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| **Climbing Term** | **Definition** |
| Abseil | To descend down a rope using an abseil device and harness, referred to by the Americans as rappelling. |
| Absolute Onsite | This is an onsite without pre-placed draws, and no sign of chalk or tick marks to show the grips or footholds. See onsight. |
| Adrenalized | When a climber or boulderer is all hyped up, or too fearful to climb properly. |
| Ape Index | This is the ratio of your arm span to your height. A positive ape index means your total arm length is greater than your height, which is good for climbing. |
| Arête | A ridge or protruding feature on a cliff with two faces angled away from each other. |
| Ascent | A completed attempt on a climb, often worthy of bragging about on a Facebook or www.8a.nu profile. |
| Back Clip | This is when a lead climber incorrectly clips a quickdraw from the rock outwards, instead of from him towards the rock. |
| Belay | A safety method used to secure a climber’s rope with a friction device to catch the climber, should he or she fall. |
| Beta | Information about a climb (sometimes quite detailed) accompanied with lots of climb miming. This should not be given out should the climber want to onsight the climb. Originated from 'Betamax' videos. |
| Banjo | A rapid, nervous and repetitive movement made by one’s foot and leg before committing to a scary move, otherwise known as sewing machine. |
| Barn Door | The tendency of a climber to swing away from the rock while on a move, resembling how the door of a barn would swing open. |
| Beached Whale | When a beginner climber or boulderer gets onto a ledge - or the top of a climb/boulder - in a style resembling a whale becoming stranded on a beach. |
| Bight | A fold or loop in a rope used to make a useful knot. |
| Blank Face | A cliff with very few features on it, often intended for pleasant viewing only. Climbed only by the local heroes. |
| Boinking | The skilled method of ascending back onto the rock a lead climber is hanging away from on a very overhanging climb. The belayer hangs tight on the one end (normally on a Grigri) while the leader pulls up on the rope and let’s go. The belayer drops down while the climber stays in the same position after pulling up on the rope - leaving the climber closer to the rock. This is repeated until s/he is able to grab the quickdraw and get back onto the rock. |
| Bolt | A metal pin and hanger secured into a hole drilled in the rock. A carabiner and rope are clipped to this securing a climber on a lead. Also used as top anchors. |
| Bolt Chopping | An aggressive act of breaking off a bolt or many bolts, done by 'puritan' climbers who insist that only natural anchors be permitted on a climb. This is not as easy as it looks and can leave a scar that often looks far worse than the original bolt. |
| Booty | Gear left on a climb that is for the taking by the stronger climber, not to be mistaken for fixed rope or fixed draws on a project that should never be taken. |
| Boulder | A large or small block of rock that can be free-climbed in various ways. These can be the topic of long discussions. |
| Boulder Mat | A small mattress carried around by boulderers and placed below boulder problems to soften and protect them from a fall. See pad. |
| Boulderer | A 'climber' who prides himself in not owning a rope and only climbs cliffs or boulders no higher than 5m, or sometimes a bit higher. Climbers like to think that they often spend much more time brushing, discussing and touching the cliff/boulder than actually climbing it. They also never want to be referred to as climbers, but only as boulders. Boulderers prefer technical and gymnastic movement to adventure climbing. |
| Bouldering | The act of climbing up a short face or up a boulder, often involving very intense and powerful moves. This form of the sport may also include much brushing of holds, many attempts with many falls onto mobile mats or pads and cheering by other boulderers. Big wall climbers have been known to refer to bouldering as pebble wrestling. |
| Bounce | This is when an unfortunate climber hits a ledge or the ground, often due to bad belaying or missing out bolts while leading. This generally results in serious injury and when this happens it’s advisable not to move the patient and call Mountain Rescue on 0741251385 or 0741633952. |
| Brush or Brushing | The act of cleaning grips on a climb with a brush. This is sometimes accompanied by adding chalk, brushing it into the grip and repeating this until the grip looks like it was painted white. |
| Bulge | A rounded protrusion of rock. Climbing over it would be similar to climbing onto the back of an elephant. |
| Butt Dragger | A very low move or traverse on a boulder problem which results in the possibility of one's butt dragging along the ground. |
| Buttress | A large protrusion of rock that stands out from the rest of the cliff. |
| Cam | A metal device designed to open under spring-load and lock into a crack on a cliff. |
| Carabiner | A metal linking unit used to connect ropes or slings to the rope and to anchors on the rock. Derived from a spring hook device used with a Carabine Rifle long, long ago. |
| Chains | The general term for the anchors at the top of a sport climb or an abseil point. The original chains used real chain but nowadays there are better, more secure options. |
| Chalk | White powder climbers put on their hands to absorb sweat and help grip onto the rock. Mostly Magnesium Carbonate, but also containing other secret ingredients - the identity of which we would all love to find out. |
| Cheat-clip | A long stick with an item on the end which can hold a carabiner open and connect a quickdraw to it. This is used to reach up to clip the next bolt from the previous bolt or the first bolt from the ground, freeing one from having to climb up to it. Frequently used to clip a high first bolt to prevent ground falls. |
| Chicken-winging | The tendency of one's elbows to point outwards when one gets pumped out on a climb (see pumped out). |
| Chimney | A crack wide enough to climb up on the inside in the same manner a child would climb up inside a doorway. Also known as a grovel - especially if it is too narrow to fit one’s body in easily. |
| Chock Stones | A rock naturally jammed in a crack which one can use as a good handhold or to stand up on. Climbers should ensure that these aren’t loose and won’t fall out. |
| Cleaning | This is when a climber ties his ropes through the anchors at the top of a sport climb and lowers down removing all the gear from the climb. It can also mean the fastidious act of brushing handholds with a toothbrush, or the removing of plants and loose rock off a new climb. |
| Cliff | Also known as a crag, this is a location prized by climbers. This is where climbers’ hearts and minds are, even when they sit behind a desk at work, varsity or school. |
| Clip or Clipping | The act of connecting one’s climbing rope to a quickdraw via a carabiner. To make the clip, would mean to successfully clip the rope in. To miss the clip results in the rope dropping down out of your hand - and the quickdraw swings from side to side, empty. |
| Compression | A technical term for a very powerful climbing move involving pulling together or compressing a section of the rock (such as a small pillar) with one's arms and legs via heel hooks. This is done to get through a difficult section that has no holds below, but only opposing handholds and footholds to the sides. |
| Corderlette | This is an 8 to 15m long piece of climbing accessory cord around 8mm in diameter used to assemble and anchor onto the top of a cliff. See top anchor. |
| Convulsive Elvis Legs | The rapid regression of Elvis Legs into desperate, panicky and rapid leg wobbling caused by extreme fear, and where a big fall could be imminent. See Elvis Legs. |
| Corner | An angular depression on a cliff that often has a crack in its indent. They vary in size from a few cm to immense, and the angle of opening can be narrow or very open. See open book. |
| Crack | This is a split in the rock-face which one can climb by jamming fingers, hands, toes or other parts of one's body into. Some love it, others hate it. Difficulty is generally determined by the size of one's finger or hands in relation to the width of the crack. |
| Crag | A small area where climbable cliffs occur. |
| Crank or Cranking | A powerful series of moves involving pulling oneself up. This can involve a number of such moves in a row. |
| Crater | To hit the ground or a ledge in a violent manner, resulting in serious injury or event death. A very bad bounce (see bounce). |
| Credit Card | An extremely small crimp (see crimp). |
| Crimp | A small handhold which can be as small as the edge of a coin or even a credit card. A crimpy climb has many such holds. |
| Cross-through | The technique of moving either one’s foot or hand through, under or above the other, in a sideways movement on a climb. |
| Crouch Start | A bouldering term. To start a problem with handholds at such a low height that one has to be in a crouching position to use. |
| Crush | To climb a hard climb with great form. |
| Crux | This is the most difficult section of a climb or boulder problem - sometimes one move or a series of moves. The redpoint crux is the most difficult part to lead on the climb, not necessarily the most difficult move, but feels like the hardest section due to fatigue. |
| Cubbyhole | A small recess or hole in the cliff where a small climber can balance inside to rest, but a big climber couldn’t. |
| Dead-point | A quick, deliberate move to a catch a grip while keeping one’s body much in the same position. Less upward motion and launching up than a dyno involves. See dyno. |
| Dab | When a boulderer accidentally touches the ground on a low move or swing-out move, this is seldom immediately acknowledged or felt by the boulderer, but always pointed out by the spotters or spectators. |
| Deck | The ground below the cliff or large ledge on a cliff. To hit the deck is to bounce or crater (see bounce or crater). |
| Draw Grabbing | The shameful act of grabbing a quickdraw while leading a climb. The clipping of the quickdraw if done while holding onto it is even more frowned upon. |
| Drop Knee | A climbing move where the climber’s one knee is turned to point downwards while that leg’s foot is positioned high on a foothold around shoulder height. The other leg is positioned below them. This strange move feels unnatural when you’re getting into it, but once committed this helps one twist the body to engage stronger core and lat muscles, positioning one shoulder up and closer to the grips above, making one’s reach more effective. |
| Dogging | Leading a climb while resting on the quickdraw at each or some of the bolts. Climbing a climb in this manner doesn’t constitute a valid ascent, only a practice. Go back and lead it clean without resting on the rope. |
| Down-climb | A climber can climb down to a better position to rest on a climb. This is a tactical move to reassess the moves before moving up to try the move again. This is also a tactic of withdrawing from an intimidating position and attempting again in a better frame of mind. |
| Down-grading | The claim that a climb or boulder problem is easier than its grade. Sometimes true and sometimes ego-driven (see grade). |
| Drag | See rope drag. |
| Dynamic | The use of momentum to move through a difficult move or series of moves, also requiring considerable confidence. |
| Dyno | An explosive jump that a climber or boulderer does to propel one’s body up to a grip that cannot be reached by static reach. |
| Edge | The side of a cliff where one can hold a side-cling (see side-cling), or a small sharp crimp (see crimp). |
| Egyptian | The exaggerated drop knee (see drop knee) where one’s one knee twists down below that leg’s foot. This orientates the body more sideways to enable the climber to reach very high. |
| Eliminate | A boulder problem with defined handholds, features or footholds that are permitted, while others aren’t. |
| Elvis Legs | The wobbling of one’s legs resembling the gyrating dancing done by Elvis Presley (I'm all shook up, ohummm!). Often when fear controls the mind on a climb.man-dancing.png(insert Elvis Emogi here) |
| Expansion Bolts | A metal bolt (normally stainless steel) inserted and locked into a hole drilled in the rock, also known as a Hilti. |
| Exposed | A position on a climb where the fear factor is high. There's typically lots of fresh air around and a very good view down to the ground. |
| Feature | A small part of a climb used as a foothold or handhold. Sometimes very small and can be overlooked by the average climber. |
| Figure-of-eight | This is a metal double ring device that looks like the number 8, used for abseiling or rappelling. |
| Finger-crack | A crack of enough width to fit one’s fingers into, jamming them into the crack to use it to climb up. This can be painful if not done properly. |
| Fist Jam | A method of gripping a crack by fitting one's fist in sideways and locking it within the crack. |
| FA | First ascent of a climb or boulder problem. |
| FFA | First free ascent of a climb, or without any advantage from hanging on gear or the rope. |
| Following | To ascend a climb after a leader has led it with the rope above and removing all the runners. |
| Flagging | A technical climbing move using one's feet and legs to counter the tendency to swing off a side-pull or barn door. See barn door. |
| Flapper | A piece of fingertip skin torn from holding a sharp hold. It can become the subject of much bragging, including photos on social media and much concern from climbers’ moms. |
| Flash Pump | The sudden onset of fatigue as a result of getting onto a hard climb without warming up first. Muscles were not prepared or ready for the sudden exertion resulting in a premature pump out. See pumped out. |
| Flake | A thin piece of rock wedged into a crack or on a face, as a result of exfoliation of the rock. Flakes make welcome handholds, but can break off when least expected. |
| Flash | When a climber gets up a climb on first go without any weight on the rope or gear, but with prior knowledge of the climb – either from a beta or watching another climb it. See beta. |
| Free Solo | To climb without the security offered by a rope; just the climber and the cliff. Here a fall would mean certain death. |
| Friction move or friction climbing | This climbing move, or series of moves, involves placing one’s climbing shoe directly onto the surface of the rock and relying entirely on the friction between the rock and the shoe to gain purchase (hold you in place) and climb up. |
| Gaper | A non-climber who comes across a climber in action or hears about climbing, and has the tendency to hang their mouth open in amazement, resembling a fish. They often come out with questions like, "do you use ropes?" and, "how do you get the rope up to the top in the first place?" |
| Gardening | The removing of vegetation from climbs. See cleaning. |
| Gaston | A climbing move where one pulls a side-pull away from the chest outwards, mostly with one’s thumbs facing down. This originated from a famous photo of the French climber and guide Gaston Rébuffat doing such a move on a climb in Chamonix. |
| Ge-Koekarasie | An irritating tangle in the rope or ropes, which can be solved by shaking and plucking at the entanglement while pulling one end out. Sometimes such a mess requires painstakingly threading one end in and out to undo the knots. This often occurs when one is in a hurry or with a brand-new rope that wasn’t carefully unravelled but thrown onto the ground in the false hope that it would undo itself perfectly for the first time. |
| Girdle Traverse | This is a traverse (see traverse) where one leads a climb sideways, over a number of climbs, across a face. Here one can obtain a long, sustained climb on a relatively small cliff. However, caution should be taken to make sure there are no other climbers present who may want to climb the climbs you intend to cross over, this has been known to result in much irritation and general verbal abuse. |
| Gorge | An opening between two cliffs where a river often runs through. This can be anywhere from 3m to 100km wide and from 30m to over 1000m deep. |
| Grade | This is a subjective estimate of the difficulty of a climb or boulder problem expressed in an alphanumeric system. There are a number of major grading systems for climbing and bouldering all over the world. The actual value assigned to a climb varies from person to person and is subject to much heated dispute. |
| Grade Compression | This is a phenomenon where there is resistance to grade climbs over a certain grade, resulting in a wide range of difficulties in one grade. This occurs for a number of reasons such as there being no climb around graded higher, or reluctance to offer the climb the higher grade due to stigma or the reputation the higher grade holds. For example, some grade 5.10 climbs in the USA that were opened long ago are much harder than modern ones due to reluctance at the time to grade them as 5.11. In South Africa we see some grade compression on 21s as grade 22 is reputed to be a very hard climb. |
| Grade Discounting | This is when a climb used to have a certain grade, and then with time the recorded grade is pushed higher as climbers either match with other softer graded climbs, or that the climb was graded easier than it should have been due to grade compression. |
| Ground Up Ascent | A very pure form of climbing ethics, where a lead climber attempts a climb from the ground, without first top-roping, or dogging it. S/he returns to the ground each time s/he falls to start from there again. |
| Grigri | A belaying device made by Petzl which can automatically lock if the climber should fall. |
| Gully | A large opening on the side of a cliff where one could gain access to descend to the bottom of the cliff. |
| Hand Free Rest | A cunning way to free one's hands on a climb to sneak a rest, such as a knee bar or shoulder lock, etc. See knee bar or shoulder lock. |
| Hand-jam | Gripping a crack by fitting one's hand inside and locking it within the crack and/or by expanding your hand to press against the sides of the crack. |
| Hangers | A stainless steel unit connected to a bolt in a cliff to which a quickdraw is connected. |
| Hanging Slab | A slab above some overhanging rock. See slab. |
| Hanging Stance | A stance where there is no ledge and one has to hang on the changes or anchors in your harness. |
| Hardcore | A breed of climber or boulderer who never smiles, or brags and keeps to themselves, but accomplishes astonishing feats on rock that fuel legendary tales. |
| Harness | A piece of webbed climbing equipment a climber climbs into like a pair of pants, and fastens tight around the waist and legs. The rope is secured to the device to hold the climber safely should s/he have to weight the rope in an abseil, rest on the rope, or fall. |
| Headwall | This is a steep part of a cliff above a roof or above some overhangs. |
| Heel Hook | A useful technique using one's heel on a grip or edge to aid in pulling either downward over a lip, or sideways to prevent a barn door (see lip and barn door). The heel in this move acts as a 'third arm' to help the other two arms do their job. |
| Highball Boulder | A boulder problem that is higher than the average boulder, sometimes done as a free solo. See free solo. |
| Highpoint | The highest level reached by a climber who is working a project. See project. |
| Holds or Grips | These things make climbing possible and vary considerably in size and shape. |
| Hueco | A big, round hollow in the rock made by erosion. |
| Hyperthermia | The medical emergency when one's core temperature rises above a certain temperature and can be life threatening. This is a result of extreme heat exposure. |
| Hypothermia | The medical emergency when one's core temperature drops below a certain temperature and can be life threatening. This can result in freezing to death. |
| Jam Crack | A crack in which a climber jams their fingers, toes, hands, fists or any part of their body in order to get up the climb. |
| Jug | A large handhold sloped into the cliff; or an incut or indent you can curl your fingers inside. This is always welcome on any climb, anywhere. |
| Kloof | Afrikaans word for Canyon, or gorge. See gorge. |
| Knee Bar | A position in climbing where one can lock one or two knees so as to release one's hands from the rock, or at least relax ones arms to be able to sneak a (legal) rest. |
| Kneepad | Climbers use rubber kneepads to make knee bars easier, see the climb called COCK OR BOLLOCK at the Man Cave, Chosspile. |
| Ladies Tee | A sit start boulder problem where one is permitted to sit on the folded boulder mat to get a little extra height. See sit start and boulder mat. |
| Layaway | A climbing move where one has one’s body and weight are to the side of a vertically oriented handhold, using the hold by pulling sideways on it. |
| Layback | A technique used by climbers to ascend a corner crack. The climber holds sideways on the crack while both his feet are on the other side of the corner. S/he then walks up while moving hands up to keep balance. If hands and feet get too close together it feels like one is trying to rip the cliff apart, but if hands and feet are too far apart, it feels as if one’s feet may slip. |
| Lead | To climb with the rope below you clipping into the quickdraws on bolts as one ascends. A fall will potentially be twice the height above the last bolt clipped. This is also known as climbing on the sharp end of the rope. |
| Lead- or Run-out | A climb where the anchors or bolts are far apart, thus it has more "adventure" than other better protected climbs with more bolts. |
| Left-facing Corner | A corner where the right wall is perpendicular to the cliff and faces to the left, while the left wall is flush with the cliff. See corner. |
| Lip | The outside edge of an overhang or roof, where the overhanging section becomes vertical. Climbing over the lip of an overhang or roof, or 'turning the lip', is often the most difficult section as one’s feet are under the overhang, and not in a good position to propel one over. It is common to use a heel hook to turn a lip. See heel hook. |
| Longdraw | A quickdraw that is longer than normal. This is useful to reduce rope drag (see rope drag), which occurs when one goes around corners or other various lines. |
| Lowering Off | Descending a climb with the rope through the anchors at the top or the chains. If the lower is from a bolt below the chains it is known as the shameful lower (see shameful lower). |
| Maillon | An oval shaped metal unit with a gate that screws closed. This forms a strong link used often in climbing on the anchors or chains on top of a sport climb (French word meaning link). |
| Mantelshelf | A technique used by climbers to gain position onto a ledge or top of a boulder. The climber would lean in and face their shoulders outwards. Then with a little hop they push their arms down to eventually get one foot up and then stand up on the ledge or boulder. This can degrade into a beached whale (see beached whale). |
| Mantle | See mantelshelf. |
| Mantle-out | A bouldering term referring to a mantelshelf move on the top of a boulder problem to finish it. |
| Match | Placing both hands or feet onto a handhold or foothold. To match a handhold is to put both hands onto that handhold. |
| Multi-pitch | A climb more than one rope length high. This has to be climbed in multiple stages or sections (called pitches) where the leader would bring their climbing partner up to a ledge or hanging stance (see hanging stance) and then lead again up to another ledge or hanging stance. This process is repeated until the top of the cliff is reached. The longest multi-pitch climb in South Africa is North by North West on Du Toits Kloof, which is 21 pitches or rope lengths. |
| Natural Anchor or Gear | Natural anchor or gear placements where one can wrap a sling around something like a big rock or tree. |
| Nose | A large protrusion of rock on a cliff that resembles a human nose. |
| Off-route | When a climber goes off the prescribed line they should be climbing. This often results in much grovelling, banjoing and big run outs (see run out). |
| Off-width | A crack which is just too wide to jam, but too narrow to chimney. There are those climbers that love them, but the majority have a distinct dislike for these sadistic climbs, even to the point of causing them to wake up in the middle of the night with palms sweaty. |
| Onsight | This is what is known as a pure ascent. A leader climbs or boulderer sends a problem on first go without falling and without any assistance from the rope, spotters or any of the gear (such as quickdraws) and without prior knowledge of the climb from any beta or word of mouth. The climber must not climb down to the ground in the process, and is only permitted to use the intended line without going off-route. |
| Open Book | A feature on a cliff that resembles an open book. It is climbed up the inside or side where the ‘printing’ is, otherwise known as a corner. See corner. |
| Overhanging | A portion of a cliff where the rock leans back over the base of the cliff. This requires more upper body strength to climb. |
| Over Grading | The act of giving a climb or boulder problem a grade harder than it is, thus too easy for the grade. This can falsely boost one's confidence giving one unrealistic expectations of what a certain grade feels like. This confidence is rapidly shattered when a sandbag is encountered. See sandbag. |
| Pad or Boulder Pad | A small firm mattress covered in robust material, with backpack shoulder straps. Carried around and used by boulderers who place them beneath boulder problems to protect them from the ground or other features/boulders in the event of a fall. This is also used as a sleeping mattress, lunch break seat or even as a couch in some boulderers’ lounges. |
| Peg | A small metal pin hammered into a crack and left in place, used as protection in days gone by, but still clipped today if the peg looks okay. See protection. |
| Pillar | A large feature on a cliff protruding from the face with a left and right side to it. |
| Pitch | One section climbed at a time or part of a multi-pitch climb. See multi-pitch. |
| Pinch | A type of handhold which one would hold by compressing it between one's fingers and thumb. |
| Plastic climbing | The act of climbing on an artificial wall with set handholds and footholds. |
| Pocket | A hole eroded out of the rock which one can put one’s fingers into to make a handhold. This can fit many fingers, or sometimes only one finger (then called a mono-pocket). |
| Polished | A smoothed cliff surface or boulder problem polished by water, animals or from many climbers over time. |
| Pop | To make a quick deliberate move up to a handhold. |
| Positive Hold | Handholds that are incut and easier to hold. |
| Power | The juice needed to get through a strenuous section of a climb or boulder problem. |
| Pre-clipped | To clip a quickdraw before leading a climb, normally the first and sometimes also the second one from the bottom. Some debate remains as to whether this constitutes a clean ascent. |
| Press | A type of climbing move where one would push down with one's hands, often with the palms. |
| Problem | A set route which a boulderer would follow up a boulder or short cliff face. This is called a problem because the essence is to solve the puzzle of how one should climb it. |
| Protection | The items a lead climber would clip into or place into the rock to clip the rope to, so as to catch them should they fall. |
| Project | A climb or boulder problem which a climber or boulderer sets out to achieve. Projects can be worked on for some time (even years) before success is attained. |
| Prusik | A short loop of accessory cord tied into a rope with a friction knot called a Prusik knot. This has many uses such as protecting abseils or in rescue situations. |
| Psyche | The energy produced by climber or boulderer enthusiasm. It’s better to produce your own psyche than to feed off the psyche of others, however times do occur when one needs a little boosting. Psyche boosters include: energetic music, strong coffee, hardcore climbing movies, cool climbing photos, positive self-talk, hot climbers in tight pants or no shirts, etc. |
| Pumped Out | The sensation when muscles (most commonly the forearms) become hard and unable to operate effectively. This is the physiological reaction of insufficient oxygen to match the demand placed on a muscle. Muscle, when energised via a chemical called ATP (Adenosine triphosphate), expands and stays there ready to do work, when a command is received from the brain via a nerve it quickly contracts to do an action such as pull on a handhold, then with more energy (ATP) it very quickly re-lengthens to pull again. A healthy muscle can reload many times a second to provide what appears as continuous force. The ATP itself is produced with the aid of oxygen, thus too much pulling with not enough oxygen supply results in the muscle not being able to reload or lengthen properly and remaining short and hard. This also explains the shaking of muscles under huge load, it’s the rapid reloading of the muscles that’s the root cause of banjo and it also explains why dead muscles (in a corpse) go hard. |
| Pumpy | A move, series of moves, or a climb that is strenuous and will likely result in you being pumped out. See pumped out. |
| Push the Boats Out | When a lead climber commits to hard moves far above their last gear or anchor. |
| Quickdraw | A short sling with a carabiner on either side of it. Commonly used to connect a rope to bolts placed into the rock. |
| Rail | A horizontal crack or narrow ledge that a climber traverses along (see traverse). Cool to lead, not so cool to follow. |
| Recess | A part of a cliff that is recessed, or an indentation. This is normally smaller and less defined than a corner. |
| Recovery | When a climber reverses the progression of being pumped by finding a sneaky rest. See pumped. |
| Redpoint | When a climber leads a climb clean without any aid from the rope or gear on the rock; having used only the grips and footholds intended for use on the climb. In this case the climber has tried the climb before and failed, sometimes many times. |
| Retrobolted | To replace the bolts on a climb, but change their position slightly. It is advised to ask permission from the person who originally bolted the climb. This is a sign of respect to the effort made in opening the climb and helps prevent undercurrent conflict within the community. |
| Retroflash | A repeat climb of a route first go with no resting or falling after sufficient time to forget most of the moves from the previous climb. This is controversial and does not count as a proper flash, (see flash). |
| Ridge | A protruding edge of rock running up a cliff or boulder problem. See arête. |
| Right-facing Corner | This is a corner where the left wall is perpendicular to the cliff and faces to the right, while the right wall is flush with the cliff. See corner. |
| Rock-over | A move done by climbers and boulderers involving manoeuvring one's body onto and over a foot placed high on a foothold. Insufficient flexibility and strength could result in an unnatural-looking failed attempt at this move, despite very emotive facial expressions and loud groans. |
| Run Out | When the space between the runners or bolts is large and potential falls for the leader are big. |
| Roof | A section of cliff or boulder problem that is parallel to the ground. To climb it one has to hang under the rock like a monkey. The strict defining point where an overhang becomes a roof is open to a lot of debate, as this varies a lot according to climbing ability and ego. |
| Rope Drag | A nasty effect of the rope being difficult to pull up while leading. This is often caused by friction from rope twisting or getting snagged in a constriction or crack, but also often unjustly blamed on the poor belayer. The best practice to prevent rope drag is to keep your rope below neat, placed where it can‘t be snagged and by using long quickdraws or slings on bolts which are out of line or around corners. |
| Rope Up | A climbing call which instructs the belayer to take in rope. |
| Route or Line | The line which one should follow when correctly climbing a prescribed climb or boulder problem. If not followed correctly, one would go off-route. See off-route. |
| Rurps | A tiny postage stamp sized piton, used by hardcore climbers who dress like Jimi Hendrix. See hardcore. |
| Runner | Short for running anchor. A lead climber places or clips to runners to connect their rope in order to protect them as they go. |
| Sandbag | The ego-driven act of intentionally grading a climb or boulder problem easier than it actually is, giving the impression that one is climbing it carrying a heavy bag of sand. When on such a climb or boulder problem it can be puzzling as to why you’re struggling on something that should be easy, trying to rationalise the lack of performance. The opposite of over grading (see over grading). |
| Scramble | A section of a cliff climbed without ropes; normally at such an easy grade that you shouldn’t fall. Common to get to the start of the climb or to get off at the top of a climb. |
| Screw-gate or locking gate | A carabiner with a mechanism to screw it closed to make it more secure and less likely to open accidently. See carabiner. |
| Sequence | A sequence of required moves on a climb or boulder problem. Practicing a climb or boulder problem would result in what’s called ‘getting the sequence wired’, or in other words you’re able to follow the order with ease through the difficult section. This can be intellectually stimulating and very rewarding. |
| Shaking Out | To hang on a big grip or hand-free rest and slowly shaking one's arms one at a time to get circulation back into them to recover. See hand-free rest. |
| Shameful Lower | The act of asking the belayer to lower one off a climb before reaching the top anchors or chains. This is a clear sign of surrender, where the climb has won. |
| Sharp | When handholds have sharp edges, and can hurt a climber or boulderer's hands. |
| Shelf | A part of a cliff that makes a long horizontal ledge. |
| Shlorkey | A term given when the surface of a grip or part of a cliff or boulder problem is slippery due to water, general slime, grime and sweat from other climbers, as well as sea breezes in coastal conditions. Can be solved by much chalk and brushing. Common to see a distasteful expression on the climber's face when it is encountered. |
| Shoulder Lock | To cleverly hook one's shoulder under an overhang to free one's arms and hands to get a rest. |
| Short Roped | When a belayer is belaying a leader and isn’t paying attention, they tend to sometimes not give enough slack on the rope for the leader to clip a quickdraw. Not uncommon to hear a loud "SLAAAACK", followed by some stern remarks from the leader such as, "wake up down there", or "concentrate please". And then further followed by general dark mutterings as they continue to lead the climb. |
| Side-pull | A type of climbing handhold that’s vertically orientated and one has to pull it to the side to be able to use it. The use of this type of grip often also requires flagging. See flagging. |
| Sit Start | A boulder problem start with one’s bum on the mat and the boulderer’s legs either to the side or splayed wide open. More difficult for taller climbers. |
| Slab | A section of cliff or boulder problem that leans in to the cliff and makes the angle easier to climb as opposed to the opposite way or overhanging. However, slabs often make up for their lack of angle by having decisively less features, handholds and footholds on them. Strong fingers and good balance often required. |
| Slack | A term used when requesting the belayer to make the rope looser, often called out loudly and with much urgency. |
| Sling | A nylon loop used to connect to natural anchors or to lengthen connections to bolts or other anchors. They come in various lengths and thicknesses. |
| Sloper | A handhold that slopes away from the cliff making it more difficult to hold, as opposed to a jug which slopes into the cliff and is easier to grip. See jug. |
| Solo | To climb a climb alone or without a partner. Free solo excludes safety rope and gear; rope solo involves using a rope and gear to protect oneself with special rope tricks. |
| Snatching | A rapid grabbing motion with one’s hands in an effort to obtain a handhold or handholds in order to survive in a desperate situation. |
| Sport Climbing | A form of climbing where cliffs are climbed with the use of bolts fixed into the rock for safety. |
| Spotter | A person who assists a boulderer by ensuring that they don’t hurt themselves by guarding their head in particular away from dangerous objects, keeping their boulder mat under them, softening their fall, and offering lots of encouragement. |
| Sprag | An irregular feature on the rock which offers a small handhold where one’s fingers must disperse to best hold the grip. |
| Stance | A point where a lead climber stops climbing a pitch and brings the climbing partner up to where they are in order to lead again such as required in a multi pitch. |
| Stand Start | A boulder problem start standing with handholds at chest level or sometimes higher. |
| Stemming | To climb a corner or recess with each leg on either side of it. The splayed legs aid the body to keep weight off the arms. |
| Straddle or straddling | See stemming. |
| Summit | The ultimate goal of climbing a mountain: the very top and a place to fly your national flag. |
| Sustained | A climb or boulder problem with many difficult moves in a row, requiring a fair degree of fitness. See pumped. |
| Table Bouldering | A silly game where a person moves from on top of a table to the underside, through the table legs to hang under the table. S/he then moves along under the table to exit again through the legs to the top of the table on the other side. Better enjoyed when drunk, and easier for smaller people. It can cause strange bruises on one’s inner thighs, which can cause concern especially if you were too drunk to remember table bouldering the previous night. |
| Take | The command uttered urgently as a person is about to fall on a rope (Naturally it will not help to shout ‘take’ if one is free soloing!) |
| Technical | A climb that requires considerable technique, balance and flexibility to get through. It could have unusually small footholds, be difficult to keep your balance, or necessitate tricky moves, etc. |
| Thumb Catch | A way of holding a grip by hooking the thumb onto or around a protrusion. |
| Tick Mark | A small chalk line placed on the rock to mark key footholds and handholds. It is recognised as good practice to rub them off afterwards, as they can look unsightly. Routes can be remarkably easier if marked. |
| Tight | The command used by a climber who is top-roping or following a climb and would like the belayer to tighten the rope to make them feel more confident to continue. Thought by many to be a little overused. |
| Toe Jam | A method of finding a foothold in a crack in which one could fit one's foot inside and locking it with a constriction. |
| Top Anchor | The place where a rope is anchored on top of a cliff to anchor it for top-roping or an abseil. Sometimes it is constructed with slings, screwgate carabiners and a cordelette onto natural anchors like a big rock or tree. |
| Top-rope | To climb a cliff with the rope above you, anchored through a top anchor and descending as the belayer pulls the rope in. Generally, the safest and least risky form of climbing. |
| Top-out | A bouldering term meaning to climb to the very top of a boulder or small cliff so that you can walk off the top and get down somewhere else. Descent needs to be scoped out beforehand to avoid the necessity for ladders, etc. |
| Trad | Traditional climbing, where the leader leads a climb and places runners into cracks as s/he goes. Runners here include cams, nuts and other protection. The follower removes all hardware and slings. This a purer form of the sport where less trace is left of the climber. |
| Traverse | To climb sideways across a cliff or boulder problem. Can be as, or more, difficult to follow as to lead, depending on positioning of the gear or runners. |
| U-bolt | A bolt anchor in the shape of a U that is glued into the rock via two matching holes drilled into the rock. |
| Undercling | A type of handhold requiring the climber or boulderer to have his or her palms facing up and pulling out and upwards to use it. |
| Undercut | A section of a cliff or boulder problem with an overhang or roof at its base, making it more difficult to find footholds to get over, because of the open space below. |
| Wall Climber | A person who climbs mostly on artificial walls or plastic climbing, and does not climb on rock - or does so less than once a month. Note these climbers are referred to as wall climbers, not rock climbers. Sometimes referred to as 'plastic' climbers. |
| Z-clipped | When the leader mistakenly grabs the rope from below the previous clipped quickdraw and clips it to a higher quickdraw. This causes the rope to go from the belayer up through the top quickdraw, then down through the quickdraw below it and back up to the leader to resemble the letter Z. When this happens, it is frequent to hear the leader shout, “SLACK” then even louder, “SLAAAACK!” when attempting to progress with the rope in this Z formation. The extra stress from this often results in banjo, then Elvis Legs and can progress into Convulsive Elvis Legs with frantic snatching and draw grabbing, draw clipping and then finally the Shameful Lower. Common if the bolts are placed too close together. |