

Body awareness games

A person's understanding of body position and awareness of kinesphere have a direct impact on their climbing efficiency. This chapter has a range of activities and games designed to help develop the required awareness.

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As the ground gets steeper, you need to conserve as much energy as possible. By climbing with straight arms you are using your legs more to gain the height.

54

Straight-arm climbing

Climbing with arms straight is a fundamental body position. It allows the body's weight to be supported by the frame as opposed to the muscles. When clipping bolts and placing gear, it is preferable to do so with straight arms. When climbing on overhanging parts of the wall, the arms should also be kept straight as much as possible. The other major body joints (shoulders, back, hips and knees) should be flexing instead.

On the easiest, slabbiest part of the wall demonstrate climbing up with your arms straight. If a hand is touching a hold then ideally the arm must be straight, although it can sometimes be hard to do this. Novices quickly realise that the only way to climb like this is side-on to the wall, pushing with their legs and pivoting on their hand.

Novices should then progress on to more vertical and overhanging sections. As the climbing gets more difficult, it will be harder to keep the arms straight. Returning to slabby walls can therefore help to remind novices about the body positions they are trying to maintain (side-on, hips close in to the wall) and the joints which should be flexing most.

55

Balloons



Inflate a balloon and place it either inside or taped to the outside of the climber's clothing. Have the climbers experiment with the position of the balloons and observe how this additional part of their body affects their positioning on a range of climbs of differing degrees, grade or steepness. This is often a quick and easy method of getting a climber to climb with straight arms and a twisting motion on steeper ground, as they try to keep the balloon away from the wall.

What do you notice about the difference in the climber's body position?





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Getting dressed



This works in a similar way to 'one-handed catch' but offers more variety in practice. Hang a range of different items of clothing around the wall. The climbers then have to climb to those clothes and put them on or even take them off without touching the ground, making them think about stable body positions.

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Musical climbing



The climbers move to the rhythm of the music. Slower, more controlled, movements are required for slower music, while faster music means that they have to move dynamically.

Notice the straight arm and the wide base of support that the legs are forming.



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One-handed catch

By getting a climber on a wall to catch a soft ball, the climber is required to get themselves into a stable body position. They then have the option to throw the ball back to you or to another climber.

A good stable position will allow the spare hand to be used for something else. Placing gear, perhaps?

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Octopus



Identify two handholds that are level and approximately shoulder-width apart, as well as a single foothold. While holding the handholds and standing on the foothold, have the climber move their body around and try to touch as many different footholds as possible with their spare foot.

Variations: Use two footholds and one handhold. Have the climber try to touch as many different holds with their spare hand as possible. Reduce the quality/size of either the handholds, footholds or both. Does this make a difference to the number of holds a particular climber can touch?

Notice how the body position has changed but the hands have not moved at all.



60

Hovering hand

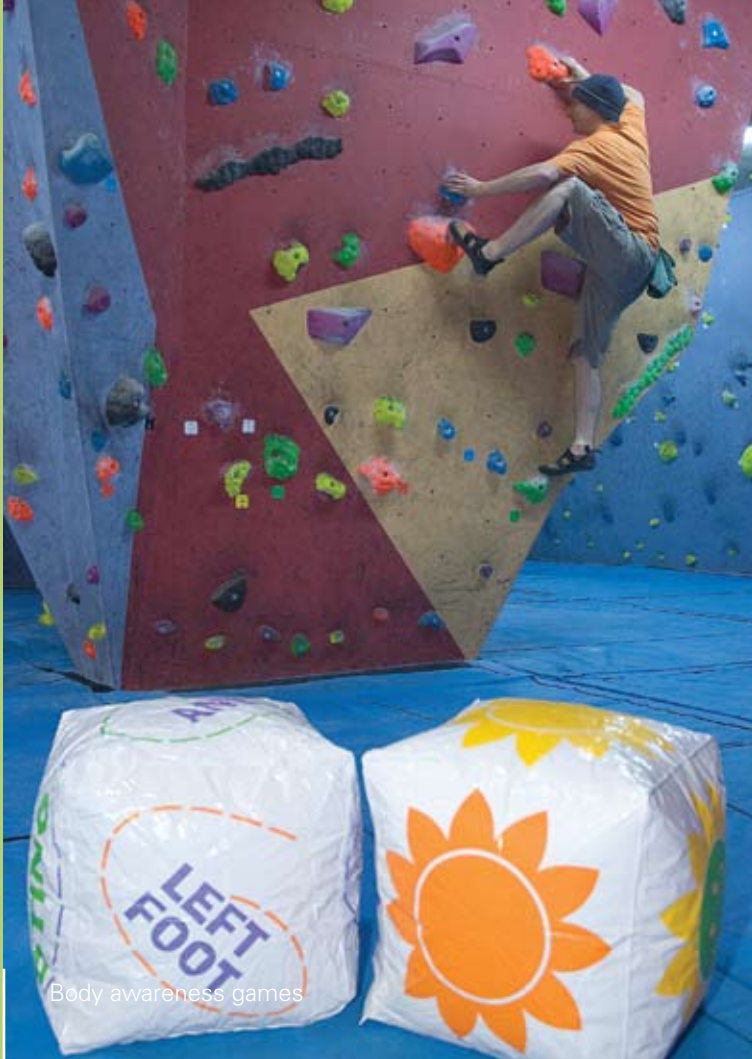
To improve the technique of some climbers, you need to slow them down. They must learn to commit completely to the position for each unique move of a route or problem.

The climber ascends a problem which is easy for them. Just before they touch each of the handholds, they must pause with their hand hovering just over it for a count of five. If the climber is unable to do this without struggling, getting out of balance or pulling too hard with the other hand, have them try it on an even easier problem.

Once they can do it on the easier ground, increase the difficulty. Focus the climber on getting that efficient body position before touching each handhold.

Count to five!





Body awareness games

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Twister zzz

The classic party game can keep a group amused for hours on a climbing wall. Have several climbers positioned on a section of wall with a range of differently coloured holds, well away from each other. Play the game as normal using a standard Twister spinner but have all the climbers moving at the same time. The winner is the climber that stays on the wall for the longest time, without falling or touching another hold.

Variation: Use a pair of dice instead. One should have a colour on each face and the other should be marked with left hand, right hand, both hands, left foot, right foot and both feet.

Climbing Twister is good for developing a stable body position.



62

Hula-hoop



Hang hula-hoops along a traverse or at different places on a boulder problem. The idea is for the climber to reach the hula-hoop and then pass their body through it, without dropping the hoop or falling off, before continuing with the problem.

By passing through a hula-hoop while traversing, balance can be practised.

63

Hip, hip hooray 🏹 🖐️ 🦶 🏠 🚶

As the ground gets steeper, going past vertical, the position of the climber's hips becomes a very important link between the hands, body and feet. Changing this position, allows the climber to transfer weight to the feet and still see them, which is important for specific, accurate placement.

The climber traverses a section of wall. When they need to move their feet, have them pull their hips away from the wall. To move their hands, they must bring their hips back in. It might be helpful to have the climber shout 'In!' or 'Out!' as they traverse.



Even although the climber is looking up in the first picture, you can see that she would have a much better view of her feet than in the second picture.

64

The controller



This works best when the climbers are in pairs, either as a climber and a spotter, or as a climber and a belayer. The pair assign each hand and foot with a number, e.g. left hand is 1, right hand is 2, etc. Once the climber is on the first holds of the problem or route, the controller must tell them which limb to move next by calling out its associated number.

Variation: Before the climber starts the problem, the controller must decide the exact sequence that the climber must use. If the climber finds it impossible to use that sequence, can the controller demonstrate?

65

Body circles



This exercise will highlight how a person can change their body position in relation to the use of set holds. Other weaknesses in their performance, particularly flexibility, are also likely to show during this activity.

Four holds are arranged as a square on the wall. Have your climber use just these four holds and have them travel in circles, starting small and gradually making them bigger. Go in both directions. If you were to place a coloured marker on them, would it really travel in a circular motion?



66

Unwrap the sweet 🧑‍🦲 zzz 🧑‍🦲 🧑‍🦲

With similar aims to the previous game, this one allows the climber to make a decision between 'locking off' on a hold or trying to establish an efficient body position that will allow them to use the other hand to complete a task.

Place wrapped sweets at various points on a climb. The climber has to climb up to these sweets, take them and unwrap them using just one hand, while still holding on.

If the wrappers are awkward, make a decision on whether or not the climber can use their teeth to assist them. Be aware that by allowing them to use their teeth, not only does the task become easier but you could be encouraging them to develop bad habits for when they are lead climbing in the future.

A sweet treat brings an improvement
in the ability to rest!