



Climb On Safely (COS) for Climbing Gyms

Myth: You don't need a leader with COS training to take a unit to a climbing gym.

Myth: A climbing gym takes care of everything.

Myth: A leader with COS training just has to show up on the outing at the gym.

Fact: COS is BSA's Requirements to Unit Climbing and Rappelling, indoors or out, for Scouts of all ages.

Fact: You don't know if the gym provides everything required by BSA unless you follow **the 8 Points of COS** as your **safety checklist!**

Fact: Even as a COS trained leader, you can't accept responsibility for outing safety if you haven't been part of the outing planning and you are just showing up for the outing!

(In the following, "Scouts" = Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, or any climbing participants of any age.)

Realize that if you have 6 Scouts waiting in a line for their turn to climb, and each person takes between 5 and 10 minutes, then the 6th Scout is waiting around **30 to 60** minutes for their first turn, and everyone will wait that long for their second and subsequent turns! Is this fun? Is this safe? Can a gym supply more staff for shorter lines? Can other leaders/parents help the gym supervise the waiting Scouts, or plan other activities to keep them safe and happy?

Expect waiting time with any climbing: Think SMALL groups of Scouts per instructor; Think LOTS of supervision and alternative activities!

Applying the 8 Points of COS to climbing gym outings (in addition to normal outing planning)

Point 1- Qualified Supervision (adequate numbers of Leaders/adults, First Aid and CPR) What are the gym's emergency procedures? YOU may need to supply First Aid and CPR responders! Calling 911 doesn't replace the BSA COS **requirement** to have on-site First Aid and CPR responders for all unit climbing outings. (Note: Make sure the responders have current training in **pre-hospital care**. Being an RN or LPN or even a medical practitioner may NOT be adequate if they can NOT render First Aid and CPR.)

Point 2- Qualified Instructors In a gym, the employees are the Qualified Instructors. Will there be enough staff for the number of Scouts you are bringing to avoid long waiting times? Staff belayers are focused on the climbers, as they should be. Can your leaders and parents help supervise waiting Scouts and be available to provide extra eyes and extra activities while the Scouts wait for their turn to climb?

Point 3- Physical Fitness Any gym-specific medical forms? Share any special concerns with the gym manager/staff and ask how the staff may accommodate any limitations: Hyperactivity, medical restrictions, learning disabilities, allergies, asthma, diabetes, recent injuries or surgery, etc.

Point 4- Safe Area Does the gym have any age or ability inappropriate or off-limits areas?

Point 5- Equipment The gym WILL take care of this one! Follow their equipment rules.

Point 6- Planning A Tour Plan is required for all unit climbing outings. Any gym forms, waivers, permission slips? Does 911 work? Where is the nearest emergency medical facility? Phone number?

Point 7- Environment Help the gym staff monitor the "human environment" risk signs, such as physical (fatigued, dehydrated, hungry, injured) and emotional (over-excited, fearful, disrespectful). You know your Scouts better than the climbing gym staff does, and you know what to watch for.

Point 8- Discipline Scouts need to follow rules for safety. Go over the climbing gym's rules with Scouts and leaders, parents and adults.

Remember: Don't go climbing without a responsible, Qualified Instructor!

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