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Author's Note

When I started rock climbing I loved it, but I wanted to progress faster. As a beginner I did whatever a newbie would do, use Google. And it did help me, but at that point there wasn't really anything out

there. I knew I had the passion to get something special going but I didn't really know where to start or what to do. That's why I've made this book. If you're a beginner trying to learn the ropes ('scuse the pun), or you've been doing it a while and just aren't really seeing any progress then this eBook's for you.

This eBook hopes to give you a general run down of how to turn from your standard OK rock climber into a climber with a solid foundation of knowledge and eventually skill. For more information, check out the articles I've written at RockClimbingCentral.com

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Rock climbing can be dangerous.

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Step 1: Find a Partner or Boulder Alone

I first went bouldering with my friend Dan who'd been practising for only about 2 months at that point. Since then, Dan boulders every now and then while I climb religiously. It's definitely more fun to climb with a partner or even a group of people. I find that having a group of people, especially people who are better than you, will not only be more FUN but more advantageous in terms of progress. You'll learn things from more advanced climbers you'll have never even thought of, at a much faster rate than if you were climbing on your own.

Now, if you can't find a friend then I would advise you go indoor bouldering alone. I would not recommend you outdoor boulder until you are competent enough to understand climbing technique and general safety. Lead climbing is obviously off the table until you've had a lesson and/or climb with a partner.

I really believe it's best to climb with someone who wants to climb and progress just as much and as fast as you. This will make you better climbers because you'll both be motivated to get better. Plus it will build solid foundations in your friendship. If you're lead climbing then you're seriously putting your life in the other persons hands. If you can find a few people like this then that's even better, because obviously your one friend might not be available every time you are.

Make sure you can trust the partner. They're doing something very important when they belay you. Are they reliable? They need to be good at communicating with you, belaying isn't just about helping you up the wall, it's also about talking and listening. If you're going to be lead climbing, try to find someone who's got the climbing ability to understand what they're doing. This doesn't mean they have to be as good as you, it just means they need to know what is and isn't safe. Plus this is always a nice thing when you're both working on a problem together and are having the same troubles rather than both of you working on different problems. And last but not least, make sure you enjoy spending time with this person. Do they lift you up or put you down? If you're climbing with this person a lot you want to be able to say that they make your climbing experience better rather than worse.

My favorite places to find new partners are a crags or climbing gyms. You could even ask your own friends, however I know that some people just aren't into climbing (weirdos) but that's fine. There's a few different websites where you can find climbing partners. You can use the search tool on rockclimbing.com and meetup.com to find climbers in your local area.



Step 2: The Gear You'll Need

Now it's time to get some gear. If you have a climbing partner you can actually buy some of the climbing gear together so it isn't as much of an expense. For example if you're bouldering outside you could split the cost of the crash pads.

It's hard to know what gear to get, so I've put together a checklist for you.

Rock Climbing Gear You Need When Bouldering

- Climbing shoes – Needed
- Chalk and Chalk bucket – Highly Recommended
- Crash pads – Needed if bouldering outside
- Hangboard – Highly Recommended if you want to progress fast

Rock Climbing Gear You Need When Lead Climbing

- Climbing shoes – Needed
- Chalk and Chalk bag – Highly Recommended
- Rope – Recommended as you progress
- Harness – Highly Recommended
- Helmet – Highly Recommended for climbing outdoors
- Belay device (such as an ATC or gri gri) – Highly Recommended
- Sling – Recommended as you progress
- 2+ Screw Carabiners – Highly Recommended
- Climbing Pack – Recommended as you progress
- Rappel Gloves – Recommended as you progress
- Hangboard – Highly Recommended if you want to progress fast

Rock Climbing Accessories

- Chalk Brush – Recommended
- Finger Tape – Recommended if you are prone to finger injuries
- Skin Repair – Recommended as you progress

Visit <https://rockclimbingcentral.com/recommended-gear/> to find my recommended gear.

I strongly advise you to buy new gear, especially when it comes to stuff like rope. If you are thinking about buying old gear then inspect it **thoroughly**.

Once you've got your gear you'll need to learn how to use it. This is where I would go to a lead climbing gym and have them coach you on it, or find a partner who knows what they're doing. Here's a great video by REI on how to belay: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFiz4cBFVro>

Step 3: Learn How to Fall

The first thing you're going to want to do is learn how to become comfortable at falling, because believe me you'll be doing a lot of that. Whether you're bouldering or you're lead climbing, falling will happen. You'll usually be higher up when lead climbing, so if you're having trouble getting over your fear of falling. You also need to learn how to fall and how not to fall. Here's an excerpt I wrote in my article: [How to Conquer Your Fear of Falling](#).

Falling off a climbing wall can be dangerous and cause injuries if you don't fall off it in a correct fashion to protect yourself. Beginners are usually the biggest culprits for this because they haven't fallen enough to get an experience of how to land and fall. When you fall there are certain things that you should do to lower the possibility of an injury. You should try to practice the method of "How to Fall Off a Climbing Wall" below many times before you attempt to conquer your fear of falling with the method mentioned above.

Push yourself away from the wall

If you're on a vertical climb or a slab, you don't want to pull yourself in when you fall because you might hit your arms, legs, body or even head onto the wall and cause yourself an injury. It's rare you hit yourself in the head, but I've definitely hit my elbow or knee from falling on the climb wall as I drop. By pushing yourself away slightly as you fall, you decrease the chance of this.

Look down

You need to know what you're going to land on to see if there's anything you can possibly avoid if you can move as you fall. This also improves the control of yourself as you fall because you are focused on landing, not on falling.

Engage your neck muscles

By tucking your chin into your chest, you engage your neck muscles which means you are less likely to receive whiplash from your fall. Again this is uncommon, but we are trying to decrease the possibility of any injury.

Bend your knees and roll back (bouldering)

When you fall you should try to land on your feet, bend your knees and elbows, retract your arms and absorb the impact with your legs. Then you should roll back and tuck the chin.

Break fall (bouldering)

When I used to do Brazilian Jiu Jitsu we used to learn a technique called a break fall, which took the impact of the fall into your arms and hands instead of your spine. To do this you need to slap your arms backwards while cupping your hands to make an air pocket. Slap your arms at around a 45 degree angle from your body as you land on your back after rolling backwards.

Falling from a horizontal overhang (bouldering)

If you're on an overhang that's almost horizontal, you should keep your hands up as you fall from the wall and use the break fall method in t

Step 4: Hangboarding

If you want to progress fast then you'll need to start using a hangboard. Additionally, if you've been rock climbing for a while now and feel like your progress is stunted then that's probably because your fingers are too weak and the climbs you're doing aren't good enough to build any strength.

Hangboarding may seem like a waste of time, but *trust me*, as long as you do the hangboard exercises correctly, you'll see a big difference within 30 days. If you've heard that being a good climber is about technique, then you've heard wrong. Finger strength is on par with technique on how important it is for rock climbing.

Many people make the same mistake when using a hangboard: they hang with their ears and their shoulders at the same level. You need to engage your shoulders. Bring your ears up above your shoulders. It'll probably feel uncomfortable at first but you have to remember that with most of the movements in climbing you will be engaging your shoulders. When hangboarding your arms should never be straight. You should bend them a little bit just to take the weight off.

I suggest you try out hangboarding on a 30 day cycle. Time how long you can hang on to each finger hold with both hands before your 30 day regime, and then do the same at the end of the 30 days. This will show you just how much your finger strength/endurance has improved.

Here's an exercise for you to try:

- Have a phone timer or stopwatch nearby.
- Place both hands into the deepest rung – four fingers in, thumbs out.
- Hang for 10 seconds.
- Rest for 10 seconds.
- Repeat this another 4 times (5 times total)
- Rest for 3-4 minutes making sure your body has fully recovered.
- Repeat this whole cycle 6-7 times in total.
- Do this either everyday or every two days for required results.
- You should be able to hang for at least 7 seconds, at most 11 seconds before you feel fatigue in your fingers.
- Once you get good enough, do this on the more shallow rung.
- If your fingers are need even more strength, add 5lb or 10lb weights to your body.

After around 10-15 days of doing this exercise DAILY you should probably be feeling a difference with your climbing. Some of the holds you might usually avoid may be easier to grab.

You can buy hangboards online and fit them at home. Otherwise most climbing gyms have them. If you'd like to see my recommendations for the [Best Hangboards then click here.](#)

Step 5: Diet and Massage Therapy

There are many foods you need to eat to make sure your diet is full of the nutrition it requires to speed up the recovery of your body after a climbing session. Your body needs omega-3 and 6 fatty acids for inflammation recovery (tuna, salmon, trout), protein for muscle recovery (chicken, fish, beans), and calcium for bone recovery (leafy greens such as broccoli, nuts, tofu, milk). You'll also need to get some vitamin-D to help the absorption of nutrients (the Sun, tuna, salmon, halibut, mushrooms, vitamin D3 supplements). Make sure you get enough sleep, this helps massively with overall health and body recovery. I would also recommend up to a teaspoon per day of turmeric and ginger for their anti-inflammatory benefits. Turmeric is also full of anti-oxidants which speed up healing. If you are overweight then eating well will also benefit your climbing experience because you'll have less weight to pull up the wall. Therefore you'll be able to send more problems!

If you feel like you've pushed yourself a bit too far in training, or you'd just like to speed up muscle and joint recovery then there are many ways to do this. A deep tissue massage is one of the best all-natural ways to increase blood flow to a specific area and therefore speed up the rate of recovery. Personally, I get a 30 minute sports massage at least once every 6 weeks. If you would rather do this at home, get yourself a trigger point foam roller (click for price on Amazon) and/or a lacrosse ball (click for price on Amazon). These two items have helped me immensely with sore muscles. You should also consider using a bag of ice wrapped in a thin cloth on the affected part of your body (or just take an ice bath if your whole body is sore). If you have any injuries it's best to use the RICE method – rest, ice, compression, elevation. Rest your injury, ice it up, compress it, then elevate the body part above your heart if possible.



Step 6: Climbing Frequency

It's bad to climb every day because it puts a lot of stress on the flexor tendons in your fingers. If you over-train your flexor tendons, it's only a matter of time before they snap. There are ways to strengthen these tendons so that you can climb more frequently – this takes time and patience to achieve and is best done by using a hangboard.

What people forget about climbing is that it's a mix of a fast twitch and slow twitch sport. It requires the endurance of slow twitch muscle fibres and the explosive power of fast twitch muscles fibres. This then means your body needs more time to heal after a hard session. Of course, as your body gets used to the exercise, the healing process will become much easier.

It's imperative to know how often you should be climbing. You don't want to cause yourself injury, however you also want to keep progressing. At some point in time you may want to improve more quickly. At this point you're going to wonder if you should increase the amount you climb per week. This is something you're going to have to judge for yourself. There are a few ways to do this.

If you aren't improving as quickly that means you're ready for an upgrade, but to do this you'll have to download information faster into your hard drive... for any non-techies out there, that means you're going to have to learn faster. To learn faster you're probably going to have to do three things: concentrate more on using the right technique, increase strength in areas that will help climbing, climb more often. The easiest thing to do out of the three is to climb more often. That is, of course, presuming you have time.

If after the last few times of climbing you haven't been feeling as sore after a usual session, that will probably mean your body is now used to your regime and can handle more climbing sessions. You've upped the endurance of your muscles, tendons, and ligaments and they're now adapted to your routine. It's time to improve those muscles by climbing one more day per week and therefore increase your climbing ability.

If you're climbing 2 days a week and you're picking up annoying injuries as a result then you may want to wait before increasing the amount you train. You're just increasing the probability you'll obtain more injuries or worsen your current ones. You won't improve much if you're constantly on the mend.

When you're climbing you should be using proper technique, without the need for the overuse of strength to get up the wall. By using proper technique, you limit the probability of injuries that you may receive and you'll also improve quicker.

You don't want to burn yourself out too hard, too fast. It's easy to burn yourself out as a beginner. A lot of beginners think it's a good idea to get back up and climb straight away after falling off half way through a climb, but this burns your forearms out due to intense gripping. Try to leave at least a minute in between climbs – whether fail or success.

If you are beginner you should be climbing 3 days a week maximum, having each day spaced out by at least another days (e.g. Climb Monday, Wednesday, Friday). This is so you have enough time to heal muscles you're not used to using. Advanced climbers should train 4-5 times a week if they want to see progression. 1-2 of the days should be slower paced. Professional climbers usually train 6-7 days a week.

Step 7: Outdoor Climbing vs Indoor Climbing

Knowing the difference between outdoor and indoor climbing is crucial when climbing outside for the first time. When climbing outdoors there's one main difference that becomes obvious quite quickly: climbing on brightly colored holds is a lot easier than finding a route on rock that isn't obvious to the climber. When you have the guiding pathway that these colored holds give you, it becomes so much simpler than climbing a route which offers no real guidance.

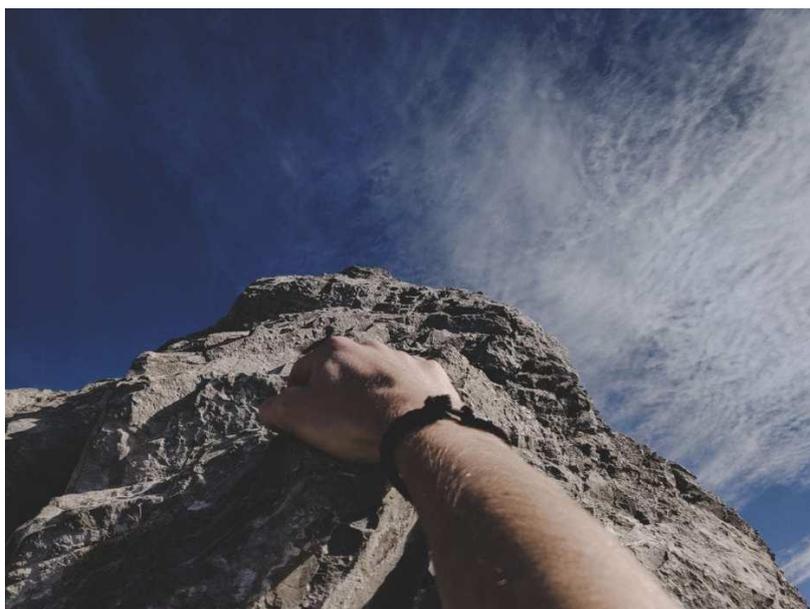
When outdoor climbing you may find that you're feeling around for holds a lot more or feeling how good a hold is than you are actually climbing. With indoor climbing this doesn't usually happen as much.

Outdoor climbing is very peaceful and usually there aren't as many people around causing fall hazards. Don't forget, when climbing on outdoor rock you're much more likely to get scratches and scrapes than you are on an artificial wall.

Outdoor rock may be covered in dirt or sand and can therefore be more slippery and confusing for the climber than holds that are used in a gym – climbing gyms don't often replicate muck and dirt particles on their climbing holds. A lot of outdoor climbing holds can also be more polished than the majority of indoor holds which increases the chance of slipping.

Outdoor climbing is also considered harder in terms of grades. For example, when bouldering, a V2 in a gym can be considered a V0 outside.

Rock types differ in their ease and feel when climbing on them. Limestone is considered one of the hardest rocks to climb on due to it usually having a more polished nature. Sandstone is considered easier, however you should not climb on sandstone within 24 hours of rain as the rock can absorb the moisture. If you climb on sandstone while it contains water then you have more chance of breaking it off the wall and therefore ruining the climb while also wasting your time trekking your way out to a crag. It has been said that granite is one of two things: a dream to climb on or very sharp causing pain, flappers and cuts on the hands.



More Tips

1. Warm up/Cool down and stretch – Do this before you climb and afterwards.
2. Join in with a group of more advanced climbers – If you want to progress faster it's better to learn from someone who's better than you.
3. Watch other people climb – If they're better than you then watch them to check out the techniques they use.
4. All climbers find their feet – If your feet aren't on the wall it's a lot harder. A lot of people neglect to use their feet in certain situations.
5. Clench your foot like a monkey on slippery holds – This seriously helps to grip onto holds that have you slipping off.
6. Don't rush – You should think about your next move before you rush into it. Bouldering outdoors or in an indoor gym has no time limit so climb slowly if you can.
7. Work on your strengths AND weaknesses – Don't just advance on types of climbs you're good at, work on your weaknesses too.
8. Don't get annoyed – If things don't go your way don't get annoyed because this will just make you climb worse.
9. Safety first – Make sure you don't endanger yourself or any others around you.
10. Use the circuit board – Using the circuit board helps to improve your climbing technical ability, endurance and strength.
11. Try bouldering outdoors – If you haven't already tried it, outdoor bouldering is a really good experience.
12. Get a good brush – A good brush for use on chalky holds is definitely needed.
13. If you buy climbing shoes, make sure they suit your needs – Buying the wrong climbing shoes is a waste of money.