

The Climbing Wall at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Operating Manual



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## **Manual Outline**

- I. Company Philosophy
  - 1. History of MITOC
  - 2. Goals and Objectives
- II. Operation Guidelines
  - 1. Hours of Operation
  - 2. Rules
  - 3. Instruction
  - 4. Documentation of Use
  - 5. Maintenance Inspections and Documentation
- III. Staff
  - 1. Schedule
  - 2. Duties and Responsibilities, Roles
  - 3. Staff Meetings
  - 4. Office Procedures,
  - 5. Activity Log
  - 6. Alcohol and Drug Policy
  - 7. Staff Qualifications
- IV. Safety Program and Documentation
  - 1. Safety Overview, Importance of 'what if' thinking
  - 2. Equipment Inspection Responsibilities
  - 3. Assumption of Risk Form and Procedure

## **I. Philosophy**

### **MITOC**

The MIT Outing Club (MITOC) was founded in 1935. Over the years the outing club has sponsored many trips and activities. Some of our members stay active with the club many years after graduating. The purpose of the MIT Outing Club, is to provide its members with the education and means to use, enjoy, and explore the out of doors in accordance with its Corporate Charter and its role as an MIT student organization.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The Climbing Wall at MIT is available to the entire MIT community, including present and past students, MIT Outing Club members, faculty, staff, and their immediate family (children, spouse). The Climbing Wall will provide challenges and basic instruction via classes to climbers of all levels. The Climbing Wall will be a location where students, faculty, and staff can interact outside the normal academic environments of MIT.

## **II. Operating Guidelines**

### **1. Hours of Operation**

Unless otherwise posted, the Climbing Wall will be open weekly on Friday at 9 pm until 12 am, Saturday 4 pm until 9 pm, and Sunday 2 pm until 6 pm. A staff member must staff the Climbing Wall anytime the Room is open.

### **2. Rules**

All participants, observers, and staff must abide by the rules. The rules will be prominently displayed within the Climbing Wall at all times. Individuals violating the Climbing Wall rules will be warned appropriately. The Climbing Wall staff reserves the exclusive right to expel any individuals failing to abide by the rules. The rules for the Climbing Wall are as follows:

1. All climbers must check in with the on-duty staff member.
2. All climbers must pass a spotting proficiency class and complete a Participant Agreement, Release, and Acknowledgement of Risk
3. Any minor must have the Participant Agreement signed by a parent or guardian.
4. Parents are responsible for the actions of their children.
5. Absolutely no drugs or alcohol are allowed at the climbing wall. If you have been consuming any such substance, remove yourself from the premises. The Campus Police will be summoned if you do not.
6. Please remove all jewelry, watches, keys, etc. These objects can cause injury to you and/or your spotter(s). These objects are also bad for the crash pads.
7. Never climb alone! You must ALWAYS have a spotter, who has completed the spotting class offered at the Climbing Wall, and there must always be a staff member present in the room.
8. PAY ATTENTION! If you are spotting a climber, your responsibility is to guide the person in the event of a fall. Not being attentive to the climbers every action/movement can result in injury to you, the climber, or others.
9. Only climbers on routes, spotters guarding climbers on route, and staff members may be in the climbing area of the Climbing Wall. If you are not one of the afore mentioned parties, you must remain in the warm-up/registration area of the Climbing Wall. Failure to do so may result in injury to yourself or others at the Climbing Wall and will lead to immediate removal.
10. The Climbing Wall is not responsible for lost or stolen articles.

### **3. Instruction**

The MIT Climbing Wall and its staff will provide Introduction to Spotting class on a regular basis during the weekends depending on the demand for the class. The sign-ups and times for the classes will be posted on the bulletin board outside the Climbing Wall. The classes will be limited to 6 people per session and will be run by at least one staff member. An outline of the spotting instruction can be found in the "Staff" section of this manual. Upon successful completion of the class and passing of the safety check, an individual will be allowed to spot or climb in the Climbing Wall.

#### 4. Maintenance Inspections and Documentation

Before the wall is opened each night, the wall should be inspected, as outlined in Section IV, Item 1, for any maintenance problems. It is within the discretion of the staff member on duty whether to open the Climbing Wall if a maintenance problem is found. Any problem should be reported immediately to the Climbing Wall manager(s).

### III. Staff

The Climbing Wall will be staffed at all times, when open. The MIT Climbing Wall Staff member may spot climbers as necessary. If there are not enough spotters available, the other climbers must wait for the climbing wall staff member to become available.

The MITOC and the Climbing Wall Staff members reserve the exclusive right to expel any person from the facility, who is not following the rules, posted at the Climbing Wall, or for any other legitimate reason. If a person refuses to leave, the climbing wall staff is encouraged to call the Campus Police. The MIT Climbing Wall staff member has the right to cease operation of the climbing wall, and close the wall for any reason. Participants must leave the climbing wall when instructed to do so by a climbing wall staff member

#### 1. Schedule

The staffing schedule will be posted on the bulletin board outside of the Climbing Wall and online. If a staff member cannot make a scheduled Climbing Wall operation time, he/she should notify the climbing-wall manager immediately.

#### 2. Duties and Responsibility, Roles

The responsibility of the staff is to maintain a safe environment for participants at the Climbing Wall. The staff is also responsible for teaching proper spotting methods. It is the mutual responsibility of the Climbing Wall Staff and the participants of the wall to conform to proper safety measures at all times, as outlined in this document.

#### 3. Staff Meetings

Staff meetings will be arranged as necessary to discuss any concerns that the staff has.

#### 4. Office Procedures, Phones

The staff of the wall should file all Participant Agreement, Release, and Acknowledgement of Risk forms, alphabetically in the filing cabinet located at the Climbing Wall. Every participant entering the Climbing Wall should be checked to ensure the individual has passed the safety check and has a signed Participant Agreement, Release, and Acknowledgement of Risk on file. The phone at the Climbing Wall is for informing the MIT community of the hours of operation of the wall and for summoning help in the event of an emergency. Each staff member must read, sign, and file, a Participant Agreement, Release, and Acknowledgement of Risk form.

#### 5. Activity Log

Whenever the Climbing Wall is open, the staff should track numbers of individuals climbing. It is suggested that there is a sign-in/sign-out sheet kept at the desk. At the end of each climbing period, the staff members should tally the number of climbers and record the number in the activity log.

#### 6. Alcohol and Drug Policy

Staff members of the Climbing Wall who consume drugs or alcohol are a liability to all individuals at the Bouldering Wall. Any staff member will be dismissed immediately, if s/he is determined by the manager(s) to be consuming such substances during hours of operation or if s/he is under the influence of illicit drugs or alcohol.

#### 7. Qualifications

To be a staff member at the MIT Climbing Wall, there are certain qualifications. These qualifications include:

1. Current CPR/First-Aid certification (from Red Cross, AHA, or similar organization)

2. Satisfactory completion of the spotting instruction course.

Upon completing the spotting instruction course as outlined below, the Climbing Wall Staff candidate will be reviewed by the MITOC Board of Directors. The right to accept or reject a staff member candidate is reserved for the Board of Directors.

### IV. Safety Program and Documentation

#### 1. Equipment Inspection Responsibilities

Before the wall opens every Friday night, the staff member present should take time to do an inspection of the wall. It is suggested that the staff member look at the previous week's entry in the maintenance log. It is up to the discretion of the staff member to open the wall. An inspection should include, but is not limited to, insuring the landing pads are properly positioned, examining the Climbing Wall structure for wear and/or damage.

#### 2. Spotting Script (including safety orientation)

Script for an instruction class for spotters

**Overview:** The spotting class will last approximately one hour. The first half of the class will be instruction and demonstration by a trained Bouldering Wall staff member. The second half hour will be for practicing techniques just learned.

1. Introduction to the facility and explanation of bouldering
  - a. Instructor shows around the wall, pointing out vertical and overhanging sections.
2. Explanation of purpose and style of bouldering:

Short climbs, no ropes: Every fall is a ground fall
3. Safety features of the gym
  - a. Instructor points out mats. Explains that they should be clear of all items (e.g. food, drink, gear, shoes, people) that could potentially cause a falling climber to injure his or her ankle or back.
  - b. Spotting
    1. Instructor talks about what spotting is, why it is used, when it should be used and how it should be performed.
      - a. This is approximately what the instructor has to say:
        1. About spotting in general:

Spotting is a crucial part of climbing extreme bouldering routes. The goal of a spotter is not to catch a bouldering climber when they fall, but to break their fall to prevent a serious head injury and steer them into a safe landing. Assume a solid stance on the ground, with legs slightly bent, and arms outstretched towards the climber and slightly bent, ready to break a fall. If the situation could result in a potentially dangerous fall, get two or even three spotters to break the climber's fall. This is more of a concern in outdoors scenarios with taller boulders.
        2. About spotting priorities:
          - i. Your highest priority is to protect the boulderer's head and spine.
          - ii. The next priority is to steer the boulderer toward a good landing.
          - iii. Last, if possible, reduce the force of the boulderer's fall.
      - b. To spot well, know the problem and anticipate the moves. Focus on the boulderer's center of gravity. With most men this is a few inches above the belt line. With most women, it is at the belt line. Don't make the mistake of watching hands, arms, feet, or legs. These tend to fly about giving the appearance that the climber is falling, even though he or she may still be hanging on.
      3. About spotting technique for vertical walls:

A climber will usually fall feet first from a vertical wall. Grab the boulderer by the hips and steer him to a good landing. Absorb some of the fall with your arms and legs. The boulderer absorbs the rest of the impact with his or her legs. [Instructor demonstrates position].
      4. About spotting technique for overhanging walls:

When falling off overhangs the body often falls at an angle to the ground, instead of feet first. In these hazardous cases grab further up the body (above the center of gravity), along the upper lats or underarm. This will cause the body to rotate feet downward. Steer the climber to a good landing and absorb the impact as above. [Instructor demonstrates the technique with a partner].
      5. About common sense and judgment of situation:

Sometimes the best a spotter can do is push the falling climber away from danger and into a safer landing position. This is more of a concern for outdoors bouldering. However, even in the gym, one should always make sure that the safety rules are being followed, and no danger is created. Over-zealous spotting is preferred to no spotting, but you should not support the climber while he or she is still on the problem - your job as a spotter is to break the climber's fall when he or she is falling.
4. Instructor repeats safety rules:
  - a. Keep mats clean and clear of all items
  - b. Keep clear of area if not spotting (i.e. don't walk underneath a climber)
  - c. Use caution when climbing and don't climb in each other's way
  - d. As a climber, be aware of your body position so you can land safely on your feet
  - e. Use a spot if you need it
  - f. Use common sense and good judgment and be aware of your surroundings
5. Practice spotting

All practice happens one at a time, with instructor(s) watching.

Scenario 1: Feet-first fall from a vertical wall

Scenario 2: Fall from an overhang

- Scenario 3: Fall from a weird position overhanging (climber remembers to be aware of his or her position and try to land safely, spot remembers to steer to safe landing)
- Scenario 4: Two spotters working together (making sure they know each other's responsibilities)

## Outline for Certification of Spotting Instructors

### 1. Introduction

- All climbers at the gym must have a spotter.

### 2. Gym safety features and rules reminder

- Keep mats clean and clear of all items
- Keep clear of area if not spotting (i.e. don't walk underneath a climber)
- Use caution when climbing and don't climb in each other's way
- As a climber, be aware of your body position so you can land safely on your feet
- Use a spot if you need it
- Use common sense and good judgment and be aware of your surroundings

### 3. Spotters' class outline

The class will include an introduction to the gym, an explanation of the purpose of spotting, a show of spotting techniques, and a practice session. At least one instructor and one experienced climber should be present at the class for demonstration purposes. The class script should be followed approximately, with the instructor making sure all the essentials are covered, especially the safety rules.

[Documents are distributed to future instructors Time given to instructors to read them]

### 4. Practice instruction

[Class splits into small groups of 3-4 people for the practice session. Future instructors take turns mock-teaching the rest of the group by following the script]

### 5. Safety reminder

Remember to always conclude the spotters' class with a reminder of the safety rules in the gym.

The class to train spotting instructors will be run by two climbing wall instructors. New instructors will be considered fully ready to teach after having been an assistant instructor for at least two spotting classes, which are run by an already certified spotting instructor.



**Liability Release, Waiver, Discharge and Covenant Not to Sue**

This is a legally binding Release, Waiver, Discharge and Covenant Not to Sue (collectively, "Release"), made voluntarily by me, the undersigned Releasor, on my own behalf, and on the behalf of my heirs, executors, administrators, legal representatives and assigns (hereinafter collectively, "Releasor," "I" or "me", which terms shall also include Releasor's parents or guardian, if Releasor is under 18 years of ages) to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology ("MIT") and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Outing Club ("MITOC").

As the undersigned Releasor, I have read and understood the rules of the Climbing Wall. I fully recognize that there are dangers and risks to which I may be exposed in utilization of the Climbing Wall. I also acknowledge the risks involved in climbing without a helmet, and I personally accept any risks resulting in not wearing a helmet.

As the undersigned Releasor, I understand that MIT does not require me to participate in utilization of the Climbing Wall, but I want to do so despite the possible dangers and risks and despite this Release. With informed consent, and for valuable consideration received including assistance provided by MIT, as the undersigned Releasor, I agree to assume and take on myself all of the risks and responsibilities in any way arising from or associated with this activity, and I release MIT, the MITOC and all of its affiliates, divisions, departments, and other units, committees and groups, and its and their respective governing boards, officers, directors, principals, trustees, legal representatives, members, owners, employees, agents, administrators, assigns, and contractors (collectively "Releasees"), from any and all claims, demands, suits, judgments, damages, actions and liabilities of every name and nature whatsoever, whenever occurring, whether known or unknown, contingent or fixed, at law or in equity, that I may suffer at any time arising from or in connection with the activity, including any injury or harm to me, my death, or damage to my property (collectively "Liabilities"), and I agree to defend, indemnify, and save Releasees harmless from and against any and all Liabilities.

As the undersigned Releasor, I recognize that this Release means that I am giving up, among other things, all rights to sue Releasees for injuries, damages or losses I may incur. I also understand that this Release binds my heirs, executors, administrators, legal representatives and assigns, as well as myself. I also affirm that I have adequate medical or health insurance to cover any medical assistance I may require.

I agree that this Release shall be governed for all purposes by Massachusetts law, without regard to such law on choice of law.

I have read this entire Release. I fully understand the entire Release and acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to review this Release with an attorney of my choosing if I so desire, and I agree to be legally bound by the Release.

THIS IS A RELEASE OF YOUR RIGHTS, READ CAREFULLY AND UNDERSTAND BEFORE SIGNING.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Releasor's Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent's Signature, if Signatory is minor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)