



Bouldering Safety Operating Procedure (SOP)

1. Purpose

This SOP outlines the safe planning and delivery of the Bouldering activity to ensure risks are effectively managed and all participants are provided with a safe, enjoyable and well-supervised experience.

Bouldering involves climbing at low height without climbing ropes or harnesses and therefore requires specific supervision, spotting and participant management procedures.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all AOEC staff, instructors, supervising adults and participants involved in the Bouldering activity at Aongatete Outdoor Education Centre.

Due to the nature of the activity, all Bouldering sessions must be led by a trained and competent AOEC instructor.

Schools and groups are not permitted to provide their own Bouldering instructors.

3. Description of Activity

Bouldering is a form of climbing undertaken at low height without the use of climbing ropes or harnesses.

Participants develop climbing skills, balance, coordination, problem-solving, confidence and teamwork.

Participants work in pairs or small groups, with one participant climbing while another acts as a spotter where required.

Participants must remain below the designated red line and follow all instructor directions regarding safe climbing height, movement and spotting.

Sessions are generally planned in 1-hour blocks, although session length may be adjusted during the camp planning process to suit the age, ability and needs of the group.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

AOEC Instructors - Lead and manage the activity safely - Conduct pre-session safety checks and equipment inspections - Deliver safety briefings and bouldering instructions - Supervise all bouldering activities and monitor participant safety - Coordinate emergency response if required.

Supervising Adults (Teachers/Parents) - Retain duty of care for students at all times - Remain actively engaged throughout the activity - Ensure participants follow safety instructions - Monitor students who are climbing and spotting - Monitor student behaviour and maintain discipline where required - Assist with risk management and emergency response if required. Participants - Follow all instructions - Wear required clothing and use correct climbing and spotting techniques - Disclose relevant medical or behavioural conditions - Behave responsibly and not place themselves or others at risk.

5. Instructor Requirements

- Minimum of one trained AOEC instructor per session (maximum 15 participants).
- Groups larger than 15 participants require a minimum of two instructors.
- New instructors complete competency training consisting of: Use correct climbing and spotting techniques. Use correct climbing and spotting techniques.
- Returning & Seasonal Instructors are updated with new safety practices and procedures
- Risk Management Workshops are held on a regular basis for all instructors.
- Instructors must be familiar with:
 - Bouldering wall operating procedures.
 - Equipment and facility inspection requirements.
 - Emergency procedures
 - Risk management systems (RAMS)

Schools and groups may not provide their own climbing instructors.

6. Ratios

- Minimum instructor ratio: 1 instructor per 15 participants. Larger groups require 2 instructors.
 - Supervising adult ratio: Minimum of two supervising adult per session.
 - Ratios may be increased depending on participant age, confidence, ability, or additional support requirements.
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7. Pre-Activity Requirements

7.1 Risk Disclosure & Medical Information

- Medical conditions, injuries, behavioural needs and relevant fitness considerations must be disclosed prior to the activity.
- A responsible adult must be assigned for participants requiring medication

7.2 Equipment Checks

Before each session, the instructor must inspect the activity area and equipment.

Equipment must be provided, checked and maintained in accordance with AOEC procedures and the applicable activity safety guideline.

Any damaged or unsuitable equipment must be removed from use and reported to AOEC Management.

Personal climbing or Bouldering equipment must not be used unless it has been approved as suitable and signed off by AOEC Management.

7.3 Clothing Requirements & Checks

Participants must: Wear long shorts, long trousers, tights or track pants - Remove jewellery where appropriate - Tie long hair back - Climb barefoot where practical - Participants must bring any required personal medication.

7.4 Other Requirements

- Participants must complete the instructor safety briefing before bouldering
 - ENSURE participants bring their personal medication with them, and that there is someone present (adult supervisor) who knows how to administer it
 - Participants are encouraged to use the bathroom before the session
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8. Environmental & Weather Assessment (Go/No-Go Criteria)

The activity must not proceed if:

- Critical climbing equipment is damaged or unavailable.
- The climbing structure is unsafe.
- Instructor supervision cannot be maintained.

Guiding principle: If in doubt, stop the activity.

Instructors must:

- Complete pre-session inspections.
 - Continuously monitor participant safety.
 - Stop climbing immediately if safety is compromised.
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9. Safety Briefing (Mandatory for all participants)

Must include:

- Correct spotting techniques
- Waiting and movement procedures
- Safe climbing practices

Supervising adults must be present and engaged during the briefing.

10. Activity Management

During the activity:

- Participants climb only when instructed or when the activity structure allows.
 - Supervising adults actively monitor participants and spotting.
 - Participant behaviour must be continuously monitored.
 - The instructor must intervene immediately if unsafe climbing, spotting or behaviour is observed.
 - The activity must be stopped if the facility, equipment or participant behaviour creates an unacceptable risk.
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11. Emergency Response (Summary)

In the event of an incident:

- Instructor takes control of situation.
 - Activity is stopped immediately.
 - First aid is administered by trained person
 - Emergency services contacted via 111 if required
 - AOEC Management notified immediately.
 - Group managed and kept safe by supervising adults
 - Designated person meets emergency services at access point
 - All incidents must be reported to AOEC management and recorded.
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12. Environmental Care (Reinforce this to the students)

- Respect the climbing facility and equipment.
- Use equipment only as instructed.
- Return all equipment and report damaged equipment immediately.
- Leave the Activities Centre clean and tidy.
- Treat the facility and others with respect.

Bouldering - Risk Analysis & Management

	Prepared by: Karen Tobich & Emily Underwood Approved by: Board of Trustee - Nisha Duncan		Date: 03/08/2026	Next Review Date: 03/08/2027	
	Risk Rating System: Likelihood (1–5) x Consequence (1–5): 1–5 Low - 6–10 Moderate - 11–15 High				
	What would cause someone to get hurt?	What could happen?	Risk Rating	Risk Management Control Measures	Risk Rating
	Hazards/Harm	Risk	Initial	What can be prevented? By Whom?	Post Control
People	• Group Leaders/Supervising Adults not familiar with activity instructions, responsibilities & risks	• Major Injury • Minor Injury • Physical Wellbeing (cold, hot, wet) • Damage to Equipment • Loss of mana • Boredom/Frustration	9	• Activity Leaders / Adult Supervisors familiarise themselves with Activity Instructions, Responsibilities and RAMS prior to camp/ activity commencement.	2
	• Poor Instructions/Understanding of Activity	• Major Injury • Minor Injury • Physical Wellbeing (cold, hot, wet) • Damage to Equipment • Loss of mana • Boredom/Frustration	6	• Brief group through instructions, safety guidelines & hazards	2
	• Lack of Support/Spotting	• Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• Adequate adult supervision, additional support for participants with behaviour issues or disabilities. • Participants must be supervised. • Participants must be paired with a spotter	2
	• Poor Listening Skills & unruly behaviour	• Major injury • Minor Injury Damage to Equipment	6	• Students waiting to boulder to be calmly sitting down or occupy with small games while supervised by adults.	3
	• Special Needs not identified	• Major Injury • Minor Injury • Loss of mana	6	• Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults. Ensure there is a knowledgeable adult able to deal with that condition/issue.	3
	• Student/Group Leader/Supervising Adult becomes incapacitated (Injury, heart attack, asthma, etc)	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	10	• Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults. Ensure there is a knowledgeable adult able to deal with that condition/issue. • Other adults in group must know what to do in an emergency. • Follow the Emergency Action Plan	6
Equipment	• Poor Clothing & Footwear	• Major injury • Minor Injury	4	• At the beginning ensure that everyone in group (students and adults) are wearing appropriate clothing and foot ware.Recommend bare feet. Dress according to the weather, even inside can be cold or too hot	2
	• Hard Surface	• Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• Spotting with paired similar size to partner, do not try to catch a falling participant but assist lowering the, safety to the ground, protecting their head and neck. • Extra padding on high fall areas	4
	• Slippery Equipment and slippery floors	• Major injury • Minor Injury	4	• Make sure hands and feet are dry before bouldering • Remove wet shoes/socks at the door	2
	• Damaged equipment	• Major injury • Minor Injury	3	• Rock Wall inspected yearly by AOEC Staff • Any damaged equipment marked and fixed ASAP • Halt/cancel activity if it is no longer safe to use	2
	• No first aid kit on site	• Major injury • Minor Injury	8	• Ensure First Aid kit is on site	4
Environment	• Weather unsuitable for session, activity centre can become very warm in summer and cold in the winter	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Hyperthermia/hypothermia	8	• Ensure participants are dressed for the weather conditions, open doors and windows to keep cooler in the summer.	3
	• Climbing wall becoming wet and slippery from students coming in from rain	• Minor injury • Major Injury	6	• Keep wet gear at the door, towel off feet and hands if need.	3

Emergency Plan	First Aid	Medical Treatment	Serious Injury
	Who is the trained and nominated First Aider	Follow Emergency Action Plan Discussed at Pre Activity Safety Talk and at Safety Stations	See Emergency Action Plan discussed at Safety Talks and at Safety Stations
	First Aid Kit - Instructors have this	- Katikati Medical Centre 07 549 0411 4 - Clive Road, Katikati	Call 111 or activate PLB
	Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults and knowledgeable person to deal with it	Tauranga Hospital, Cameron Road, Tauranga 07 579 8000	Nominate someone to meet Emergency Services at Gate
	Incident & Accident Reporting	Report to AOEC Management - Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station	Report to AOEC Management - Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station