techniques on the wall (you don't need to leave the floor - just show the body position. OR you can use the pictures on the card.


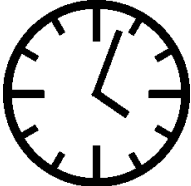

How to improve your bouldering

There are two ways to improve your bouldering

1 Mental – changing how you think about bouldering and how to move.

2 Physical – changing the technique of how you actually move.

Tips to improve your mental bouldering

	Climb with your eyes first Plan your route - try to think a few moves in advance – what position do you need to be in next?
	Slow it down Take your time, and rest between moves. Trying to go as fast as possible will make you more likely to slip, and tire you out.
	Its ok to slip Everyone slips – its how we learn to get better. Your partner is there to back you up. If you do slip try to step down, then just get back on and go again!

Better Bouldering – Continued



Use your legs

Why?

Your legs are much stronger than your arms – use them to do all the heavy lifting. Take small steps.

Teaching tip:

How long can you do a hand stand for? How long can you stand normally/on your legs for?



Use straight arms

Why?

This uses your skeleton to take the weight, not your muscles

Teaching Tip:

Is it easier to carry heavy shopping bags with bent or straight arms?



Use your toes

Why?

Position the sides of your toes (not arch) onto the hold, this lets you pivot and change direction and keeps your bum in!

Teaching tip:

If you have your foot sideways on the wall how easy is it to turn around? How easy is it to turn from your toes?



Try Crimping

Why?

If you are struggling to grip try “crimping” - by placing your thumb over your index finger.

Teaching tip:

Find a hold – see how much grip you have if you hold it like a tin of beans, now move your thumb and feel the difference.

Part 7 – Games & Challenges

Time: Approximately 25 minutes.

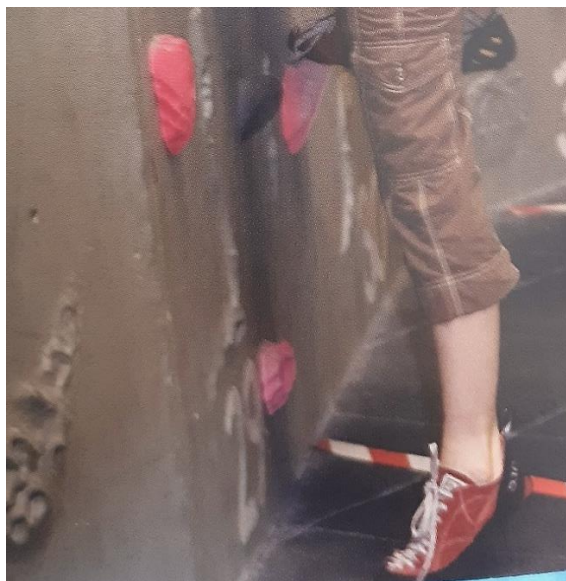
Equipment: Set of helmets, Hoops, Balls, Cones, etc.

Now that everyone has had a chance to traverse and to improve their techniques we can play a series of games to develop them further or work on specific techniques. Most of these games are adapted from "Climbing Games" by Paul Smith.



This QR code takes you to a video introducing games and challenges.

Games to make it simpler



Islands of Safety

If participants are struggling or tiring after long traverses then designate certain areas as an island which they can step down on to. You can use cones, mats paper, whatever you like – just not this guide book!

Tag me in / Lives

Each participant is given 3 "lives. If they get to a tricky bit or they get tired they can tag in their partner and swap over. Alternatively they can try a move and if it doesn't work they can rewind back to where they started and try again for the cost of one life.

Games to make it harder



One handed Traverse

As simple as it sounds! The boulderer must traverse with one of their hands behind their back. You could also try with one foot!

Ball carry

Give the climber a ball to carry (or 2) They must make their way along the whole traverse wall without dropping it.

Routes

Give the participant a certain colour of holds they are allowed to use as they traverse the wall. Alternatively use dots of masking tape to mark holds that can (or cant) be used. – But PLEASE remove the tape after!

Games and Challenges – Continued

Games to play as a group



Ball/Hoop Pass

Spread the participants along the wall, with a 2 or 3 meters between each person. The first participant is given a tennis ball – they traverse along with the tennis ball then pass it to the next person in the chain.

Crossover

Two boulderers start from opposite ends – they work towards each other then cross over in the middle – they can't go above or below each other – only around.



Cat and Mouse

One boulderer (the Mouse) begins to traverse. They have a 30 second head start. Then the second boulderer (the Cat) begins – the Mouse tries to finish the traverse wall before the Cat catches up and tags them.

Hoop relay race

Hang hoola-hoops (or cones) from a holds on the wall. Split the group into teams - one at each end of the wall. A boulderer from each team sets off from opposite ends. They retrieve the first hoop and bring it back to their team, then the next participant goes.



Twister

Spread the participants along the wall, with a 2 or 3 meters between each person. The leader then calls out moves which the participants try to make (e.g. Left Foot Blue). If they can make it they step down. The last boulderer on the wall is the winner!

The floor is lava!

Participants start lying on their backs with their legs up against the wall. When the leader shouts a trigger word they must jump up and get off the floor. The last person off the floor is eliminated/

Self-Led Bouldering – Risk Assessment

This risk assessment covers the significant hazards associated with instructing and supervising a bouldering session. As the supervising adult you may need to supplement this with specific knowledge of individuals in your group – for instance any health condition.

You will also need to dynamically risk assess as you supervise the activity. CLAP is a useful tool to help you supervise and provide dynamic risk assessments:

- C** Communicate – give your group clear simple instructions and check they have understood the key points of the information,
- L** Line of sight – set boundaries and rules to ensure that you can see your group when they take part in activities with medium rated hazards.
- A** Avoid – Look for existing hazards and anticipate developing hazards, then take action early to avoid these becoming a risk to your group.
- P** Positioning – Try to move to the place where you can be the most effective in managing risk. This will change throughout the activity.

Severity Factor & Remaining Risk Assessment

Please pay particular attention to the “Medium” residual risk rating - these are items you must take action over during your activity.

Level	Severity Description	Residual Risk Description
Low.	Minor Injury requiring no treatment, or simple first aid.	Control shave reduced the severity and/or likelihood of occurrence to minimal levels.
Medium.	Injury would require the participant/worker to stop continuing the activity/task; medical treatment is beyond the skills of a basic first aider.	Control measures have reduced severity and/or likelihood to an adequate level but hazard still requires dynamic risk assessment & conscious consideration.
High.	Injury would require expert medical attention and/or result in fatality.	Control measures are not sufficient to reduce the severity or likelihood to an acceptable level.

Standard Risk Assessment – Self-led Bouldering

Hazards	Who may be harmed?	Foreseeable Severity	Control Measures in Place	Residual Risk
Impact from falling off the bouldering wall	Participants	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spotters must be used whilst climbing is taking place. Supervising adult to monitor and reinforce this throughout the session. ○ Bouldering mats can be used as a secondary measure. ○ Helmets to be worn to protect against head impact by active participants. ○ Foot-line on wall as a visual marker of safe bouldering height, participants informed of this by supervising adult. ○ Participants instructed to climb (step) down (not jump) at the end of their turn – Supervising adult to monitor and reinforce this throughout. 	Medium
Injury caused by falling from height	Participants	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervising adult to monitored and managed behaviour. Sessions should be stopped if behaviour is a hazard to safety, ○ Activities take place at low level – foot line used to prevent climbing too high. 	Low
Injury or accidents associated with group behaviour and adventurous activities	Participants	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A ratio of 1:12 for group members to supervising adult is recommended. ○ Supervising adult member to give a briefing and follow the session structure to ensure participants stay engaged. ○ Supervising adult to complete a visual check of the area before beginning the session to identify any unexpected hazards. 	Low
Health issues including personal injury or illness	Participants	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervising adult must be aware of significant medical requirements and ensure any essential medication is accessible. ○ An adequate warm up will be carried out and repeated if necessary. ○ Activities should be selected and to avoid excessive strain. (e.g. use breaks,, swap climbers), and differentiate for physical ability (e.g. less fit climbers may have simpler challenges) 	Low
Sports injury from over stretching or similar	Participants	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A warm up is advised to prepare participants for activity. ○ Leader/Teacher to observe group for any medical difficulties. ○ Participants encouraged to challenge but not over-challenge themselves. 	Low
Unsupervised use of the activity	Anyone in vicinity	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All groups are made aware not to use activity equipment without supervision. ○ Where practical bouldering areas are locked when not in use. 	Low

Self-led Bouldering

Minimum requirements

If you choose not to follow the structure in this guide then you must as a minimum follow the requirements set out below.

Supervision and Leadership



Please note it's a self-led session – as the adult in charge you are responsible for the supervision of your group, including ensuring the safety of all participants. You should complete a risk assessment for your activity.

Supervision, Equipment

Please read the following guidelines for use during your session.

- Scout Adventures may curtail the session at any time if it is deemed unsafe.
- Ensure equipment is suitable for your needs, and you understand how to operate it correctly.
- Participants should be supervised in line with your risk assessments.
- Suggested group size for this activity is 12 or per your risk assessments.
- Please report any damage to the equipment at reception.

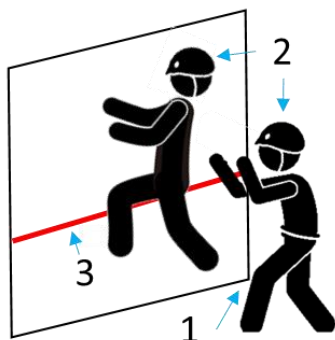
Safety Requirements

- Jewelry and any loose clothing should be removed before taking part in the activity.
- All participants must wear safety helmets when in the activity area.
- You must instruct participants in the safe use of the wall.
- All participants must have a spotter to protect them in case they fall.
- There must be close supervision by a competent adult of participants on the wall.

After your session please return equipment and this sheet to the reception or a member of staff.

Help and Assistance

If you have any questions about these guidelines please ask a member of staff before commencing the activity. Please contact the center's Duty Manager if you need assistance.



Visual Reminder of Key controls

- 1) Participants must have a spotter who is prepared to protect them if they fall.
- 2) Participants must wear helmets when they are in the activity areas.
- 3) Participants must not climb higher than the foot line. This is either a distinct line of paint, or a change in the pattern of the wall.