

BELAYING PROTOCOL



**WORLD
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1. Introduction

Climbing and its associated belaying is very specific in the world of Climbing. The style, the methods, and the pace is unique. One cannot underestimate the very human connection between the athlete and their belayer. There is no other sport where an official—whether a known hire or a volunteer stranger—is more directly involved in an athlete’s safety *and* performance. And in Climbing, an athlete’s performance is the *raison d’être*, and in many cases, their livelihood.

Unlike setters and judges, who generally remain out of view, the athlete-belayer relationship is public, personal, and powerful. Within this connection lies a certain faith; the belief that the belayer is skilled enough to keep the athlete unharmed in all scenarios, and the hope that the belayer is competent enough to allow the athlete to push their performance to its limits.

This faith manifests through skills and through heuristics. The behaviors and actions of your belayer—and those of the entire belay team—will convey information that may impact how athletes focus on their climbing. Ideally, there should be nothing for the athlete to consider. But, at present, there is much variation between competitions and among individual belayers.

Impression formation extends beyond safety checks and safe catches. Every observable belayer action conveys important information to athletes. It is the responsibility of the belayers (and the expectation of the athletes) that belaying is performed in a safe, consistent, and professional manner. Safety, consistency, and professionalism should be the demonstrable standard within and between events. There should never be an impression of favoritism.

In our majestic sport there is room for more belay uniformity across competitions; a baseline expectation to keep athletes confident that their belay meets certain standards. Yet there will always be room for regional variation with uniforms, procedures, and presentation.

The top athletes are getting better. Stakes are getting higher. Simultaneously, new nations with less experienced climbers are entering the competition circuit. Setting is becoming more difficult. Belaying practices must be able and ready to serve all athletes. Climbing athletes, with the support of setters and belayers form a balanced triangle that allows the sport to safely evolve.

One should never belay because one is solely a fan of the sport. The belayer is not granted this trusted access to mingle with athletes or solicit autographs. The belayer is not belaying to watch the competition. The belayer is additive, not a distraction. Belaying is not a matter of luck.

Belaying is a noble calling built upon skill, experience, mental acuity, and a disciplined presence. Training should support technique, procedure, and fitness. The next generation competition belayer will strive to become trained belaying professionals in all aspects. Member Nation belayers and officials will participate in the growth of the Belaying Protocol.

2. Belaying Officials

Refer to Technical Officials Terms of Reference Appendix VIII for full details.

2.1. Head (Para) Belayer

The Head (Para) Belayer is responsible for the planning, coordination, and supervision of all belaying operations during Lead and Para Climbing competitions, ensuring full compliance with World Climbing Rules, technical regulations, and safety standards. Appointed by the LOC or World Climbing, the Head Belayer develops and implements the belay plan, recruits and prepares an appropriate team of belayers, verifies equipment compliance, and oversees all belaying activities within the Competition Area. The role includes leading and managing the belay team to ensure effective communication, clear role allocation, and safe execution of all operations, while addressing technical or safety issues promptly. The Head Belayer participates in pre-competition briefings, coordinates with line judges, and liaises with the Jury President, Event Delegate, Head Routesetter, and other Technical Officials to ensure athlete welfare, safety, and competition integrity throughout the competition.

2.2. (Para) Belayer

The (Para) Belayer is responsible for safely and effectively performing all belaying duties during Lead and Para Climbing competitions, under the direction of the Head (Para) Belayer. This role includes following Call Zone protocols, using belay equipment correctly, and executing belaying techniques consistently and professionally on the Field of Play. (Para)

Belayers work as part of a coordinated team, maintaining clear communication and adherence to safety standards, and liaise with the Head Belayer and other relevant officials to support smooth, safe, and fair athlete progression throughout the competition.

3. Belay Team

All competition belayers, including the Head Belayer, must be endorsed by the LOC for the type(s) of belaying they will conduct or oversee and are required to follow this *Belaying Protocol* in all operations. The Belay Team is managed by the Head Belayer, who is selected by the Host Federation or organizing body, and works closely with the Jury President and Event Delegate to ensure alignment with competition standards and operational needs. Belayers shall be selected according to LOC procedures, with Head Belayers responsible for providing qualified belayers for each event. Team formation prioritizes athlete safety, belay competency, fairness, and consistency, enabling competitors to focus fully on their climbing. Where possible, the belay team should also reflect diversity considerations, including gender and other relevant factors, while maintaining the highest standards of professional belaying.

For belay assignments, the Head Belayer should consider the following:

- More experienced belayers may be assigned to the more difficult-to-belay routes as determined by Head Belayer in conjunction with Head Routesetter and Jury President.
- Belayers should be assigned according to their strengths.
- Belayers should not normally be assigned to belay a category that contains their relative or someone they coach. The Head Belayer should inform the Jury President of any exceptions.

Belayers are to be reassigned, or removed from the belay team if it is determined that they are unable or unwilling to safely and effectively perform their duties as determined by the Jury President or the Head Belayer.

The Head Belayer should, as soon as reasonably possible, brief a reassigned or removed belayer with the reason(s) for their reassignment or removal.

4. Belay Procedures

4.1. Before the competition day

Head Belayer should complete a Belay Plan (see Appendix I):

- Assign an Assistant Head Belayer
- Determine number of line belayers needed for each round
- Determine number of safety belayers needed (if necessary)
- Determine number of rope handlers needed (if necessary)
- Share important event information (links)
- Spotting is probably not necessary in majority of cases, however, determine if spotting is necessary. If determined necessary, spot both all athletes of both genders, never only one gender nor a selection of athletes
- Set expectations for gear
- Set expectations for uniform
- Set expectations for procedures
- Set expectations for protocols/behaviour: closed toe shoes are mandatory

The Head Belayer may assist in or determine the belaying equipment to be used:

- Belay device(s) - ATC is elite standard
- Carabiners - auto locking is preferable
- Harnesses - comfortable, durable
- Gloves - two is elite standard
- Rope baskets - soft but rigid
- Prism glasses - not advisable
- Ropes - ~50 m / 9.5-9.8 (verify with Head Routesetter)

Belayers should use the equipment with which they are most familiar

- Belay devices need the approval of the Event Delegate, JP, or Head Belay

Develop a training and preparation opportunities:

- To determine appropriate Call Zone protocols and expectations
- To understand competition flow: to determine field of play entry and climb approach procedures
- To practice catches using dynamic rope control
- To understand the predetermined belay order: no glory or pity belaying

4.2. Before each round

- Belay team should meet to review routes, staging and Call Zone protocol, and belay procedures
- Note potential trip hazards from Call Zone to Field of Play: mark if necessary
- Note potential swing hazards into which an athlete could swing
- Consult the Head Routesetter for information about the route (blue crosses, areas of concern, and timing of brush breaks, etc.)
- Work with belaying partners to know common belay start side and other safety and consistency procedures
- Know and adhere to belaying order as it fits with start list order, no preferential belays
- Check and prepare rope supply and rope bags
- Check the field of play for debris, especially setting screws, clean as appropriate
- Determine if ropes will be pulled from climb or belayer side of the system

4.3. In the Call Zone

- Uncoil ropes and properly load them into rope bags prior to engaging athletes
- Verify that you are engaging the correct competitor. If appropriate, check bib number against the start list
- Provide rope end to next-up athletes and allow athletes to tie-in
- Where appropriate, quickly and introduce yourself as the athlete's belayer
- Attach your belay device to your harness
- Perform brief safety check while looking over entire system
 - Acknowledge that the athlete has tied a figure eight knot with "safety knot" - "Your knot is good"
 - Acknowledge that athlete's climbing harness is worn correctly - "Your harness looks great"
 - If a climber's harness or knot is out of compliance, calmly have them remedy
 - Show the belayer's side of the system to your athlete
 - Demonstrate that the rope is appropriately loaded into the system with a sharp tug - "My side of the system is engaged..."
 - Demonstrate that carabiner is locked- "...and the carabiner is locked"
- Never touch athletes, if an adjustment needs to be made, ask the athlete to make it
- Be mindful of the athlete's concentration and space and only communicate as necessary
- If there is a problem, contact the Head Belay or Jury President

4.4. During belaying

- Walk athlete to route start avoiding active belay/climb/fall areas. Determine prior to round what side to walk to avoid field of play confusion
- Position the rope bag away from fall zone or footwork area
- During attempt approach, the belayer should position the rope on the side where it is anticipated climbers will make their first clip and not between climber's legs – an athlete may specify preferences to where approach rope is placed
- Partners should start belay from the same side, if a change must be made, both partners change

- Keep the area in front of the wall clear
- Place the rope bag away from the wall and prepare a few meters of rope for easy handling
- Do not stand under the competitor (at start), but close enough to the wall to assure safety
- Keep close to the wall for the first 2-3 quickdraws, then the belayer can stand in optimal position
- Be aware about rope aid and provide sufficient slack to avoid short roping
- On first few clips, provide rope “as needed” to avoid having enough slack for a ground fall
- Never release the brake strand
- Be aware of athletes who may clip more than one quickdraw in one movement
- Do not communicate with athlete during attempt
- Focus on the athlete’s movements, especially clipping and prepare for a fall at any point
- Absorb the fall dynamically which is not synonymous to a long fall
- Absorb the fall safely – sometimes a longer fall is needed in order to avoid hitting hazards (wall, other athletes, etc.)
- Never touch athletes; if an emergency catch is warranted, the belayer should reach for the rope or the gear loop on the harness, not the athlete's body parts
- Lower the athlete in a controlled manner with both hands on brake strand
- If there is a concern, contact the Jury President or the Route Judge immediately

4.5. After the attempt

Once athlete is back to the floor:

- Immediately provide courtesy slack so athlete can untie their knot
- Disconnect yourself from the belay system
- Direct the athlete away from the wall or where rope may fall
- If athlete needs assistance with knot, let them ask
 - Never assist with untying knot unless asked or invited
 - If athlete is struggling, you may as if help is needed
 - Assist from a kneeling position so work in the harness region is observable
- Pull rope through the system as soon as the competitor is lowered to the ground
 - Pull rope from climber side while the climber is untying
 - Pull rope directly into rope bag leaving climber’s side out
 - Tuck climber side of rope into bottom of flaked rope
- Check the quickdraws after pulling down the climbing rope
- Direct athletes to field of play exit

5. Recommendations for Belaying Practices (Lead and Top Rope)

5.1. Introduction

A belayer’s top priority and responsibility is safety.

A belayer should also be impartial. A belayer should avoid conversations with competitors and

spectators. Likewise, spectators (including coaches) should never engage belayers in conversation. A belayer should avoid any action that hinders or helps the competitor, unless that action is for the safety of the competitor.

A belayer must perform a full equipment check every climb: harnesses (climber & belayer); belay device; carabiners; Figure-8 and safety knots; The equipment check should be conducted verbally, showing the competitor what checks are being performed. Along with showing the climber the belay device setup, the belayer should squeeze the locking carabiner to demonstrate that it is indeed locked. A belayer should perform these checks before every climb.

A belayer is strongly advised to avoid physically contacting a competitor. Where possible, ask for consent before touching a climber or approaching their personal space. (e.g. to help them untie the knot from their harness.) If a climber is swinging in a dangerous manner, a belayer should attempt to grab the rope or a utility loop on the harness, unless a safety issue dictates more direct contact with the climber.

If a belayer becomes physically or mentally tired, or otherwise needs a rest, the belayer must inform the Head Belayer immediately. In no case should a belayer continue to belay if they feel they cannot perform the belaying job appropriately and safely.

A belayer must recognize the roles of the competition officials, including the Jury President, the Head Routesetter, and the Head Belayer. Where and when possible, all feedback (rope control, slack, footwork) for the belayer will be channeled through the Head Belayer.

A belayer should not take this feedback personally, as the Head Belayer (and others) may be able to see things the belayer cannot see, and it is the Head Belayer's role to help the belayer and to keep the competitors safe. Any feedback that one belayer has for another belayer should generally be channeled through the Head Belayer when possible.

All belayers must recognize and remember that spectators are watching their belaying, either in-person or often on an event broadcast. Safe, professional, impartial and fair belaying, and behavior, is a critical part of these events.

5.2. Manufacturer Specifications and LOC Policies

All climbing and safety equipment used during any World Climbing competition or event, including but not limited to harnesses and belay devices, must be used in full compliance with manufacturers' specifications. Nothing in this guide is intended to conflict with the manufacturers' specifications. However, to the extent there is a conflict between this guide and any manufacturers' specifications, the manufacturers' specifications shall govern regarding the use of all climbing and safety equipment.

At World Climbing competitions or events, all belay practices must be in accordance with (and in compliance with) the Host Facility's policies and standards. To the extent that there is a conflict between this guide and a Host Facility's policies and standards, the Host Facility's policies and standards shall govern all belay practices.

The Head Belayer, in coordination with the LOC, should, as early as possible, review the policies and standards for the Host Facility. To the extent that the Head Belayer and/or LOC have questions or concerns about the policies and standards, they should discuss these concerns with the Host Facility representative to determine if event-specific policies can be established that provide a more appropriate environment for World Climbing competition belaying at the event. However, the Host Facility has the final authority over the policies and standards for belaying.

5.3. Equipment

5.3.1. Climbing Rope

- The use of any climbing rope must meet the manufacturer's specifications and recommendations.
- The length of the rope must be confirmed with the Host Facility and Head Routesetter to be sufficient for safe climbing on all the competition routes, taking into account the wall topology and possible belay positions.
- When the LOC provides climbing ropes, those ropes should be run through the hands of the Head Belayer or their designee(s) (e.g. members of the belay team) prior to the competition, and periodically during the competition as necessary. These checks may include "bend tests" in the 10 meters on each end.
- When the event requires or allows competitors to provide the climbing rope they use, the Head Belayer and the LOC must determine the policies and process regarding accepting such ropes for use, including determining suitability of a rope, and how to provide a substitute rope (e.g., event rope) if necessary.
- The climbing rope must be flaked prior to the start of the competition, and between each climb that uses the rope.
- During flaking, the rope should be visually and physically checked each time, looking for obvious damage.
- If a rope is moved or if someone disrupts a flaked/staked rope, that rope must be reflaked/restacked prior to belaying a competitor.
- The rope should also be checked for blood, especially if a climber has an open wound.

- If concerned about the condition of the rope leading to a safety issue, the rope must be immediately taken out of service and marked with bright tape (e.g., red, pink, orange).
- Consult the Head Belayer or Head Routesetter when taking the rope out of service.
- If this would result in a climbing rope not being available, the Jury President should be immediately notified, along with the Head Routesetter.
- Pre-flaked backup rope(s) should be available to replace ropes pulled from service.

5.3.2. Climbing Harness

- The use of any climbing harness must meet the manufacturer's specifications and recommendations.
- The belayer's climbing harness should be in good and safe condition, with no visible defects.
- The harness must be worn over all clothing, and fully visible to technical officials, other belayers and competitors.

5.3.3. Belay Device

- The use of any belay device must meet the manufacturer's specifications and recommendations. The belayer's belay device must be in good condition, and the operation of that device must be known and familiar to the Head Belayer.
- The Head Belayer and the route belayer should evaluate the belay device and its suitability to the climber safety, the particular route that was set, as well as other factors (e.g., density of routes and belayers, weight differential, etc.).
- Tube/manual style belaying devices (e.g., ATC) are mandated by rule.

5.3.4. Belay Gloves

- The use of belay gloves must meet the manufacturer's specifications and recommendations, if any.
- The use of belay gloves is strongly encouraged, but only if the belayer is comfortable with belay gloves and has good experience using them while belaying.

5.3.5. Belay Glasses

- The use of belay glasses must meet the manufacturer's specifications and recommendations.
- Belay glasses are a tool that a competition belayer may choose to use. As with any tool or technique, experienced and educated judgment must be applied and the Head Belayer may instruct a belayer not to use belay glasses if it is deemed to present more risks than benefits in a particular setting, or if it is judged that the belayer lacks experience with them. If a belayer is so instructed, the belayer may elect not to belay without belay glasses, in which case they would be replaced.
- The use of belay glasses impacts the field of view and depth of field and it takes time and experience to adjust to the lack of peripheral vision when looking through the glasses. Once adjusted, an experienced belayer may appreciate the narrower field of vision which allows a better focus on the climber and the magnification that allows to see the climber's actions in greater detail. An experienced belayer will also be able to quickly switch from looking through the glasses to under or on the sides when appropriate.
- The belayer should look directly at the climber through the first two clips.
- Belayers should not use belay glasses for the first time at a competition. Before using belay glasses at a World Climbing competition, a belayer should have experience with belay glasses while catching competition

climbers pushing themselves, including climbing well past their last clip. (An athlete climbing past a legitimate position needs to be safely caught.)

- Different models of belay glasses have different fields of vision and a belayer should use only a model that they are experienced with.
- A belayer using belay glasses should recognize that competition belaying has characteristics that are significantly different than gym, recreation, project, or outdoor Climbing.

5.3.6. Shoes

All belayers must wear closed-toe shoes while belaying in a World Climbing competition.

5.3.7. Uniform

- All belayers at World Climbing events must wear the selected (uniform) jersey, t-shirt, badge, or other belaying designation, if available.
- Some event may require that specific clothing and equipment display only World Climbing approved branding

5.4. General Recommendations for Belaying

5.4.1. Safety

- All equipment should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications and recommendations.
- Belayers must perform a thorough but brief safety check before every belay.
 - Check the climber's harness, climber's knot and finishing knot (if any).
 - Show the climber that your belay device is properly fed/loaded with rope and attached to your harness.
 - Show the climber that your carabiner is locked.
 - All checks should be done, verbally, such that the climber can hear.
 - Never allow the climber to start climbing until the belay device is loaded properly, and all checks (both belayer and climber) are completed.
 - Never unload (unthread) the rope from the belay device once the climber has started climbing.
 - World Climbing requires a Figure-8 follow-through knot, with a "safety knot."
 - Neither a Figure-9 finish nor a Yosemite finish is a "safety knot."
 - Inspect all knots. If you don't recognize the knot, ask the Head Belayer to examine the knot or ask the climber to re-tie the knot.
- The Belayer can assist with untying of the knot, but only after requested by the climber or given permission by the climber, while on the field of play. The same applies to assisting with locking carabiners on a Top Rope route. Avoid touching the climber, unless a safety issue dictates otherwise.
- Belay in a safe manner, with approved techniques.
- Belay only with techniques that you are experienced with, comfortable with, and competent to perform.
- All taking in of slack (mostly Top Rope, but occasionally with Lead) must be done using the PBUS (Pull, Brake, Under, Slide) method. Important characteristics of PBUS:
 - When taking in slack, only slide your brake hand when the rope is held in the brake position – held down, not up.
 - When taking in slack, only slide your brake hand up when your other hand is holding the rope under your brake hand without placing brake strand in guide hand
- Always maintain proper brake-hand control of the brake-side of the rope coming out of the belay device.

5.4.2. Focus

- Pay attention. Your best belay will be when you are completely focused on your climber. Take it seriously because it shows when you do, and especially shows when you don't.
- Don't talk with other people while you're belaying.

- Your climber wants to know that you are paying full attention to them. If the climber looks down at you, they want to see you looking at them. If the climber hears you talking with someone, they will think you're not paying attention.
- Ideally, you should be able to see both hands and both feet of your climber.
- Pay attention during your belay like you would want another belayer paying attention to your climb.

5.4.3. Professionalism

- The belayer should perform their function in a professional, fair, and relaxed manner.
- Do not engage a climber in conversation, or joke around with the climber. Each climber should receive the same professional, but courteous, belay.

5.4.4. Logistics

- Have the climber tie in while in the Call Zone.
- Visually look over the entire belay system.
- Where/when appropriate, attempt to confirm the climber's place in the order.
- Provide simple, short pre-climb communication saying the same things to all climbers.
 - e.g., "Hello, I am [name] and I will belay you. Your harness looks good, your knot looks good. The belay system is properly loaded and I am ready to belay.."
 - Use clear hand signals during safety check (e.g., point to knot, harness, and belayer set-up).
 - Show every athlete your side of the safety system and demonstrate rope is engaged and the carabiner is locked.
 - Minimize talking with climbers. Some may be nervous, some may be focused on their climb. Less talk from the belayer is better. Give the competitor personal space.
 - Avoid physical contact with the climbers.
- In most cases, once the climber has reached the top, the belayer will not take tight so as to allow the climber to always have sufficient slack, even though this may allow the climber to fall into a few feet of slack. This minimizes any interference or perception of interference at tops (blind or visible).
- After lowering climbers, direct them to a spot safe from falling rope or other hazards, and get them untied right away (before or as they talk with the judge) in order to get the next climber tied in and ready to climb.

5.4.5. Para Climbing

- Obtain familiarity with the method and process of belaying required for your belay assignment.
- Prior to the competition, practice the belay method in a controlled, monitored, and safe manner, with a non-competitor acting as a climber.
- Given the wide variation of weight distribution of Para Climbing athletes, there may be specific catching and lowering considerations that the Head Belayer will provide.
- Always ask permission to clip or unclip.

5.5. Recommendations for Lead Belaying Practices

5.5.1. Route review

- Try to determine clipping stances and holds that competitors will use.
- Identify potential difficult to belay falls.
- Look at routes to the left and right and determine possible fall-zone issues with neighboring climbers or belayers.
- Determine if there are any Safety (i.e., "blue cross") holds and their corresponding clips.
- If you have any questions or concerns, contact the Head Belayer, who may contact the Jury President or Head Routesetter.

5.5.2. Rope Management

- Know the diameter and length of your rope. Ropes feel different depending on the diameter, type, and wear. Determine what diameter rope(s) will be used for any routes you might belay.

- Confirm with the Head Belayer that the length of the rope has been checked/confirmed with the Host Facility and Head Routesetter.
- Pull the rope through from the climber's side every time to help it wear evenly and avoid kinking. This swaps the climber end of the rope each time. Also, the energy from the fall ends up as heat in the rope and temporarily reduces the elasticity.
- When pulling rope after a competitor's attempt, pull the rope slowly as the end goes through the first three clips, in order to "calm" any swing of those draws for the next competitor.
- Flake your rope out where you want it for your next belay. Don't ever move a rope pile without re-flaking it out. A rope bucket or rope bag alleviates this problem.
- Know where your next 10 feet of rope are coming from. You should have the next 3 meters of rope out on the floor to your side. This way you can see that there are no twists or kinks coming up and you'll get a constant amount of drag on the brake end when you need to quickly feed rope. After the climber clips, that's your chance to look down, check your rope, and pull out another 10 feet if needed.

5.5.3. Approach

- In general, do not spot climbers.
- Review your climb so that you have a good idea what side to start belaying from, which typically is determined by assessing from where the climber will clip the first two bolts.
- Sometimes you trail the rope behind the climber and sometimes you face the climber as they approach you. Consider asking a setter, or another experienced belayer, if you need advice.
- Before the climber starts, get the rope on the same side of the climber that you're going to belay from. You don't want the rope between the climber's legs because that will either get the rope wrapped around their legs, or they will uncomfortably land on the rope if they fall and you are standing behind them during the first few clips.
- Before the climber starts, hold the rope up off the floor with a large (loose) drape of rope in your guide hand, held open. Stand to the side that you want to belay from. That will avoid the rope being in the way of the climber and minimize the chance of the rope being between the climber's legs.
- If the climber, as they approach the wall, moves the rope to between their legs or on the other side of their body, then you should adapt to these cues, and will need to allow them to alter your planned belay location. This could change how much rope they need for the first clip, how you need to hold the rope, or how you move around as they clip.
- Before the climber starts, have more than enough rope paid out. Once they make the first clip (and even as they are moving their hands to make the first clip), start taking back in so that just as the gate closes you have precisely the right amount of rope out.
- It is bad form to short rope a climber on the first clip. It is also bad form to not have them on belay the moment they make the first clip.

5.5.4. Stance

- Keep your brake hand on the brake rope at all times. Resting position is your brake hand down, at your side, guide hand up to demonstrate slack.
- If you need to take rope slack back in while lead belaying, use footwork to move your body in order to reduce slack. If you need to pull slack back in through your belay device, use PBUS; move your non-brake hand back down to brake rope, under your brake hand, like a top-rope belay, taking necessary steps to assist with slack management.
- The belay stance is dynamic and will often shift around, especially in the first 2-4 bolts.
- Adjust your stance to get a better view of what's going on with the climber. Also, use your legs to quickly take excess slack, or to quickly provide slack if clipping.
- Closely watch the climber, trying to anticipate their movement and their clipping. Be ready for a climber who clips earlier than others, or a climber that makes two clips from one position.
- Guide the rope around the climber's feet as they climb through the first few clips.
- Keep close to the wall, especially for the first few clips.

- Watch the competitor carefully, and anticipate when a climber will make a clip. Step in towards the clip as needed, but try to belay as close to the wall as possible to reduce rope drag. In general, stepping away from the wall will tend to cause more rope drag, and will increase your risk of being pulled off balance in a fall.
- Leaving a lot of slack as a preventative measure against short-roping can be sloppy and simplistic, as well as potentially dangerous. Leaving a lot of slack might also inhibit your ability in making a soft catch in some instances. Learn to pay out rope “just in time”.
- There can be rare cases where leaving more slack is appropriate, like long routes with lots of rope drag.
- If a climber pulls but fails to clip, the belayer should quickly and carefully take in excess slack once the climber releases the rope. Typically, the safest and most effective way to take in this slack is to move away from the first clip, preferably along the wall. This allows the belayer to quickly give slack by stepping back in, if the climber pulls rope in order to reattempt the clip.
- If a competitor claims there was a technical incident to a short-rope that you (as belayer) caused, hold off any discussion until the Jury President is called to discuss the situation, regardless whether you think there was a short-rope situation or not.

5.5.5. Catch

- Provide a soft, dynamic catch. Never “sit into” the catch.
- Make a safe catch.
- A “soft” catch reduces the swinging back into the wall.
- Some head-walls or features/volumes require experience to lower the falling climber before weighting the rope so that climber doesn’t slam into the wall or feature.
- Catch the climber as high (soon) as safely appropriate.
- Catch the climber (stop the climber’s fall completely) before lowering.

5.5.6. Lowering

- Be aware of the landing zone and dynamics, especially if the climber is swinging excessively.
- Lower your climber while standing near the wall (not away from the wall) to prevent lowering the climber onto your rope, and to minimize kinking the rope.
- After your climber is lowered to the ground, pay out 1-2 armloads of ‘courtesy slack’ to allow them to untie the knot easily. Remember, once you land the climber, the stretched rope will begin to recompress, requiring more slack for the competitor to comfortably untie their knot.
- Ask the climber to move out from under the high point clip or anchor.
- If necessary and with the climber’s consent, help the climber to untie.
- Pull the climber-side rope down and then move the rope out of the way. Re-flake the rope. Alternate the end of the rope that the climbers tie into.

5.5.7. Back clips

- Back clips are not disallowed by World Climbing rules.
- The belayer should not point out back clips.

5.5.8. Z-Clips

- Z-clips are disallowed in World Climbing Rules. If a climber makes a Z-clip, the Z-clip must be fixed before the climber continues climbing.
- Allow the judge to call the Z-clip.
- The climber must fix the Z-clip before continuing and can fix the Z-clip in any order:
- The rope must be correctly clipped, through all quickdraws to the highest clipped quickdraw, before the climber is allowed to continue.

5.5.9. Skipping Clips / Clipping out of sequence

- Per the World Climbing Rules, climbers must not skip quickdraws/clips, or are subject to being called off-route by the judge.

- In addition, the World Climbing Rules states that “the Judge shall notify the competitor to clip the quickdraw if it is apparent that a competitor is about to skip a clip and the safety of the competitor is compromised.”
 - “[climber’s name], make your clip!”
- Do not tell the climber how to move, or how to clip, only that they must make the clip.
 - Be careful with instructions. Avoid technical incidents due to belayer providing bad, misunderstood, or misleading instructions.
- Before any climbing begins, during your route preview, consider which (lower) clips are unsafe to skip.
 - Decide before any climbers attempt the route, and discuss this with the route judge.
 - However, you have the ability to change the decision "in the moment" in the interest of safety.
- If the climber no longer is in a legitimate position relative to the next unclipped quickdraw (see World Climbing Rules), the judge will call the climber down. However, safety may dictate that the judge should wait until the climber makes the next clip, if possible.
- If a climber clips draws out of sequence, the judge should call them down.

5.5.10. Communication

- Belayers should communicate with other belayers and judges as needed by the logistics of their route relative to other routes on the wall.
- When the climber controls the top hold and makes the final (anchor) clip, do not take slack. Allow the climber to fall into several feet of slack.

5.5.11. Safety (again)

- Safety is paramount, and the highest responsibility of a belayer.
- Belay in a safe manner, with approved techniques -- in a manner you are comfortable with and competent to perform.
- Always maintain proper brake-hand control of the brake-side of the rope coming out of the belay device.

APPENDIX I - SAMPLE BELAY PLAN

2024 Lead World Cup, 5-8 March, 2024
Salt Lake City, Utah, United States

Info Sheet

[\[link\]](#)

Belay Program

Head Belayer Name and contact information (phone number and email)

Team

Belayer	Q M (1)	Q M (2)	Q F (1)	Q F (2)	S M	S F	F M	F F	Contact
Head Belayer Name - HB	f	f	f	f	f				[Phone number]
Assistant Head Belayer Name - AHB	f	f	f	f		f			[Phone number]
Belayer Name	X		X		X				[Phone number]
Belayer Name	X		X		X			X	[Phone number]
Belayer Name		X		X		X	X		[Phone number]
Belayer Name		X		X		X		X	[Phone number]
Belayer Name			a	a			X		[Phone number]

f = floater/reliever, a = aspirant belayer

Head Belayer Objectives
For team

- Provide the very best belay efforts for climbing athletes and the sport
- Overall excellent belay performance upholding the comp belay pillars: safe, consistent, professional
- Continue to develop team members as top-tier belayers
- Continue to develop team members as leaders in the belaying community (Shar, Wong, Ku, and Naone will all AHB National or Championship events this year with the expectation that they all will be eligible and eager to HB a National or Championship event as soon as next season)
- Develop promising top-level belay talent through the Aspirant Belayer program
- Provide future leaders the opportunity to work among the world's best belayers to both model and demonstrate the very best in belaying that they can take back to their respective Regions

For HB

- Continue to learn about, test, and workshop belay techniques
- Continue to educate the belaying community on best practices
- Continue to develop top-tier belay talent
- Continue to model my very best efforts in belaying

Logistics & Report Times

Optional Technical Meeting

- Tuesday, April 23, 5:00

Mandatory Belay Meeting

- Tuesday, April 23, 6:00

Pre-round Meeting Report

Lead registration as of Date: 16 April 2024, 77M / 73W

- Qualification: Wednesday, April 24
 - **Belay briefing: 7:30 am** or if convened earlier
 - Men climb: 8:00 am
 - Women climb: 4:00 pm
- Semi-finals: Thursday, April 25
 - **Belay briefing: 9:00 am**
 - Climbing: 10:00 am
- Finals: Thursday, April 25
 - **Belay briefing: 5:00 pm**
 - Climbing: 6:00pm

Uniform & Equipment

Include here guidelines on belayer uniform (event shirts, trousers, footwear, layering), broadcast-related presentation requirements, and the use/approval of event-provided belay gear and personal equipment.

Briefing

Refer to *Belaying Protocol* for detailed information on belay procedures and practices

- Include here a summary of the pre-event briefing, outlining safety responsibilities, round-specific belay procedures (including Safety Belayer model), partner check standards, and rope/lowering protocols.
- Specify professional conduct expectations on the Field of Play (communication, neutrality, no devices, no spotting, no physical contact), as well as reporting lines and authority of the Head Belayer/Jury President.