



## CLIMBING



CLIMBING GUIDEBOOK  
FOR SCHOOLS & CAMPS



# ABOUT EP

Inspired by our hometown crag, Smith Rock State Park, EP USA was established through a partnership with EP France in 1988 with a mission to make world-class climbing accessible to everyone. Since our first artificial climbing walls 40 years ago, EP has built more than 7,600 climbing walls and boulders worldwide, using state-of-the-art technology and design. Our boulders are made at our U.S. office in Bend, Oregon.

The decision to work with EP means you'll be collaborating with the most reliable wall building partner in the industry: an expert team of craftspeople and climbers- who also happen to be industry-leading consultants, designers, engineers, and project managers, who work hand-in-hand with you to supply custom-built products supported by high quality service. As a leader in the climbing industry, we take pride in delivering complete climbing wall solutions to our customers by designing your vision and building it into a reality. EP prides itself on delivering innovative, advanced climbing facilities purposefully crafted to evolve with the sport of indoor climbing.

From sparking the first sport climbing revolution with our Freeform walls, to making history as the official supplier of climbing walls at the Olympics, EP brings climbing to everyone



# WHY CLIMBING?

Climbing is well suited to youth programs because it combines movement, problem-solving, and personal challenge within a self-paced and adaptable format. Participants are encouraged to assess situations, make decisions, and adjust their approach in real time, skills that extend beyond physical activity alone.

Unlike many traditional sports, climbing allows individuals to define success in multiple ways. Progress may look like reaching a new hold, refining technique, completing part of a route, or supporting a peer. This flexibility supports participation across a wide range of abilities, confidence levels, and learning styles.

For schools and camps seeking activities that promote engagement, resilience, and collaboration, climbing offers a practical and effective option.



# FUN FACTS

- Over 1000 climbing gyms across the U.S. and Canada
- USA Climbing offers youth, collegiate, elite and Para climbing competition series which feed into International World Cup events and the Olympic games
- National development of CTE programs in outdoor recreation
- American Scholastic Climbing League offers a competition series for middle and high schools students in 11 states and growing
- Featured in Tokyo and Paris Olympics climbing continues to grow in the Olympic movement with inclusion of LA28 Paralympics and an increased medal count



# PROGRAM FOUNDATIONS

Schools and camps serve similar age groups, but their programming structures and priorities differ. Climbing adapts well to both environments when programs are designed with context in mind. Across both settings, effective climbing programs share common foundations: thoughtful supervision, appropriate environments, clear expectations, and opportunities for reflection.

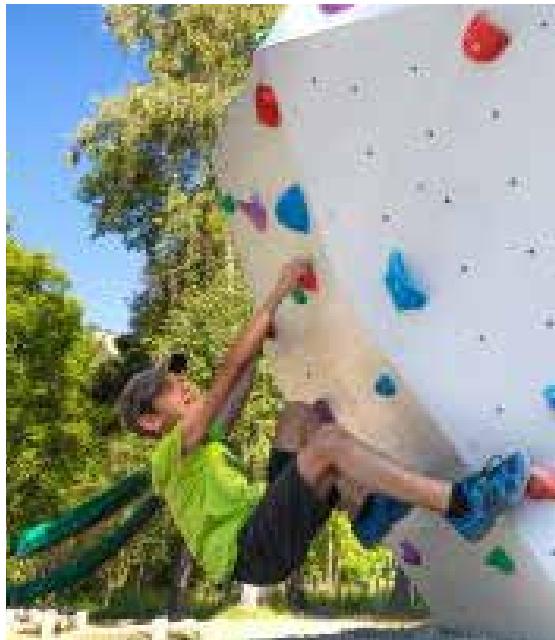
In **K-12 school settings**, climbing is commonly integrated into physical education, wellness, or enrichment programming. Emphasis is placed on physical literacy, cognitive engagement, and inclusive participation. Sessions are typically time-bound and aligned with curricular goals.



In **camp settings**, climbing often supports confidence, independence, social connection, and leadership development. Sessions may be longer and more exploratory, accommodating mixed-age participation and informal learning.

# APPLIED BENEFITS OF CLIMBING

The benefits of climbing are most clearly observed in practice.



## PHYSICAL ENGAGEMENT

develops through varied movement patterns that encourage adaptability rather than repetition

## COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT

emerges as participants evaluate routes, anticipate movement, and revise strategies when challenges arise

## SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

develops naturally as participants observe one another, offer encouragement, share ideas, and celebrate progress, both individual and collective.

## PHYSICAL BENEFITS

- Improves flexibility & balance
- Improved cardio fitness
- Full body workout
- Builds muscle strength

- Enhances memory and problem solving
- Improves communication
- Builds community and trust

# PROGRAMMING

## DESIGNING EFFECTIVE CLIMBING SESSIONS

Effective climbing sessions balance structure with choice. A consistent framework helps participants understand expectations while allowing autonomy within activities.

A typical session may include:

- A brief warm-up focused on mobility and movement awareness
- A skill focus such as balance, foot placement, or sequencing
- An activity or challenge that encourages exploration
- A short reflection to reinforce awareness and learning

This structure works well in both short class periods and longer camp activity blocks.



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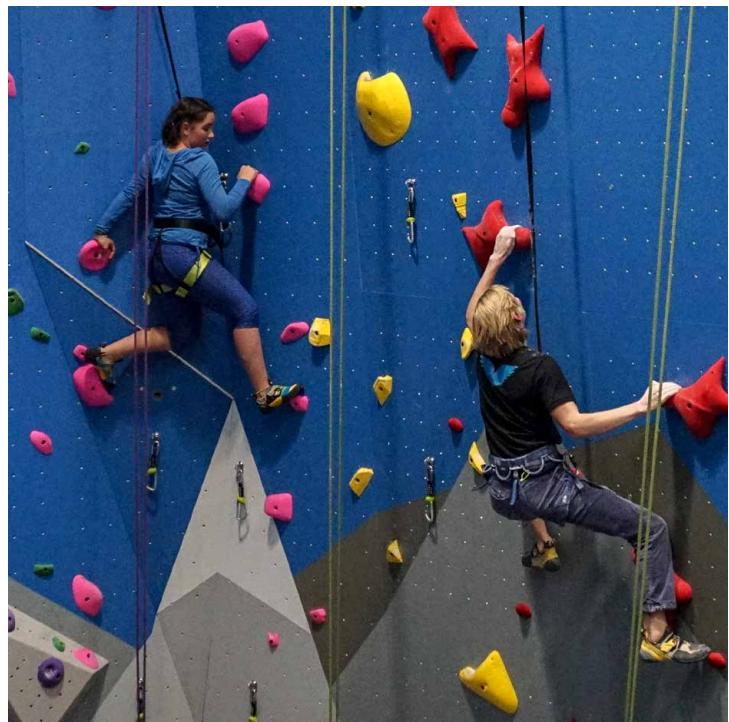
## AGE-APPROPRIATE PROGRAMMING

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Climbing programs can be adapted across age groups by adjusting wall height, movement complexity, and activity design.

- **Elementary participants** benefit from low-height traversing, games, and exploration
- **Middle school participants** respond well to problem-solving challenges and skill refinement
- **High school participants** often engage with technique development and leadership roles
- **Mixed-age groups** benefit from cooperative challenges and peer coaching

Age-appropriate design helps maintain engagement while supporting achievable challenges.



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## ACCESS, INCLUSION, AND PARTICIPATION

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Climbing environments support access by allowing participants to engage at their own level. Routes often offer multiple solutions, and progress is measured individually rather than through comparison.

- Offering both horizontal and vertical climbing options
- Encouraging self-selected challenge levels
- Emphasizing progress rather than completion
- Designing activities that support varied physical and sensory needs

Thoughtful design helps ensure climbing remains welcoming and motivating for all participants.

# GAMES & ACTIVITIES

The following activities are ready-to-use examples designed to support skill development, confidence, and teamwork. Each can be adapted for school or camp settings.

## TRAVERSING CHALLENGES

**PURPOSE:** Skill development and movement awareness

**GROUP SIZE:** Individual or small groups

Participants move laterally across the wall, focusing on balance, controlled movement, and efficient use of hands and feet.

### VARIATIONS:

- › Change direction mid-traverse to increase problem-solving demands
- › Two climbers traverse toward one another and pass without stepping down
- › Have climbers carry an object across the wall and place it at a designated finish point
- › Incorporate simple games such as tic-tac-toe or rock–paper–scissors at marked positions along the traverse

## HANG TOUGH

**PURPOSE:** Endurance and decision-making

**GROUP SIZE:** Individuals

Participants choose holds and remain on the wall while adjusting body position.

## QUIET CLIMBING

**PURPOSE:** Focus and body control

**GROUP SIZE:** Pairs or groups

One climber moves across the wall as quietly as possible while a partner listens for contact. If excessive noise occurs, the climber restarts and attempts the challenge again.

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## THE POINTING GAME

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**PURPOSE:** Communication and trust

**GROUP SIZE:** Pairs

One participant climbs while their partner provides verbal direction for hand and foot placement, emphasizing clear and precise communication.

### VARIATIONS:

- › Switch roles mid-climb
- › Restrict communication to naming holds, movement directions, or climbing techniques
- › Introduce an optional blindfolded climber for advanced groups with appropriate supervision

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## ADD-ON SEQUENCE

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**PURPOSE:** Memory, planning, and collaboration

**GROUP SIZE:** 2–3 participants

Each climber repeats an established movement sequence and adds one new move.

### VARIATIONS:

- › Allow peers to point out the sequence
- › Limit moves to specific colors or holds

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## CONSTRAINT BUILDER

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**PURPOSE:** Creative problem-solving within limits

**GROUP SIZE:** Small groups

The instructor sets one or two constraints (e.g., only open-hand grips, no matching hands, pause at every third hold). Participants must adapt their movement strategy accordingly.

### VARIATIONS:

- › Let students propose constraints
- › Rotate constraints between attempts

# PRODUCTS

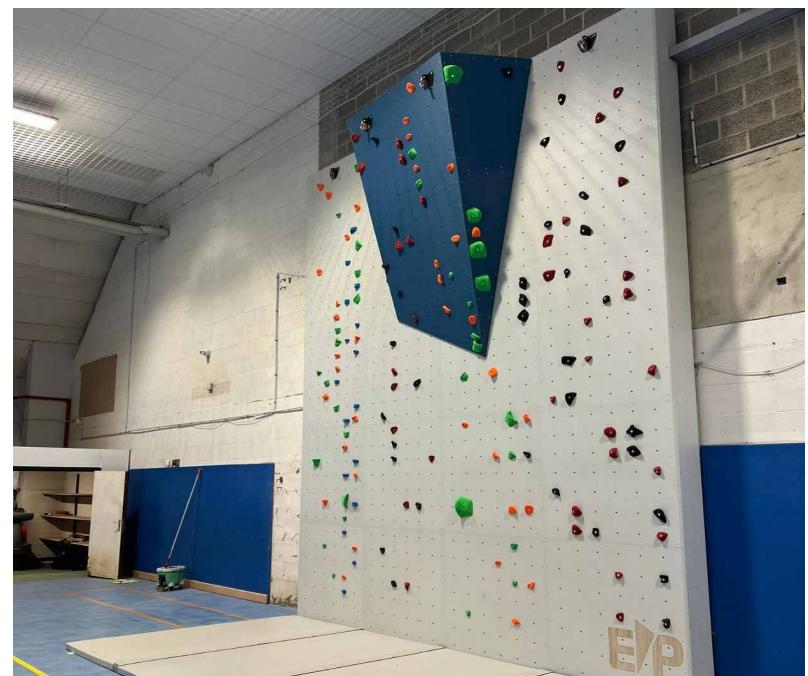
## CLIMBING SOLUTIONS FOR YOUTH

EP Climbing designs climbing environments specifically for schools and camps, with solutions selected based on available space, participant age range, supervision approach, and programming goals. Environments are configured to reflect how climbing will be used within a program and how participation may evolve over time, rather than relying on a single fixed format.

### INDOOR BOULDERING & CLIMBING WALLS

Indoor bouldering environments support structured programming that emphasizes movement exploration, progression, and problem-solving. These walls accommodate repeated use and flexible session design, allowing participants to engage at varying levels of challenge within both school and camp settings.

Essential Walls provide a flexible, purpose-built foundation for climbing programs in gymnasiums, multipurpose spaces, and recreation facilities. These modular systems can support horizontal traversing, vertical climbing, and a range of low-height and upright configurations within a single installation. Their adaptability makes them well suited for introductory programs, group-based movement, and regular daily use across a wide range of age groups.



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## OUTDOOR SOLUTIONS

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Outdoor climbing boulders are designed for year-round engagement in exterior environments, particularly in camp settings or shared outdoor recreation spaces. These environments support informal play, social interaction, and participation across mixed-age groups.



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## SELECTING THE RIGHT CLIMBING ENVIRONMENT

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Selecting an appropriate climbing environment begins with understanding how climbing will function within a program rather than focusing on a single format or feature. Effective decisions consider space constraints, participant demographics, supervision models, and long-term program goals.

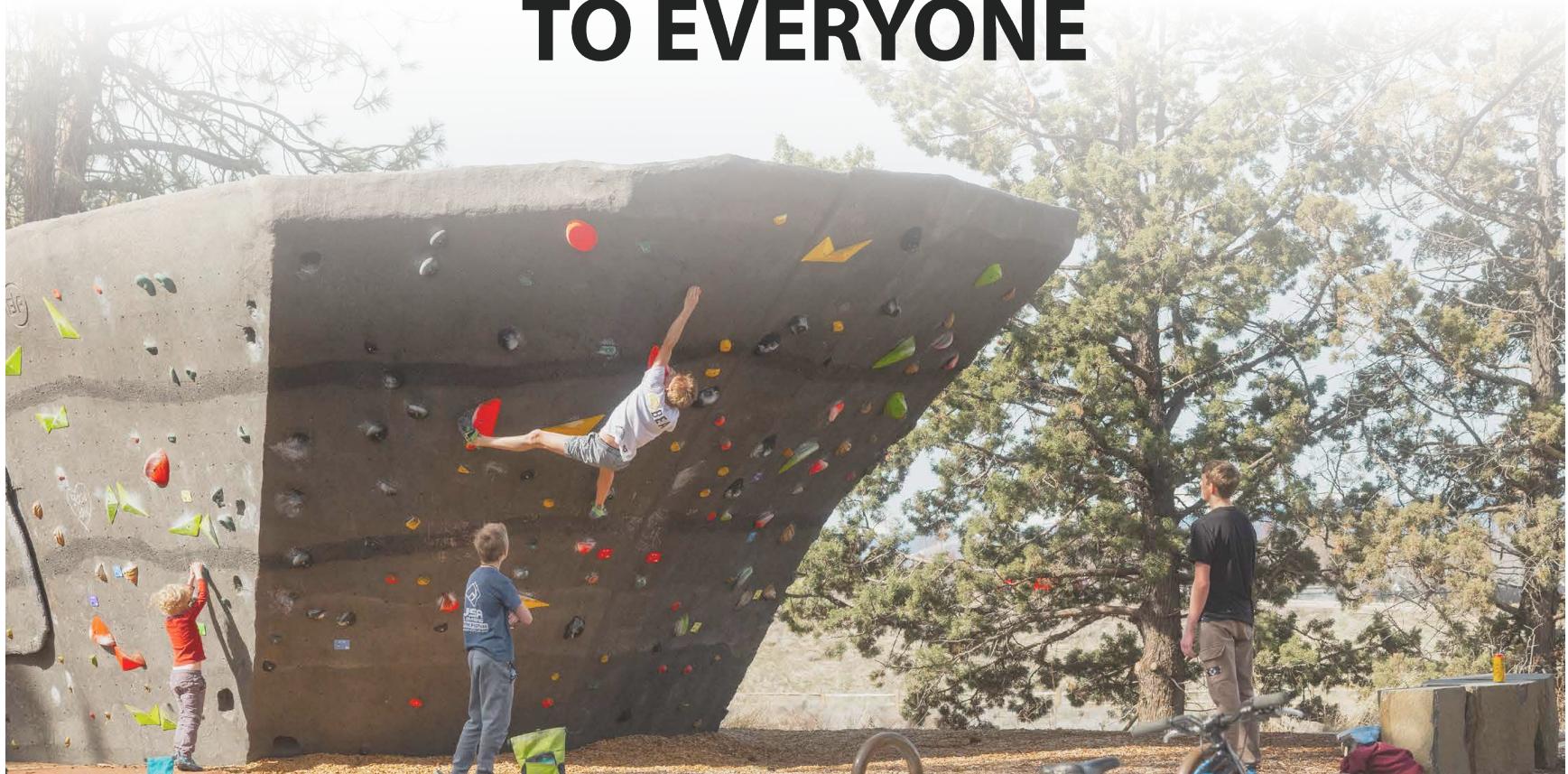
Key considerations include:

- Available space and layout
- Participant age range and experience
- Supervision and staffing approach
- Programming goals and use patterns
- Future growth and adaptability

Thoughtful alignment between program needs and climbing environment helps ensure that climbing is integrated as a functional, lasting component of a school or camp rather than a standalone feature.



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**TO EVERYONE**



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INDOOR  
CLIMBING  
AWARD  
SCHEMES



For more information, contact us at  
541-388-5463 or [hello@epclimbing.com](mailto:hello@epclimbing.com)