

Swedish Climbing Association – official standards for
BASIC ICE CLIMBING COURSE

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Utbildning

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Herein are described the Swedish Climbing Association's official standards for Basic Ice Climbing Course. The standards have been established by the Training Committee of the Swedish Climbing Association. The standards prescribe the minimum level that climbing clubs affiliated to the Swedish Climbing Association and others arranging ice climbing courses are encouraged to adhere to. Naturally, the courses may live up to higher, more stringent standards than those stated below. Courses at a lower level can only be described as trial activities or similar, and may not give the impression of being a complete course for beginners.

Goals

- The course should, in an inspirational manner, clearly raise the pupil's level of skills at safe and effective ice climbing in a sub alpine environment.
- The pupil should learn a safe and proper pattern of movements on ice, with a suitable balance between balance, suppleness, and strength. The pupil should also learn to utilize natural ice formations, stressing the importance of good foot work.
- The pupil should understand the work of the lead climber and acquire skills as a second.
- The pupil should understand that ice is a changing medium, particularly with respect to strength, and how this affects the risks ice climbers are subjected to.
- The goal is not that the participants should be able to lead climb after completing the course.
- The course should also encourage, and provide the basis for, further acquisition of knowledge and skills after completion of the course.

General requirements

NAME: Basic Ice Climbing Course

LENGTH: Two consecutive days. Minimum six hours effective climbing time per day.

PUPIL/INSTRUCTOR RATIO: Maximum 4 pupils per instructor. The purpose is to create a good pedagogical situation to enable the learning of proper team work in a "natural" climbing situation.

SAFETY: All participants and instructors must use a helmet during the entire course. Both the instructors' own safety as well as leading by example are the basis for this demand.

INSTRUCTORS' CERTIFICATES: All instructors must be members of the Swedish Climbing Association. At least one of the instructors must be a Swedish Climbing Association Certified Ice Climbing Instructor, regardless of whether the course is arranged by a club affiliated to the Swedish Climbing Association or by another climbing course provider.

PREREQUISITES: Pupils must have participated in a basic rock climbing course according to the standards of the Swedish Climbing Association or have acquired similar skills and knowledge elsewhere.

Guidelines

Equipment

The equipment to be presented must include all equipment necessary for ice climbing and belaying, i.e. ice axes, crampons, ice screws, Abalakov hook, and rope (diameters, types, impregnation).

Knots

The pupil must be able to tie and use the following knots: figure of eight for tying into a sit harness, clove hitch for setting up belays, double fisherman's knot for joining two ropes, and the friction knots prussik and French prussik. The characteristics of the knots and how they affect the belay chain must be discussed. After the course, the pupils must be able to coil the rope for transporting and uncoil and preparing the rope for climbing.

Belay

The pupil must be taught to set up a belay solely with ice screws. Also, the pupil must understand the importance of locating the belay to a site protected from falling ice.

Top rope anchors

The pupil must be taught to set up a top rope anchor solely with ice screws as well as using a combination of a tree and another type of anchor.

The lead climber's work

The pupil should understand the significance of all parts of the belay chain as well as the concept of fall factor. The pupil should also understand the differences between leashless climbing and climbing with leashes. Furthermore, the pupil should understand the route finding considerations for the leader: finding ice suitable for ice screws, but not subjecting the second to falling ice unnecessarily.

Ratings

The pupil should understand difficulty ratings according to the system that discriminates between WI (Water Ice) and M (Mixed).

Ethics and general information

The instructor must have a respectful attitude towards nature and towards other people encountered in climbing areas. As our sport grows, it becomes increasingly important for the instructors to cultivate good relations with e.g. land owners.

Clothing

The pupil should understand the importance of clothing suitable for the type of stop-and-go activity that ice climbing is. The student should also understand that it is possible to be subjected to running water despite freezing temperatures outdoors (ice crust), and how this affects the equipment as well as themselves.

Abseil/rappell anchors

The pupil must be shown how to construct an Abalakov hourglass anchor and why it is made single or double for abseils/rappells.

Theoretical ice knowledge

Basic knowledge must be presented of how different types of ice are formed, what stages these types go through as they age, and how the temperature of the ice affects the strength of the ice.

General information

The instructor must provide information on alternatives for further training/information. The pupil must be informed of the function of a climbing log, and should be given the opportunity to acquire such a log book. At the pupil's request, the instructor must give a written certification of the pupil's participation in the course in the log book.