



ACA Core Skills Checklist

OBJECTIVE: Provide students with the fundamental canyoneering skills necessary to join a competently led group into canyons rated up to 3A/B III and supervised introduction to technical canyoneering skills.

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

ASSESSOR'S NAME: _____

RECOMMENDATION: PASS CONDITIONAL PASS NO PASS

	DATE	SCORE
Logistics and Safety		
Understand the ACA Canyon Rating System and different types of canyon terrain, as well as the special issues related to that terrain (i.e. swift water canyons, dry and semi-dry canyons, slot canyons, pothole escape problems, long committing canyons, permit requirements). ACA Canyon Rating System booklet can be found here: www.canyoneering.net/docs/ratings.pdf		
Using the ACA canyon rating system and canyon beta, estimate necessary rope lengths, list required technical gear and personal equipment for a selected canyon.		
Understand common causes of accidents in canyoneering and precautions that can be taken to avoid them.		
Understand how to find/read/interpret weather reports, cloud formations, changing weather patterns.		
Identify and describe variables that contribute to flash flood risk. Describe flash flood warning signs. Describe appropriate responses to an impending flash flood including identifying canyon exits and high ground.		
Demonstrate how to activate an SOS on a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB).		
Leave No Trace Ethics		
Read the ACA's Canyons booklet www.canyoneering.net/docs/booklet.pdf		
Understand and apply low impact canyoneering practices.		
Understand and apply techniques to avoid rope grooves/damage in soft rock.		
Understand and apply appropriate methods for human waste disposal.		
Rope and Equipment Care		
Understand and apply good rope care practices.		

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Demonstrate coiling a rope; (a) Alpine coil, (b) Canyon coil.		
Stuff and use a rope bag.		
Understand and apply good equipment care and handling practices.		
Basic Knots		
Tie and inspect; Figure Eight knot; (a) on a Bight, (b) Follow-through.		
Tie and inspect; Ring Bend in webbing (aka Water knot).		
Tie and inspect; Clove hitch.		
Tie and inspect; Munter hitch (aka Italian hitch, Dynamic hitch).		
Tie and inspect; Girth hitch.		
Tie and inspect; 3-wrap Prusik hitch.		
Tie and inspect; secure bend to connect two load-bearing ropes for rappelling (i.e. Double Fisherman bend, Figure Eight bend).		
Tie and inspect; Valdostain Tresse (tied with a VT Prusik or equivalent).		
Intro to Anchors and Rigging		
Evaluate and rig existing fixed artificial anchors (bolts) using the acronym EARNEST (Equalized, Angle, Redundant, No Extension, Strong, Timely).		
Identify, Evaluate, and rig single-point natural anchors (i.e. tree, boulder, arch) using a) simple webbing wrap, b) cinching wrap (i.e. wrap 2 pull 1, Girth hitch). Explain the pros and cons of each and demonstrate how to securely back up & test single point anchors.		
Set up and use a releasable/contingency system for rappel. Explain the hazards/risks of using releasable systems and steps that should be taken to avoid accidents and mitigate risks.		
Identify & explain the variables and situations (scenarios) that dictate safely setting rope length to the height of a rappel. Demonstrate setting the rope length for safe descent for each scenario using appropriate communication and applicable rigging techniques.		
Set up and use edge protection to protect rope from abrasion and soft rock from rope grooves/damage.		
Identify, assess and mitigate basic rope retrieval challenges (crossed ropes) including minimizing or avoiding rope grooves/damage to soft rock.		
Prep ropes for retrieval & successfully retrieve rope and prep for transport (Coil or Bag).		
Signals / Communication		
Understand and use proper verbal for commands for belaying, rappelling, and up/downclimbing.		
Understand and use proper hand signals. https://www.canyoneering.net/docs/signals.pdf		
Climbing, Spotting, Handlines		
Move on 3rd and 4th class terrain (scrambling - rock climbing terrain).		

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Move on 5th class terrain (rock climbing terrain).		
Demonstrate chimneying, stemming, and bridging techniques.		
Spot a climber; climbing up, climbing down.		
Understand and use partner capture (climbing down) and partner assist (climbing up) techniques for short vertical problems.		
Understand and apply appropriate use of a hand line.		
Understand and apply appropriate use of a friction hitch safety on a hand line.		
Rappelling, Belaying, Self-Rescue		
Understand and explain the risk and tasks associated with being the first rappeller.		
Set up and use a self belay with a Valdotaire Tresse (tied with a VT Prusik or equivalent).		
Rig rappelling device for correct friction on 8mm to 11mm ropes, single and double strand, understand the variables that contribute to friction requirements.		
Rappel; control speed while rappelling, apply brake to stop mid-rappel.		
Rappel using different the starting positions that include a) traditional (standing) b) sitting c) soft start (body friction/smearing); explain when such a start should be used.		
Add friction while rappelling.		
Lock off rappel device while rappelling.		
Lock off while rappelling using leg wrap.		
Demonstrate proper bottom belay (Fireman's belay).		
Demonstrate proper belay commands / verbal communication techniques.		
Demonstrate appropriate rappelling practices to minimize rope abrasion.		
Rappel with pack on and off. Describe scenarios for both situations.		
Use rope grab (friction hitch or mechanical ascender) and foot loop to remove tension from rappel device to free stuck gear while rappelling.		
Perform controlled rappel up to 150'+, adding friction mid-rappel, communication with whistles or radios, hanging packs.		
Swimming, Jumping, Water Slides		
Create and use flotation with gear available.		
Swim 50 yards with gear, using floatation if necessary.		
Describe and identify water hazards.		
Safely perform water depth check; AKA "dipstick". ***No jumping!***		
Jumping into water (pool) using 'standard position' (feet first, arms slightly out). ***5 feet maximum height*** (5ft min depth).		
Perform wet rappel disconnect in water.		
Water slides; identify hazards, correct body position.		

Recommendations After Training

- Practice technical skills in low-risk conditions, such as on clean and low angle "slab" type environments or on vertical terrain with an effective Top or Bottom (Fireman's) Belay.
- Join well organized groups with competent Leader(s) descending easier canyons rated up to 3A/B III.