



ACIA – ICG – Indoor Climbing Guide - Syllabus

Scope – A qualified Indoor Climbing guide can guide, teach and supervise climbing activities at indoor and outdoor artificial climbing walls and towers, including top roped climbing, bouldering and auto belayed climbing. In doing so an Indoor Climbing Guide always maintains a high level of control over clients (clients do not lead climb)

The venues used must be purpose built artificial climbing structures with appropriate design, inspection and safety management systems in place.

Qualification structure - the structure to progress through the qualification is as below,

- Prerequisite personal experience
- Training course attendance - 2 days
- Consolidation period
- Assessment course – 1 day

Prerequisite personal experience

- Actively involved with indoor climbing (bouldering and roped climbing). Equivalent of at least 10 days personal climbing logged at multiple venues (at least 3), personally proficient with related climbing skills (harnessing, tying in, belaying etc)

Training course attendance

- Attendance on training course, 2-day practical training course delivered by ACIA ITA's through an ACIA approved provider. (or exemption from training granted)
- At least one day of the training course must involve a commercial climbing wall with access to Auto belays and bouldering walls.
- Max training course ratio 6 to 1 (Participants to ITA's)

Consolidation period

- Logged experience assisting / observing on at least 5 days (equivalent) of climbing activity delivery at indoor walls / artificial climbing walls.
- Logged experience, Equivalent of at least five days (min 40 routes logged) personal experience climbing across multiple venues (at least three)
- This mandatory logged experience is considered the minimum to enable prospective guides to develop the skills, knowledge and abilities, with candidates looking toward assessment ideally surpassing this

Assessment course

- Successful completion of the 1-day practical assessment course – competence with all aspects of the syllabus and all prerequisites is required.
- Successful completion of theory tasks (session plan)
- Current first aid qualification
- Maximum assessment course ratio 4 to 1 (participants to ITA's)



Syllabus

Technical Competence

- **Equipment** – Demonstrate appropriate use, care, and maintenance of a range of commonly used equipment appropriate for and found at indoor walls. Including an understanding of manufacturers recommendations and good practice. Understand the advantages and disadvantages of different options of harnesses, helmets, belay devices, ropes, slings, karabiners, ground anchors, “slow-go” pulley re-directs, Auto belay units etc.
- **Anchors and systems** – Demonstrate an ability and understanding of evaluating in-situ systems (ground anchor slings, attachments, ropes, belay devices, top re-direct systems, auto belays etc) and be able to make judgments or seek further advice from the venue as required.
Use the venue equipment and belay systems (roped climbing, auto belays, bouldering walls) within the rules and framework of the venue an organisation.
- **Belaying and attachment skills** – Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding and ability to use belay devices (manual and assisted braking) and systems, including the ability to perform checks and use appropriate communication, belay efficiently, lower safely and smoothly, hold falls.
Understand, evaluate and use different common indoor climber attachment methods (tied in, dual clip in), and be able to explain “good practice” and the context around the common and different options.
- **Personal climbing skills and knowledge** – Climb routes in a manner that is competent, assured and demonstrates technique, show a clear understanding of good practice, and knowledge around the overall safety chain involved in climbing (route selection / decision making, situational awareness).
- **Background knowledge** – demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the development of indoor climbing in Australia, its ethics, and current trends / directions

Guidance notes –

A solid base of competence and experience is essential if you are to guide and supervise others, the foundation to do this is within your own knowledge, understanding and ability. It is important that you are both familiar and capable with a range of venues, equipment and techniques, and that you can use or choose appropriate equipment and systems for different contexts and situations.

As an indoor climbing guide you will be a role model to others, and very likely an early part of their first experiences with climbing, it is there for important to provide good examples of systematic approaches that will prevent error and always maximise safety, the prerequisite and experience requirements for the course exist to ensure you can develop the required judgement, they should be considered minimums, with candidates ideally surpassing them.



Group Management and decision making

- **Planning and preparing sessions** – Prepare a “session plan” for an indoor climbing session. The “session plan” should address appropriate activities and progressions to meet the aims and objectives of the group, whilst retaining the ability to respond to client / situational needs. Show an awareness and understanding around “safety management plans” who is responsible for these and their content (identify the risks of the planned activities, control measures and specific safety / emergency procedures etc)
- **Managing the participants and group** – Provide appropriate and effective briefings, coaching and supervision to facilitate a safe productive session. Ensure the level of supervision provided is appropriate to allow you to maintain a high level of control of your group (especially essential whilst clients are belaying). This may include adapting session plans to meet participants displayed ability levels
- **Decision making and using effective safety management techniques** – demonstrate the ability to dynamically risk assess and make good decisions on route / activity selection and hazards (route style, other users, fall risks, belayer competence, etc). Use techniques appropriate to the context to manage risks during peer belaying. Ensure effective communication systems and safe practices are maintained.
Use all systems (top rope bottom belayed, bouldering, Auto belays) whilst applying effective safety management processes to ensure they work efficiently and safely.

Guidance notes –

Indoor climbing activities have inherent risk, as a climbing guide we have a duty to make decisions to keep ourselves and novices safe throughout the activity, because of this it is very important that we maintain a high level of control over the situation, and continually / dynamically risk assess to ensure we apply appropriate safety systems and back-ups at all times. The rate at which any individual will progress will differ, having a full range of activities and progressions will allow you to continue to assist them in developing specific skills in a safe manner.

Judgement and decision making around hazards, risks and control measures is essential to operating as a climbing guide, as a guide delivering practical sessions we should be dynamically risk assessing and making decisions to ensure safety, this should be done within the framework of a structured safety management system (at an overall organisational level), the safety management system we are operating within, and aims / objectives of the session should inform and influence the activities and progressions that we choose to include in our session plan. Supervising novice belayers and climbers is commonly done, but the complexity of it is often underestimated, it must be assumed that novices will make mistakes, so the back-up systems chosen (styles of belay devices, back up belay systems, attachments etc.) and the methods of supervision must match the level of competence.

Ultimately as the climbing guide you are responsible for the safety of the group and its members, and you must be certain that you have situational control and back-up systems in place to prevent serious injury or negative outcomes.



Instructional and teaching skills

- **Knowledge and demonstration of techniques** – Provide appropriate levels of knowledge for the task and clear concise demonstrations that give clients good visual images to learn from
- **Gradual build up processes, progressions, and activities** – Utilise a gradual build up process, with a logical sequence of progressions and activities, to ensure the development and consolidation of required knowledge, skills, and experience.
- **Adapt instructional style and approach to meet individual needs** – Use instructional and teaching strategies that work for the individuals you are with, make changes to the session plan based on the observable progression of the group and individuals
- **Observe and provide constructive feedback to help clients improve performance** – Observe performance and identify the areas that most need improvement, provide constructive feedback and coaching to help clients improve their ability.
- **Specific skills and techniques** – show a clear ability to teach participants to,
 1. Correctly fit Harnesses, (helmets where required) and prepare themselves for climbing activities
 2. Safely and efficiently belay top rope climbers, including safe back up belay systems
 3. Attach themselves to the climbing rope (direct Tie in and appropriate dual clip methods)
 4. Use effective buddy checks and good communication whilst climbing and descending
 5. Climb with technique to improve ability and move safely in indoor climbing environments
 6. Boulder, using good technique and sensible approaches to descending / controlling falls

Guidance notes –

Our role as an indoor climbing guide is to provide opportunities and help clients experience climbing and progress their ability and knowledge, to achieve this, you will require a range of abilities beyond your own climbing competence, your ability to communicate, inspire, and provide positive instruction will be essential in supporting their experience.

The ability to use simple instructional strategies and models (Demo, explanation, practice, correction) will be required, gaining understanding through questioning, observation, and providing feedback are skills that are outside of normal climbing that you will need to develop and refine to allow you to best meet the needs of those you work with.



Problem solving and dealing with the unusual / unexpected

- **Pre-empt and prevent** – Show in-depth understanding of the major hazards and associated risks of different activities (Bouldering, top rope climbing, Auto belay climbing) and be able to use a range of methods to manage those risks and prevent issues arising.
- **Warming up / injury avoidance** – Be aware of issues around injury through ineffective warming up and use approaches to ensure appropriate warmups are done in context of the level of effort applied.
- **Poor belaying** – Be aware of and able to use approaches to address poor belaying immediately, ensuring all slack is quickly removed from the system to reduce risk to the climber
- **Assisting** – Be able to climb to a participant on the wall (using an adjacent roped or Auto belay system) to provide support or assistance.
- **Hoisting** – Be able to raise a climber a short distance to solve issues, understand simple hoists options available with indoor climbing set ups.
- **Gaining further assistance** – Know how and when to gain further assistance and support if an issue arises that goes beyond the scope of your abilities

Guidance notes –

The systems and supervision implemented whilst delivering indoor climbing sessions should pre-empt and prevent the vast majority of issues, or they should allow a very easy and controlled solution.

Having the ability to solve issues that are unexpected or unusual is also important, the environment that we operate in (indoor climbing walls, artificial structures) is a controlled and constructed environment with relatively limited variables, where major risk should have been engineered out. This allows for the specific systems and processes practiced to be able to solve most of what could occur.

Further specific rescue systems and policies should be documented and able to be applied by the venue in support of guides and instructors delivering sessions.



The indoor climbing wall environment and etiquette

- **Access** – Understand rules and requirements and safety management processes for the wall / venues used, role model positive approaches to venue access and use
- **Etiquette and ethics** – understand climbing etiquette and ethics broadly and specifically (for indoor walls), role model positive approaches on all occasions and be capable of adjusting sessions and activities to allow for other users and user groups.

Guidance notes –

Climbing indoors and on purpose made outdoor artificial structures often involves being in high use environments with mixed user groups and motivations, because of this there will always be conflicting interests in relation to areas, demand and ethics. It is important that as guides we both understand these issues and role model responsible and positive approaches to these issues.

Indoor climbing guides need to be familiar and comfortable operating in commercial walls as well as smaller private use venues (school walls, adventure camps etc).

Involvement with state based climbing organisations and national organisations will help in maintaining an awareness of current issues and thought processes in relation to climbing broadly.