

The **Green Guide** for:

# GROUPS OF CLIMBERS

▶▶▶ *Minimal impact advice for climbing groups of all sizes*



PHOTO: MIKE HUTTON

# CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>03</b>
<b>2. TOP TIPS</b> .....	<b>04</b>
LED GROUPS .....	<b>05</b>
BOULDERING .....	<b>06</b>
CRAG ETIQUETTE .....	<b>07</b>
SPORT CRAGS .....	<b>07</b>
<b>3. ACCESS</b> .....	<b>08</b>
OPEN ACCESS LAND .....	<b>09</b>
CHECK ACCESS .....	<b>10</b>
RIGHTS OF WAY .....	<b>11</b>
BMC CRAG CODE .....	<b>11</b>
LITTER .....	<b>12</b>
FIRES & BBQS .....	<b>12</b>
SANITATION .....	<b>13</b>
CAMPING .....	<b>13</b>

PHOTO: ALEX MESSENGER.

# INTRODUCTION

Whether climbing alone or in a group, everyone has an equal right to access our crags. Indeed, many climbers started out climbing in a group, being taught by those more experienced.

Climbing groups come in many different forms. Climbing clubs, the military or outdoor centres are common examples, but an informal gathering of friends can equally be viewed in the same way. This booklet aims to give guidance on how groups of climbers can minimise their impact on the crags and other users.



PHOTO: ANDY NEWTON.

# TOP TIPS: GROUPS OF CLIMBERS



Poor parking can have been a contributing factor in many access issues – make sure you park considerately, not blocking gates or the road.

- Venue choice is crucial to ensure a good day out and minimise the impact on other climbers. Pick a crag with plenty of routes at an appropriate level.
- Consider the size of the crag and its popularity relative to the size of your group. A small crag which is very popular would be a poor choice for a climbing weekend with a large group for example.
- Parking is an issue at many crags, so park sensitively. One advantage of climbing in a group is being able to share transport more effectively. This is better for the environment and minimises the number of parking spaces used.
- Human waste can be an issue at crags. By virtue of their size, groups have the potential to have a considerable negative impact if sanitation is not managed appropriately.
- Ensure your group follows the Countryside Code.

## ➤ TOP TIPS

### FOR LED GROUPS

- Establish physical boundaries for the area your group will be active in. Keep the group in sight and under control.
- Brief your group on the challenges that the crag presents and the environmental value of their surroundings.
- Highlight the do's and don'ts for a day at the crag.



**WATCH:** How to: care for rock when using chalk

[www.thebmc.co.uk/chalk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/chalk)

**WATCH:** How to: boulder responsibly

[www.thebmc.co.uk/bouldersense](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/bouldersense)

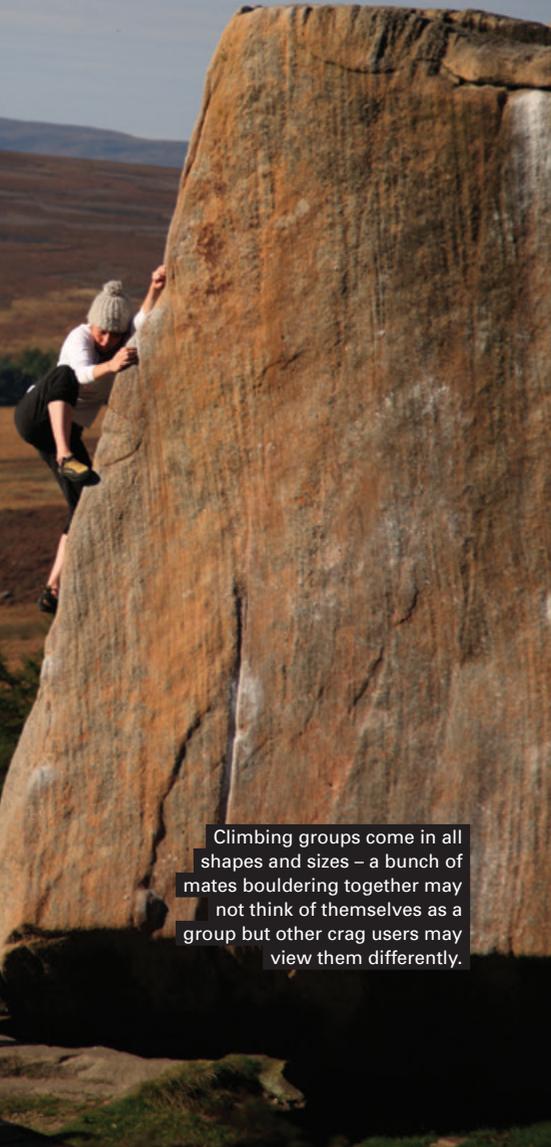
PHOTO: MIKE HUTTON.



Clean shoes before stepping onto rock and ideally use climbing shoes instead of trainers to encourage good footwork and reduce rock wear.

## ► BOULDERING TIPS

- Clean your boots to reduce wear to holds
- Don't use wire brushes or chip rock
- Use bouldering mats – they reduce ground erosion
- Use chalk sensibly. Brush off excess chalk and tick marks when you've finished
- Avoid removing turf and vegetation from boulders



Climbing groups come in all shapes and sizes – a bunch of mates bouldering together may not think of themselves as a group but other crag users may view them differently.

PHOTO: MIKE HUTTON.

## TOP TIPS FOR GROUPS OF CLIMBERS 02

### ► CRAG ETIQUETTE

- Talk to other climbers. There are very few problems that can't be solved by chatting to your neighbours at the crag.
- Avoid taking over whole sections of crag – it's usually better to split into smaller groups and spread out.
- Vacate routes as quickly as possible after finishing your climb. Leaving top ropes unattended is poor etiquette – take them down when you're finished.
- Avoid top roping popular routes for extended periods.
- Be considerate to other climbers who may wish to climb routes your group is top roping.
- Make your group aware of other users.

### ► SPORT CRAGS

- Always check the Regional Access Database first. Some sport crags are inappropriate for groups. If in doubt, give the BMC access team a call before you go.
- Some sport climbing venues are only recently developed, with access for climbers problematic. A large group at such venues can cause problems.

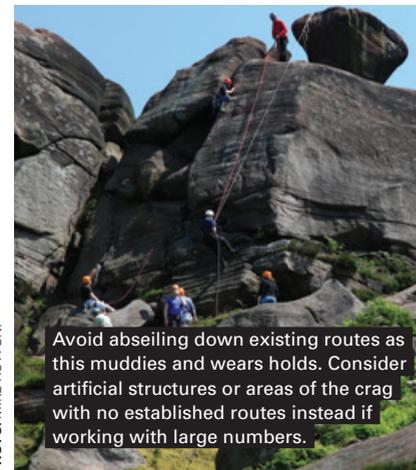
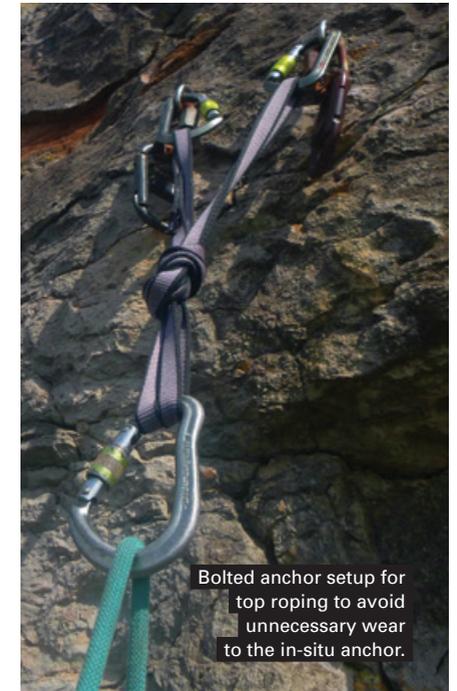


PHOTO: MIKE HUTTON.

Avoid abseiling down existing routes as this muddies and wears holds. Consider artificial structures or areas of the crag with no established routes instead if working with large numbers.



Bolted anchor setup for top roping to avoid unnecessary wear to the in-situ anchor.

PHOTO: MIKE RAINE.

# ACCESS

## > OPEN ACCESS LAND

Some land across England and Wales can be accessed by recreational users without having to use rights of way or paths – this is known as ‘open access land’ or ‘access land’. These areas have been designated under the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) and climbing is specifically included as permitted activity on any access land. Areas of mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land are included and are marked on OS maps in a yellow wash.

for commercial use. In practice this means that if the primary purpose of a group visit to open access land is for recreation or education rather than profit (eg a club day out or a training course) then no charge should be made. Access land is occasionally subject to temporary restrictions, but these do not affect public rights of way (so you use these routes even when surrounding access land is closed).

Landowners must allow free use of open access land to recreational and educational users, but can charge

Dogs need to be kept on a short lead of no more than two metres between 1 March and 31 July each year to protect ground nesting birds, and at all times in the vicinity of livestock.

Signs used to show where designated Access Land starts and ends, usually attached to stiles, gates and fence posts. The left hand image shows the symbol for entering access land and the right hand image the symbol for leaving access land (not a no entry sign).



WATCH: One dog and his man

[www.thebmc.co.uk/dogs](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/dogs)

PHOTOS: JON GARSDIE

MAIN PHOTO: MIKE HUTTON



## Check access

Access information for individual crags can be found by checking the BMC's Regional Access Database (RAD). All access information is kept up to date, such as temporary climbing restrictions for nesting birds or agreed access routes to a crag. Crags on private land that are not available for group use are also listed.



The RAD can be viewed online at [www.thebmc.co.uk/rad](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/rad) or you can download a free iOS or Android smartphone app to check access details whilst out and about.



**WATCH:** Don't ruffle feathers by ignoring access restrictions

[www.thebmc.co.uk/birdsfilm](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/birdsfilm)



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

## > RIGHTS OF WAY & ACCESS LAND



### Area access:



**Access land boundary and tint:** gives a right of access on foot without having to stay on paths, specifically including walking and climbing.



**Access symbol:** marks the start of access land and area wide access on foot: usually placed on gates, stiles and fence posts.



**'Negative' access symbol:** marks the end of area wide access, although linear access such as public rights of way or permissive footpaths may exist beyond it: usually placed on gates, stiles and fence posts.

### Linear access:

..... **Path:** not a public right of way

..... **Footpath:** right of way on foot only

----- **Bridleway:** right of way on foot, horseback or bicycle (cyclists are obliged to give way to other users)

+++++ **Restricted byway:** right of way on foot, horseback, bicycle and non-mechanically propelled vehicles



**Byway open to all traffic:** as for restricted byway but including a right of way for motorised vehicles

Public rights of way can sometimes be diverted, removed, created or have the rights suspended, but only by the local highway authority. Official signs, posted by the authority, will be found on the route to tell you if there are any changes to the local network.

## > BMC CRAG CODE

- **RAD:** regularly check the Regional Access Database (RAD) for up to date access information
- **Parking:** park carefully – avoid blocking gates, driveways and the road
- **Footpaths:** keep to established paths – leave gates as you find them
- **Risk:** develop the skills to manage the risks associated with climbing and be aware of other people around you
- **Respect:** the rock, local climbing ethics and other people
- **Wildlife:** do not disturb livestock, wildlife or cliff vegetation; follow seasonal bird nesting restrictions
- **Dogs:** keep dogs under control at all times; don't let your dog chase sheep or disturb wildlife
- **Litter:** leave no trace – take all litter home with you
- **Sanitation:** don't make a mess – bury solid waste and carry out sanitary items
- **Economy:** do everything you can to support the rural economy – shop locally

## > LITTER

Plan ahead – if you carried it in, carry it out. Don't dig rubbish in to the ground or try to hide it under boulders - removing empty packets is much lighter than carrying in full ones. Remember that food waste is litter too, as are chalk wrappers, spilled chalk and finger tape. Do your bit for the environment and take away litter left by others.



Disposable BBQs leave unsightly scorch marks and are often left behind with other litter. By all means enjoy a picnic at the crag but leave BBQs at home and pack out your litter.



PHOTO: MIKE HUTTON.

## > FIRES & BBQS

Fires and BBQs can be highly destructive and have led to previous access problems with landowners. Whilst it's tempting to take disposable BBQs to the crag, they can start wild fires when not used carefully. Furthermore, the scorch marks left on the grass do not foster positive relationships between landowners and climbers.

A much more sensitive option if you want to heat food or water at the crag, is to use a purpose-built camping stove which is easily packed in and out, as well as leaving no trace of its use if used appropriately.

PHOTO: ROB DYER.

## > SANITATION

Very few crags have toilet facilities nearby, and a large concentration of climbers in a relatively small area can pose problems if you don't think about sanitation in advance. The best option is to 'go before you go', but inevitably we will all get caught short sometimes.

Solid human waste should be buried 15-20cm deep at least 50m from paths, crags or water sources. Burying waste at this depth means it is covered up but encourages rapid decomposition due to the active bacteria in the topsoil. Sanitary products should never be left behind, even if buried. Toilet paper should be burned in

Essential kit to deal with solid waste in the outdoors: a lightweight trowel, toilet paper, a strong ziplock bag and a lighter.



PHOTO: ROB DYER.

situ (if there is no fire risk) or placed in a sealable bag, packed out and disposed of when back in civilisation.



PHOTO: MIKE HUTTON.

## > CAMPING

Rough camping near to roads or civilisation is inconsiderate – use a campsite. Whilst wild camping in the uplands causes very few issues, camping for free next to a road will create tension with local residents. For more info on wild camping with a group, see the complimentary BMC publication The Green Guide for Groups of Walkers.

# Clean the Crags

## How long will your litter last?

Litter can take a lot longer to degrade than you think. If you see it, pick it up. If everyone does their bit our crags will stay clean.

Chalk wrapper  
1 month



Food waste  
2 years



Plastic bag  
10-20 years



Wine bottle  
Not biodegradable



Cigarette butt  
12 years



Plastic bottle  
450 years



# WHAT IS THE BMC?

The BMC stands up for climbers and walkers in England and Wales. Join over 80,000 members today to get gear discounts, Summit magazine, personal liability and accident insurance and the warm glow that comes from helping us keep crags open.

**Join today and support our vital work.**

**JOIN NOW:** go to [www.thebmc.co.uk/join](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/join) or phone **0161 445 6111**

## ➤ FURTHER READING & INFORMATION:



**READ: BMC Green Guide to the Uplands**  
A good practice guide for walkers, climbers and mountaineers.



[www.thebmc.co.uk/greenguide](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/greenguide)



**READ: Rock Climbing: Essential Skills & Techniques**  
The definitive and comprehensive 'how to rock climb' textbook.



[www.thebmc.co.uk/shop](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/shop)



**READ: Scottish Outdoor Access Code**  
Public access to Scotland's outdoors. Your rights and responsibilities.



[www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)



**READ: New Rock Climbers**  
Your free guide to heading outside for the first time - or refresher for the more experienced.



[www.thebmc.co.uk/new-rock-climbers](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/new-rock-climbers)



**READ: The Countryside Code**  
Respect. Protect. Enjoy.



[www.naturalengland.org.uk/countrysidecode](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/countrysidecode)



**READ: The Green Guide for Groups of Walkers**  
Minimal impact advice for walking groups of all sizes



[www.thebmc.co.uk/green-guide-walking-groups](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/green-guide-walking-groups)



**WATCH: BMC Rock Climbing Essentials DVD**  
An info-packed instructional DVD for those new to outdoor rock climbing.



[www.thebmc.co.uk/rockessentials](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/rockessentials)



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