



ACIA – Indoor Climbing Instructor – Syllabus and guidance notes

Scope – A qualified Indoor climbing instructor (ICI) can instruct, teach and supervise people developing independent skills on indoor / artificial walls, including teaching lead climbing and associated skills.

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

- Prerequisite personal experience and qualification
- Training course attendance – 1 day
- Consolidation period
- Assessment course – 1 day

Prerequisite personal experience and qualification

- Current holder of ACIA ICG (Indoor Climbing Guide) or TRG or SPG Qualification, or equivalency granted
- Minimum 20 days (equivalent) logged experience operating as a climbing guide, at a variety of indoor climbing venues
- Minimum 80 routes led (and 80 routes belaying a lead climber), logged experience, at a variety of walls/ venues (at least 3)

Training course attendance

- Attendance on training course, 1 day (or exemption from training granted)
- Max training course ratio – 6 to 1 (Participants to ITA'S)

Consolidation period

- Logged experience showing at least 5 days (equivalent) teaching / supervising lead climbing (assisting / co-instructing)
- Logged experience, personal climbing, minimum 50 routes led (and 50 routes belaying and lead climber), variety of venues

Assessment course

- Successful completion of the practical assessment course, 1 day – competence with all aspects of the syllabus and all prerequisites is required, assessment to involve instruction to model clients (real climbers at appropriate skill level)
- Successful completion of theory tasks (creation of session plan for practical teaching day)
- Current first aid qualification
- Max 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 indoor climbing equipment (ropes, harnesses, helmets, belay devices etc). Including an understanding of manufacturers recommendations and good practice, advantages, and disadvantages of different options of equipment.
- **Belaying 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 in a manner appropriate to the situation. Understand and be familiar with equipment and strategies used to manage weight differences between climber and belayer.
- **Personal climbing skills and knowledge** – Lead routes in a manner that is competent, assured and demonstrates good techniques, show a clear understanding of good practice when taking leader falls, and knowledge around fall factors and the overall safety chain involved in lead climbing (route selection / decision making, closing systems, situational awareness).
- **Background knowledge** – demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the development of indoor climbing, its ethics, and current trends / directions

Guidance notes –

Personal competence and experience are essential if you are to impart knowledge to others, the foundation to provide quality instruction is within your own knowledge, understanding and ability. It is important that you are both familiar and capable with a range of equipment and techniques, and that you can advise and choose appropriate equipment and systems for different contexts and situations.

As a climbing instructor you will be a role model to others, it is therefore important to provide good examples of systematic approaches that will prevent error and always maximise safety, the prerequisite and experience requirements for the courses 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 written “session plan” for the instructional lead climbing session. The “session plan” should address appropriate activities and progressions to meet the aims and objectives 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. This may include adapting session plans to meet participants displayed ability levels (understand differences and responsibilities in relation to lead climbing and working with minors or vulnerable people)
- **Decision making and using effective safety management techniques** – demonstrate the ability to dynamically risk assess and make good decisions on route selection and hazards (route direction, other users, weight differences, backup systems etc). Use techniques appropriate to the context to manage risks during clients leads (back up belay systems, pre clipping first bolts, simulated leads). Ensure effective communication systems and safe practices are always maintained

Guidance notes –

Lead climbing has inherent risk, as an instructor you have very limited capacity to keep novices safe once they have set off “on the sharp end”, because of this it is very important that the people you are teaching fully appreciate and understand the potential risks and have been taught to evaluate and make decisions. The rate at which any individual will progress will differ, having a full range of teaching activities and progressions will allow you to continue to assist them in developing specific skills in isolation.

Developing the ability to perform complex skills requires the progression from cognitive to autonomous performance, achieving this goes beyond simple instructional technique of demonstration and imitation, having a genuine progressive, gradual build up approach, with activities that are appropriate for the individual and their demonstrated ability will be essential in helping people move toward independent decision making and performance.

Judgement and decision making around hazards, risks and control measures is essential to operation at an instructional level, as an instructor 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.



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 over time
- **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** – Analyse performance and identify the areas that most need improvement, provide constructive feedback and strategies / progressions to work towards improvement
- **Specific skills and techniques** – show a clear ability to teach participants to,
 1. Safely and efficiently belay lead climbers, including catching falls
 2. Climb with technique to lead routes safely and efficiently
 3. Safe / efficient approaches to clipping bolts whilst on lead
 4. Good practice concepts during lead falls
 5. Evaluate and select appropriate routes
 6. Use reliable buddy checks and communication
 7. Appropriate tie in options for lead climbing

Guidance notes –

Our role as a climbing instructor is to provide opportunities and help clients progress towards their goals, to achieve this, you will require a range of abilities beyond technical climbing competence, your ability to communicate, inspire, and provide positive instruction will be essential in supporting their learning.

The ability to use different instructional strategies and models (experiential learning, IDEAS, TTPP etc) to focus on differing aspects and best meet the needs of individuals will be required, gaining understanding through questioning, analysing performance, 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 teach.



The indoor climbing wall environment and etiquette

- **Access** – Understand access 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 and lead climbing), 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 instructors we both understand these issues and role model responsible and positive approaches to these issues. Indoor climbing Instructors 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.