The background features a blue sky with a large green circle on the left and a white circle on the right containing a black silhouette of a climber. A thick black rope curves across the scene, with two carabiners attached to it. The title 'CLIMBING WALL LEADING' is written in large, bold, white, sans-serif capital letters, with the rope passing through the letter 'I' in 'LEADING'.

# CLIMBING WALL LEADING

Learn to lead efficiently on climbing walls. For individuals, coaches, mums and dads.

Ian Fenton





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## BMC participation statement

Climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of this, accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

## About the author

Ian began climbing with the Scouts and his brother in 1972. They both moved on to leading in Lancashire and Yorkshire, but when transport was a problem climbed on the local GPO store wall, until the police believed they were breaking in. Climbing was something you did outdoors back then, and during the winters they ventured out winter climbing and aid climbing, and visits to Leeds University climbing wall were a way to keep fit.

Meeting various local climbers over the years lead to Ian climbing in many areas of the UK and visits to Norway, France and Spain. Redundancy at the age of twenty-seven lead to taking a degree at Ilkley College and the influence of Pete Livesey (director of the outdoor pursuits course at that college and well-known climber). He went on to completing the Mountaineering Instructor Certificate and joining the ranks of professional outdoor instructors. Work at Glenmore Lodge and Plas y Brenin as well as local LEA centres gave him a well-rounded instructing background, though he always continued climbing for fun, most often with his wife Bev. The acquisition of a small base in Orpierre, France has encouraged him to continue pushing himself on climbing walls and sport climbing.

Ian, always happy!





## Acknowledgements

The following people have had a great influence on my development as an instructor and the pleasure I have derived from working in this line: Pete Livesey, Ado Liddell, Alan Fyffe, Martin Burrows-Smith, Andy Fanshawe, John Cousins, Gill Cousins. Stuart Baggs, Colin Shuttleworth, Martin Doyle, Iain Peter (all the staff and instructors at PyB), Adge Last, Mike Rosser and of course the support of the staff at the Mountain Training England and Mountain Training UK. Thanks go to everyone I have worked with, or who has been a client. My time with the BMC with Graeme Alderson, Jon Garside, and Nick Colton and all the other staff broadened my understanding of climbing and mountaineering in the UK.

I'd like to thank the Scouts for introducing me to climbing, and the following for their input to my climbing and for making it such fun: Michael Fenton, Plum Wardle, Duncan Drake, Paul Craven, Dave Barton, Chris Forrest, Ollie Sanders, Steve Long, Nick Banks, many others I will have missed and, most importantly, my wife Bev.

This book has come about due to the support of Franco at Pesda Press, Ian Vickers, Gill Peet, Steve Mayers, Climb Rochdale and the staff there, Climbing works and their staff, West View Climbing Wall and the instructors there, Moon Clothing, Zoe Bidula and family; and Libby Peter for encouragement and initial editing. The stunning photos by Alex Messenger are the cream on the top!

# Leading and falls

This section considers the impact of a lead climber taking a fall on a climbing wall, not just to the climber, but perhaps more importantly to the belayer.

When practising falling, climbers will often end up closer to the floor than anticipated, or belayers may end higher in the air than expected. On smaller lead walls care is required when doing these exercises. A lead wall less than 10m will end up with falling lead climbers very close to the floor (or to a belayer's head) from any point on the wall.

- 28 **M belay system** ..... 
- 29 **Plan, plan, plan** ..... 
- 30 **Prepare to belay** ..... 
- 31 **One, two, lead** ..... 

- 32 **Taking a leader fall** ..... 
- 33 **How far will they fall?** ..... 
- 34 **Practise, 1,000 times**
- 35 **Check, check** ..... 



M belay system, the climber moving up, belayers taking in the rope.



The climber in position to take a short fall; the belayers will release the live rope and place both hands on the dead rope (below the belay device).

28

## M belay system



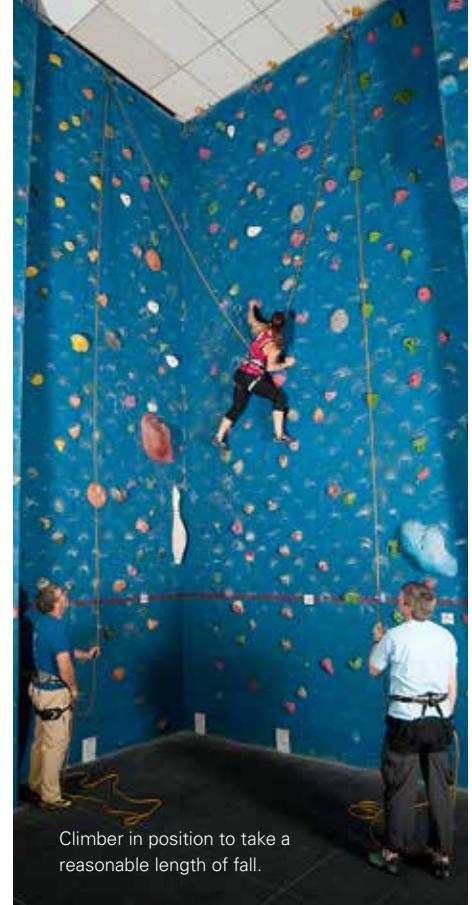
This is a good way to introduce impact of leader fall on the belayer, and a method for the lead climber to start sensing a 'leader' fall.

Set up two bottom ropes of different colours, not on adjacent climbing lines but one line further on; the climber is on a route on the middle line, but the bottom ropes are from the adjacent lines to this central climbing line. It is best if the route is easy but slightly off-vertical (overhanging), such that the climber can climb it easily, or across a corner so that the climber falls away from the wall surface. The climber ties in to both ropes, and both ropes are bottom belayed by two belayers. The ropes make an 'M' shape.

## The belayers in the M system

The climber climbs up the route, and at a set point the belayers stop taking the rope through their belay devices. The climber ascends a little further, then falls off; the belayers each receive half the impact, also the climber 'feels' safe as there are two ropes and two belayers. There is also the fail safe as there are two belayers, so should one let go of the rope for any reason there is a natural backup, and the instructor may stand within reach of one of the 'dead' ropes. When the climber takes a bigger fall, and the belayers stop taking the rope through their belay devices, they should ensure that the rope never hangs in front of the climber, so the ropes can not get under the climber's feet or legs. The belayers may pull the rope above their belay device out of the way, but not through their belay devices, ensuring they never let go of the 'dead' rope. This ensures there is no loose rope in front of the climber when they fall. The belayers should be encouraged to find a good defensive body position. This should be directly below their lowering point and ready to be lifted a little off their feet, but never letting go of the dead rope. This may involve having one foot up against the climbing wall.

This system allows for there to be differences in the stature of the climber and the belayers, as each belayer takes half the weight of the climber.

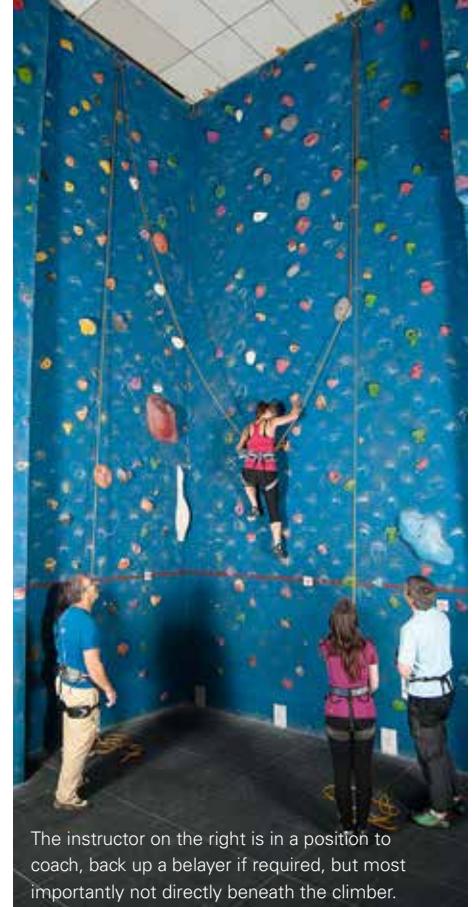




Climber in position to fall, verifying readiness of belayers. The slack rope above the belay device is there so it is removed from in front of the climber.



The belayer with belay device locked with their hand on the dead rope, the slack removed from in front of the climber with the live rope hand.



The instructor on the right is in a position to coach, back up a belayer if required, but most importantly not directly beneath the climber.



## The climber in the M system

The route should be easy for the climber, and it should be decided with the climber where the 'resting point' after the fall will be. This should not be too close to the floor, as this allows for little slippage in the system.

Equally this point should not be too high up the wall as 'vectoring' (this is when there is a cross load which is greater than the apparent load at the central point) can occur on the anchors, and also on the climber's harness.

The climber should be encouraged to fall in a good position, effectively like a 'cat', hands and feet arriving against the wall at a similar time. They should be encouraged not to 'throw' themselves backwards, just gently push away from the wall.

Falling into the 'M'.



# CLIMBING WALL LEADING

"Getting the important basic lead climbing skills correct right from the start, can mean the difference between a person enjoying the experience of lead climbing or being scared of it. Climbing Wall Leading gives you the appropriate tools to make that difference." **Paul Smith** author of CLIMBING WALL GAMES

"A little gem of a book packed with ideas and top tips – an absolute must have for anyone contemplating their first leads indoors." **Mal Creasey**

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