

Monitor of experience in rock climbing

[Experience](#)



To be able to perform at a level which is suitable for me to gain employment in the world of outdoor pursuits, one of my mid-term goals, it is vital that I am able to monitor my own progress in order to critically evaluate my levels of fitness, skill and knowledge in certain aspects of the industry. In this case rock climbing. In order for me to progress I must monitor my current levels and be able to produce a programme which will allow me to push these levels to a higher standard, motivating myself as I do so by working at a standard that allows me to remain focused and set on my chosen goal.

Prior Experience

Although I entered into outdoor education with no prior experience, as soon as I heard that I was going to be climbing as a major part of my course and would be required to do so as a large part of my chosen career I wasted no time in researching the sport. Having tutors with a large knowledge base for the subject I made notes in their lessons highlighting key words, which I later researched further in books or on the internet, a tool with which I have a wide experience of working with from my previous career and something which I have recently used to acquire a wider knowledge base in relation to climbing. I attended and continue to attend all practical sessions in order to gain first-hand experience of the sport under expert instruction and continue to learn outside of college using my own climbing equipment and going over what I have been taught.

The sport is now a hobby of mine and as such I enjoy researching it, watching videos of professional climbers and reading publications on different styles of climbing, rope work and the associated use of equipment required to make the sport safe.

I have the backing from family and friends which is very important to me as they provide me with encouragement and morale support and offer me transport to and from climbing areas acting as climbing partners when needed. My tutors are a constant source of information, available upon request and even allow me to climb with them on the indoor wall at college and outdoors on certain occasions. By observing fellow athletes I am able to look at different aspects of climbing such as body positioning and different types of holds which I would otherwise know nothing about.

Technical Knowledge and Skills

My technical knowledge is definitely at a higher level than my technical skills. I have bought enough of my own equipment to enable me to go climbing on my own and get used to using the various tools needed in the sport. I have spent time concentrating on the top of the crag ignoring everything except placing protection and creating anchor points in order to be able to climb. This subject however is huge and the amount that I know is only a small percentage of what is out there so I continue to buy and borrow books, videos and other materials demonstrating various forms of placing protection.

Through the leadership and party management section of my college course I have been able to take groups of individuals from varying backgrounds climbing something, which has helped me to develop my rope work and safety skills further, whilst on the crag or at the indoor wall. Being responsible for the well-being of others has made me look more closely at the theory behind placing protection and has allowed me to experience first-hand by working alongside a highly qualified tutor exactly what it is like to

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rig up a variety of climbing routes safely in order for people to be able to climb on them.

Different from placing protection is the actual skills needed to be able to climb. From studying the different types of hand and feet techniques and by looking at climbers body positions as they climb I have began to slowly understand certain aspects of climbing which will enable me to successfully complete a climb and conserve the most amount of energy possible when doing so. However recognising and knowing the names of the different types of techniques required for climbing is not enough and successfully putting them into practice can only be done by actually climbing and working on those techniques which I am least familiar with.

Climbing outdoors and more significantly on the bouldering wall at college has enabled me to experience these techniques and has paved the way into motivating myself into creating a training schedule for myself in order to push my climbing grades. The wall at college is overhanging, all of it! which requires a lot of arm strength and correct body positioning in order to stay off the floor. Training at first in this way was very uninspiring for me and it took a while for me to begin to be able to successfully move around on the wall. Through training with the tutors who have showed me various bouldering problems (the term used for a climbing route) and creating problems of my own I have been able to achieve that feeling of progress which I need to inspire myself and have begun training on a regular basis.

At around 8: 30am on the days that I am in college I climb on the bouldering wall completing 5 circuits with each circuit containing the same 5 problems.

The problems consist of various hand and foot holds which will help me to work a selection of muscle groups in my body as apposed to a few which is what would happen if I was to stick to the same types of holds all the time like hose which I am strongest. I train at around 8: 30am as I am least likely to be interrupted and the college is cooler than it is during the afternoon.

Although progress is being made it is slow and some days I seem to do better than others but I am committed to sticking to my schedule and continuing to learn about the theory behind the technical side of climbing. On an afternoon, after finishing my studies I go to the weights room in college where I build strength in my arms, chest and back, working various muscle groups which I believe will allow me to raise my endurance levels and allow me to climb stronger and more aggressively. More recently and I believe as a response to this training my upper body strength has improved and I am moving more fluidly on the bouldering wall and even soloing (climbing on my own) on routes I wouldn't have considered a few months ago.

I am soon entering the training phase of my Single Pitch Award (SPA) which is a big form of motivation for me to get out on the crag on weekends and concentrate on my lead climbing (climbing whilst placing leader protection in the rock as you climb) in order to go in for my assessment. Although the award only requires me to climb at the lowest grade in rock climbing I will work at a level comfortable at the time which enables me to push myself without any stressor pressure to do so.

Levels of Fitness

My fitness at the moment is at a reasonable level although I would not class myself as super fit. I smoked for 8 years before starting this course and have managed to successfully quit for just under a year with no desire to start again. I walk and climb on a weekend when possible weighting down my backpack to improve my cardiovascular and respiratory fitness. This also helps my lower body strength. I have cut down drastically on my alcohol consumption and go out maybe once a week as opposed to every other night which I was doing last year. I have noticed a vast improvement from the beginning of my course in my ability to walk up a mountain which indicates that my cardiovascular and respiratory fitness has in fact improved.

In relation to climbing finger strength is a major downfall in my climbing. As this is a part of my body which I would have never considered building on for strength my fingers and hands are relatively weak when attempting to hold my body weight. A variation of small holds of different directions on the college bouldering wall however is helping me to build on these strengths and I always go for the smallest hold possible where my strength permits.

- At rest my pulse rate is 72bpm and my breathing is 18bpm
- After exercise my pulse rate is 156bpm and my breathing is 18bpm
- After 5 mins rest my pulse rate is 84bpm and my breathing is 18bpm
- These levels are considered average for my age and gender but do not show that I am extremely fit. My weight is correct for my age, gender and height.

Diet

My diet leaves a lot to be desired. I rarely eat take-away food unless I am away from home but do eat fatty foods on occasions where time is a factor and fried food appears more convenient. I am aware of the consequences of such a diet and I am currently beginning to eat more nutritious foods such as salad based sandwiches at lunch time and oven cooked or grilled meat and cooked vegetables on the evenings.

Training Attendance and Effort

At the moment I only train when I am in college which is around 2 to 3 times a week and this is often random and non-consistent. Some days I am able to climb better than others and when I am having a bad day climbing I find it hard to motivate myself into completing my circuits. I usually climb on a morning and lift weights on an afternoon after my classes although this often depends on the type of day I'm having and if something which I deem to be more important has come up. I enjoy training but I wouldn't say that I was extremely dedicated although I have been training quite consistently the past couple of weeks and am definitely noticing a difference with my climbing and the amount of weight that I am able to lift.

My effort is often varied once again being highly dependent on the mood I am in and the type of day I am having. I wouldn't say that I have a strict training schedule, more of a 'more frequent than usual' approach to exercising.

I have made sure that I have attended all of the practical days at college and have missed maybe one session since starting there. These days have been

extremely valuable to me as I have been able to work alongside and observe much more experienced climbers than myself, something which has not only taught me elements of rock climbing but has also motivated me into exploring certain elements of the sport further helping me to improve my technical knowledge and skills.

Access to Equipment

My main source for training is the bouldering wall at college which is freely available for me to use whenever I choose. This is usually only when I am in college though as I live in Teesside and find it difficult to get in some days. I have enough of my own equipment to train outside of college and do so on weekends, weather permitting. Living in Teesside I am very close to some excellent climbing venues both outdoors on the crags dotted throughout the Cleveland Hills and Indoors at Sunderland Wall and Thornaby which has a small bouldering wall made by the same people who built Sunderland Wall. The north of England is an excellent location for climbing and other outdoor pursuits. The Lake District is only an hour or so away although I have not been there to climb as yet. I have however climbed at Brimham Rocks and Almscliffe both near Harrogate.

Other climbers that I know are kind enough to lend me any equipment which I might need for a day on the crag with the general rule that I supply my own rope and other nylon equipment which can become damaged in the event of a leader fall and should be recorded for safety reasons and to keep a check on the strength and deterioration of equipment.

Access to Effective Coaching

Being a student studying an Outdoor Education course I am able to ask for expert advice at anytime from my tutors who I have no doubt will be happy to help me. Although the climbing part of my course is now over and other outdoor activities are being concentrated on I am still able to use the bouldering wall at college as part of my training schedule and I am even able to train alongside my tutor who will guide me in the right direction or offer me information and videos or publications which will help me to progress. Although it would be encouraged for me to find out most of the information for myself in relation to setting up my own individual training schedule I am able to ask for help where needed, something which would cost me money if I were not studying Outdoor Education.

Leadership Communication Skills

Since starting the course I have been lucky enough to have the opportunity to work with various groups from schools around County Durham and the Teesside area. Working with these individuals who were aged between 14-16 years old I have been able to develop my communication skills in relation to climbing and working with groups and have experienced in different surroundings how important it is to be a good communicator both verbally and non-verbally. From first meeting a group and working with them I feel that I can be quite confrontational if the group in question is unwilling to learn or becomes disruptive when I am attempting to teach them something. I have learned that this is an inappropriate way of communicating though and I am beginning to adopt a more passive way of communicating following

working with groups of dysfunctional teenagers who do not respond well to confrontation.

I am a good listener and I speak clearly enough to be able to get my point across and in a manner which I feel allows people to understand and follow my instructions. I keep my body language as neutral as possible standing with my arms by my side or in front, never crossing them and always making eye contact with those that I am speaking or listening to. I do interact with members of a group but prefer to work more on the technical side working with equipment and setting up climbs more than attempting to motivate groups or acting as a counsellor, although I do always make myself available if someone wishes to talk to me or ask me something.

Values and Beliefs

I have strong values and beliefs in the way that I respect other people, whether these are climbing partners, groups I am working with or other climbers on the crag/wall. I follow both the written and un-written rules of climbing and respect the venues at which I climb. From being taught by working alongside other climbers who have years of experience I have been taught what is and isn't good practice and go out of my way to ensure that I follow these values in my day to day climbing.

Possible Areas for Improvement or Change

I feel that I could improve in the way that I train in general. I could put together a more consistent training schedule which would enable me to become stronger quicker and in the parts of my body which I use the most in a session. My attitude towards teaching and communicating with a group in

the first hour or so from meeting them could be improved by talking to them more and finding ways to make a session more fun either by incorporating different teaching methods or by investigating their backgrounds and finding out what their interests and attitudes are towards the session that I am taking. My training and diet could be improved by eating healthier, balanced meals. Less fried food and more vegetables.

More training and stretching would enable me to become more flexible, reaching harder holds and enabling me to improve my body positioning resulting on me staying on the wall for longer, preventing injury and ultimately improving my levels of endurance through prolonged periods of climbing. I also believe that this will improve my general rate of recovery, which could be shortened. My co-ordination skills need working on and I can do this by taking more time on a climb and watching where my next hold is. Being able to visualise a climb before I actually climb it would, I think make me more focussed and enable me to climb smoother with more fluidity. When training at college I should have more trust in my colleagues when they are belaying me, but this is difficult because of the age difference and in some cases the ratio of their weight to mine.

S. W. O. T Analysis

I have selected my major strengths and weaknesses from the profile wheel and have listed some opportunities and threats which either enable or stop me from climbing.

Strengths

Intelligence

I am intelligent enough to realise when something is dangerous allowing me to prevent injuries from occurring or if I am doing something which will benefit or hinder my climbing.

Pain Tolerance

I am not squeamish to injury or pain and as such I am able to push myself during training allowing my body to develop and advance to harder climbs.

Determination

I am a determined individual who wishes to succeed. I know what I want from my college course and my training and I am determined enough to go out and get it.

Rope work

My rope work skills are probably better than my climbing skills. I have researched further a lot of the techniques and skills taught to me in the practical sessions of my course. I have borrowed books from the library, bought books and read magazines / watched videos which have enabled me to learn more techniques in relation to my rope work.

Selecting Appropriate Equipment

I have the knowledge to select the appropriate equipment to enable me to climb safely either inside at a climbing wall or outside on a crag something which allows me to climb and to push my grades knowing that I will be protected in the event of a fall.

Weaknesses

Flexibility

My flexibility is quite restricted. Being a tall person I find it quite difficult to raise my legs up past waist height in order to reach a tricky hold. This can be improved by me however by stretching more and taking part in more aerobic exercise.

Body Positioning

Another element of my flexibility is knowing how to position my body in order to stay on an awkward hold, for example a side pull, will enable me to climb for longer, pushing my levels of endurance.

Trust

I have difficulty trusting my climbing partners because they are either inexperienced, which is the case for my partner from home who has not had much climbing experience or they are quite a bit younger than me and quite immature and easily distracted.

Endurance

I have trouble climbing long climbs or climbing for extended periods of time. This I feel can be improved by working on my flexibility which in turn will help to improve my body positioning allowing me to stay on holds longer resulting in me climbing for longer and pushing my endurance levels.

Visualisation

If I am able to visualise a climb before I climb it, something which I rarely do I would be able to improve my levels of coordination and would connect with holds more helping me to stay on the wall / crag for longer.

Opportunities

College Bouldering Wall

The college bouldering wall offers me a great opportunity to train. The wall is overhanging which helps me to build my upper body strength allowing me to climb stronger on vertical or slabby climbs. Tutors often use this wall and allow me to climb with them creating the perfect opportunity to try new routes and techniques and ultimately push my fitness levels and climbing grades.

Tutors

(See above)

North East Climbing Venues

I live in Teesside very close to the Cleveland Hills, which accommodate some of the best climbing venues in the country. Further good climbing can be found at Sunderland's and Aycliffe's indoor walls and excellent outdoor venues found in the Lake District and the North of England.

College Practical Sessions

Although the practical climbing sessions have now stopped in replacement of other activities they have proved to be a valuable source of information for me and have ultimately enabled me to go out on my own or with a climbing partner knowing that I am able to successfully and safely climb in or out of doors.

Own Equipment

Armed with the knowledge obtained from the practical sessions I have managed to gather together my own equipment, which I am now able to use

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to climb outside of college, helping me to continue to train after college, in the holidays and when I pass the course and go into my chosen career.

Threats

Transport

Not being able to drive I sometimes find it difficult to get to climbing venues, which are often in hard to reach, rural settings, something which prevents me from climbing on certain days.

Financial Situation

My financial situation is less than ideal. This can prevent me from using climbing venues where a fee is involved and prevents me from being able to pay for driving lessons which create the threat described above.

Lack of Knowledge

Although I have the basic knowledge to enable me to go out and climb on my own, there is a lot to know about rock climbing both technically and physically and this can prevent me from knowing certain 'trade secrets' which could enable me to progress at a quicker rate than I am at the present.

Bad Weather

The weather is an uncontrollable element of my training. Bad weather has prevented or hindered my progress on several occasions, preventing me from climbing outdoors. Although simply going indoors as an alternative when the weather is bad, my financial situation and lack of access to transport can often prevent this.

Injury

Although I have had no serious injuries as a result of climbing this is a constant threat which could knock my training back to the start in the occurrence of a broken leg for example which can take up to six weeks to heal. Such an injury prevents further training and produces a weakness in that area and possible psychological damage.

Summary

By using a profile wheel and selecting my weakest and strongest attributes from that wheel I have been able to identify what I am good at and what needs my attention during training. Through highlighting these attributes I will now work towards maintaining my strengths, training my weaknesses, maximising my opportunities and minimising my threats in task two of The Reflective Practitioner. I will be able to do this by identifying my short term and long term goals and analysing these using SMART Targets.