STRETCHLEARN · WORKBOOK

Rock Climbing Basics — Workbook

This workbook gives you structured exercises, reference worksheets, and checklists to apply every skill from the Rock Climbing Basics course in your actual sessions. Work through each section before and after the corresponding module, and bring this document to the gym or crag as a field reference. Honest self-assessment here — not perfect scores — is what drives real progression.

Gear, Knots, and Belay Fundamentals

Verify your gear knowledge, practise knot-tying to a timed standard, and self-assess your belay technique before your first supervised top-rope session.

Exercise: Load-Path Diagram Exercise

Draw the complete load path of a top-rope system from anchor to belayer on paper. Label every piece of hardware and state the minimum kN rating for each component. Then trace the path a second time in a different colour identifying every point where a single failure would drop the climber.

• Which component in your load-path drawing has the lowest minimum kN rating, and what is that rating?

• How many single-point failures did you identify, and which one is easiest to prevent with a simple check habit?

• Draw the load-path again from memory without notes — where did you hesitate or have to guess?

Worksheet: Knot Tying Timed Log

Tie the figure-8 follow-through five times per session, recording your time and a partner inspection pass/fail. Use this sheet for four sessions. Goal: under 20 seconds with zero inspection failures by session 4.

Session date

Attempt 1 time (seconds)

Attempt 1 inspection result (pass/fail)

Attempt 2 time (seconds)

Attempt 2 inspection result (pass/fail)

Attempt 3 time (seconds)

Attempt 3 inspection result (pass/fail)

Attempt 4 time (seconds)

Attempt 4 inspection result (pass/fail)

Attempt 5 time (seconds)

Attempt 5 inspection result (pass/fail)

Notes (errors or improvements this session)

Checklist: Pre-Climb Gear Inspection Checklist

[ ] Harness waist belt double-backed and two-finger tight above hip bones
[ ] Harness leg loops double-backed and snug
[ ] Belay loop inspected 360 degrees for cuts, abrasion, and discolouration
[ ] Rope inspected end-to-end for flat spots, stiff sections, or sheath damage
[ ] Locking carabiner at belay device is locked and gate tested
[ ] Figure-8 follow-through tied, dressed, set, and partner-checked
[ ] Both tie-in points (waist and leg-loop bridge) threaded
[ ] Belay device loaded correctly and carabiner oriented with gate away from device spine
[ ] Communication cues confirmed with partner before leaving ground
[ ] Helmet on and chin strap adjusted (outdoors or where overhead hazard exists)

Exercise: Belay Simulation Drill

With a partner on the ground (not climbing), run 10 full PBUS cycles as they simulate climbing by pulling rope through your device. Your partner calls out any brake-hand release or hand-crossing errors. Switch roles and repeat.

• How many times did your brake hand leave the brake position during the 10 cycles?

• On the Under step, did your guide hand grip the brake strand fully before the Slide step? Describe what happened when it did not.

• What is one change to your stance or body position that would make your brake-hand discipline more consistent?

Footwork and Body Positioning

Track your silent-feet progress, map your flag and hip-turn usage across a full session, and identify your dominant technique gap in movement efficiency.

Exercise: Silent Feet Progression Drill Log

Choose a route two grades below your redpoint limit. Climb it three times per session with a partner counting audible foot placements. Record error counts per lap across four sessions. Target: zero audible placements per lap by session 4.

• Which section of the route generated the most foot noise — low, mid, or high — and why do you think that section caused more errors?

• Compare your error count between lap 1 and lap 3 of the same session. What changed?

• What does your foot placement routine look like when you are rushing versus when you are deliberately slow?

Worksheet: Movement Technique Observation Sheet

Film yourself or have a partner observe you on three routes of varying angle (slab, vertical, overhang). For each move type listed below, mark whether you used it correctly, attempted it incorrectly, or had no opportunity to use it.

Route name or ID

Route angle (slab / vertical / overhang)

Inside edge use: correct / attempted incorrectly / no opportunity

Hip turn applied: correct / attempted incorrectly / no opportunity

Inside flag applied: correct / attempted incorrectly / no opportunity

Outside flag applied: correct / attempted incorrectly / no opportunity

Back flag applied: correct / attempted incorrectly / no opportunity

Drop-knee applied: correct / attempted incorrectly / no opportunity

Rest stance found and used: yes / no / no opportunity

Straight-arm rest achieved: yes / no

Notes (specific move that worked or failed)

Checklist: Movement Efficiency Self-Assessment Before Each Session

- [ ] I will climb at least one route at 30% normal speed today focused on footwork
- [ ] I will look at each foothold before placing my foot, not after
- [ ] I will attempt at least one hip turn on a reach move today
- [ ] I will identify and use at least one rest stance on every route I climb
- [ ] I will consciously reduce grip intensity to approximately 70% on juggy holds
- [ ] I will practise one flag type deliberately on a route where I would normally skip it
- [ ] I will note the move where I felt my pump increase fastest and plan to address it next session

Reading Routes and Falling Safely

Build a route-reading habit using the five-point preview checklist, track your grade progression, and document your fall practice sessions to normalise falling.

Worksheet: Route Preview and Debrief Log

Before each route attempt, complete the Preview columns from the ground. After the attempt, complete the Debrief columns honestly. Over 10 attempts you will see where your reading is accurate and where you consistently misjudge.

Date

Route grade (YDS)

Preview: crux location identified (yes/no)

Preview: planned rest stance location

Preview: planned starting hand for crux

Preview: flag or hip-turn planned for crux (describe)

Attempt outcome (sent / fell at move)

Debrief: actual crux location

Debrief: did you use the planned rest stance (yes/no/changed)

Debrief: did the planned sequence match reality (yes/partially/no)

Debrief: one thing to change on next attempt

Exercise: Progressive Fall Practice Session

Over four sessions, work through the five-stage progressive fall protocol described in the course. At each session, complete 5 falls at the current stage before progressing. Do not skip a stage. Have a trusted belayer who knows the protocol. Record your subjective fear level (0–10) before and after each stage.

• What was your fear level before stage 1 and after five stage-1 falls? What changed and why?

• Describe what your arms were doing in your first fall versus your fifth fall at any given stage. Were they more relaxed?

• Was there a stage where your fear did not decrease with repetition? What do you think caused that and what would you do differently?

Checklist: Route Reading Quality Check

[ ] I spent at least 60 seconds reading the route from the ground before tying in
[ ] I identified the crux section (hardest 2–4 moves) before starting
[ ] I located at least one rest stance below the crux and planned to stop there
[ ] I mapped the starting hand for the crux first move
[ ] I identified the finish hold or anchor position from the ground
[ ] I assessed each hold for orientation (crimp, sidepull, undercling, sloper) on the crux
[ ] I adjusted my plan mid-route when the ground preview was wrong rather than forcing the original sequence
[ ] I debriefed after the attempt comparing planned versus actual sequence

Gym-to-Crag Transition and Basic Anchor Building

Prepare your outdoor gear kit, practise building both anchor configurations to a timed standard, and plan your first outdoor session using the full pre-climb inspection sequence.

Worksheet: Outdoor Gear Kit Inventory

List every item in your outdoor top-rope kit. For each item, record its current condition, age, last inspection date, and whether it meets the minimum standard described in the course. Any fail flags require action before your first outdoor session.

Item name

_____

_____

Brand and model

_____

_____

Age (years)

_____

_____

Last visual inspection date

_____

_____

Condition (excellent / acceptable / inspect closely / retire)

_____

_____

UIAA or CE certification confirmed (yes/no/n.a.)

_____

_____

Action required before outdoor use

_____

_____

Exercise: Anchor Building Timed Drill

Using a practice anchor station (two bolt simulators or a fixed structure you can clip), build a quad anchor and a sliding-X anchor on alternating rounds. Target: quad under 3 minutes, sliding-X under 2 minutes, all SERENE-A points satisfied on every build. Complete 5 rounds of each over two sessions.

• Which SERENE-A criterion was hardest to satisfy consistently and why?

_____

• What was your master point angle on your first quad build and how did it compare to your fifth build?

_____

• Describe a scenario where you would choose the sliding-X over the quad, and a scenario where you would choose the quad. What is the deciding factor?

_____

Checklist: First Outdoor Session Go / No-Go Checklist

[ ] Crag access status confirmed via Access Fund or BMC within 7 days of visit
[ ] Raptor closure dates checked for this crag and month
[ ] Route topo downloaded as PDF — not relying on mobile signal

[ ] Both bolts on target route confirmed visually from the ground (not spinning, no visible corrosion)
[ ] Descent method confirmed (lower from route bolts or walk-off) before leaving the ground
[ ] All rope, sling, and cord inspected this morning — no flat spots, cuts, or UV brittleness
[ ] All locking carabiners tested gate-closed before leaving car
[ ] Rope-tug communication system agreed with partner
[ ] Helmet on from first approach step
[ ] Crag approach taken on established trail only
[ ] Tick marks removed from holds after session with stiff brush
[ ] All waste including food scraps packed out

Exercise: Session Debrief — Three-Question Review

After each climbing session (gym or outdoor), answer the three debrief questions for each route you attempted. Keep this log for 10 sessions. Review all 10 after the final session to identify the most frequently recurring gap — that is your priority training focus.

• What did I do differently than I planned before the route?

• Where did I first feel pump or fatigue, and was it avoidable with better sequencing or rest use?

• What is the single most specific change I would make on a second attempt of this exact route?

Your Action Plan

1. Join a gym with a certified belay instructor program and complete the intro belay course within your first two weeks — do not skip in-person belay certification
2. Tie the figure-8 follow-through every day for 14 days regardless of whether you are climbing, building speed and muscle memory to under 20 seconds
3. Complete 5 progressive fall practice sessions before your first outdoor trip, following the knee-waist-chest-full-height progression exactly
4. Film yourself climbing one route per session for four sessions, reviewing the footage specifically for foot placement noise and hip-turn opportunities
5. Use the Route Preview and Debrief Log on every attempt for your first 10 outdoor routes to build the route-reading habit before it becomes optional
6. Build the quad anchor and sliding-X at a practice station until each meets SERENE-A on every attempt under 3 and 2 minutes respectively
7. Read the Mountain Project or UKClimbing crag page for your target outdoor venue and confirm access status, raptor closures, and bolt condition reports from other climbers within the past 30 days
8. Assemble and inspect your full outdoor gear kit using the inventory worksheet — flag any item over 10 years old or with visible wear for professional inspection
9. Recruit a training partner at your skill level and agree to give each other honest footwork and belay feedback at every session — social accountability doubles skill retention rate
10. After 20 sessions total, onsight (no prior knowledge, one attempt) five routes two grades below your redpoint limit and evaluate your technique quality against the movement checklist — this benchmark reveals whether you are training efficiency or just adding strength