

Instructor Handout - Rappel Weekend

Notes:

- All student rappels are to be done with a fireman's belay backup.
- Instructors and assistants should be encouraging—rappelling is frightening at first!
- Ensure no hair or clothing is caught – stress staying clear of the rappel device gate!
- **Send students to the free rappel station, but only after they are comfortable rappelling and have rappelled with an extended device and an autoblock.**
- Program Rules are on the back of this sheet or in a separate handout.

Agenda:

- 1. Explain rappelling on level ground (far away from the cliff edge)**
 - a. Describe why rappelling is necessary.
 - b. Describe the basic process for rappelling.
 - i. Explain and build a rappel anchor using webbing or cord and a rap ring or quick-link.
 - ii. Describe the process for rappelling with an extension and an autoblock.
 - iii. Demonstrate what happens when the autoblock hits the rappel device and stress that the autoblock is only a backup for the rappel.
 - iv. Explain and demonstrate the leg wrap and fireman's belay.
 - c. Explain the importance of smooth rappels (rappel anchors are often weaker).
 - d. Allow students to practice rappelling on level ground to feel the mechanics.
- 2. Have students build a SERENE anchor appropriate for rappelling as a group**
 - a. Stress the need to protect the rope over the edge (use the gear bag for this).
- 3. First rappel – extended rappel with autoblock backup**
 - a. Explain and discuss throwing, lowering, or saddlebagging the ropes; the middle mark; and end knots (including the disadvantages). End knots are the norm, not the exception.
 - b. Discuss and demonstrate pulling the ropes, stressing the hazards that occur and the importance of untying end knots.
 - c. Explain rappelling calls (“ROPE!” twice, “ON RAPPEL!”, “OFF RAPPEL!”).
 - d. Have each student rappel with an extension and an autoblock. An instructor or assistant must check the setup and a fireman's belay must be available.
 - e. During the rappel, students should perform a leg wrap, and another student should practice using a fireman's belay to stop a rappeler.
- 4. Second rappel – joined rope and Münter hitch direct on the belay loop rappel**
 - a. Explain rappelling direct off the belay loop if an extension is unavailable.
 - b. Explain using the Münter hitch instead of a rappel device and demonstrate utilizing the level ground anchor from before.
 - c. Explain joined rope rappels and the appropriate knots. The flat overhand bend should be the default.
 - d. Have each student join two ropes (or the ends of one rope) with a flat overhand bend, coil and throw the rope(s), and rappel using a Münter hitch with a fireman's backup.
- 5. Other skills (can be done by an assistant with students not belaying/climbing)**
 - a. Each student ties/demonstrates today's knots