



# *Boeing Employees Alpine Society*

## INTERMEDIATE CLIMBING COURSE HANDBOOK

The BOEALPS Intermediate Climbing Course (ICC) is for individuals who have completed a basic mountaineering course, or can show adequate experience and training, and wish to expand their climbing horizons to include more challenging alpine routes that include technical rock and ice climbing. The course consists of 11 evening seminars with 11 corresponding weekend outings. Six of the weekend outings will be spent practicing your skills on an alpine climb.

The class provides a very low student to instructor ratio (ranging from 3:1 to 1:1). This provides for more latitude when planning climbs, gives students a greater degree of participation, and will enable students to climb more difficult routes.

The best way to learn to climb is to climb, and climb hard! This course can be very worthwhile and memorable experience for those who have the desire and willingness to put forth the kind of energy needed to push mental and physical limits, and to expand personal horizons. This is the basic premise of the class. Ultimately, what each student gets out of the class is a result of their effort, commitment, and attitude.

### **What to Expect**

This class is organized and administered by volunteers who love to share their joy of mountaineering with others. We strive to do our best, but we are learning too. We are not professional instructors, so please be patient with us – but don't hesitate to question us. Students must spend time preparing for outings, and doing research on the goals for each weekend. Evening class sessions begin with a discussion of the previous outing, followed by an informal presentation followed by time for questions and answers. These discussions allow many different viewpoints to be heard and help students to gain a more personal insight into the topic being covered.

Our instruction focuses on you as an individual and your personal abilities and goals. Students will be assigned climbs, partners, and instructors for all except the graduation climb with a focus on having you climb with as many different students and instructors as possible. While couples or climbing partners may take this class together, please be aware that close personal relationships infuse complexities into the learning environment that, as volunteers, we don't necessarily have the awareness of or skills to deal with them. For those reasons, we generally don't assign couples to climb together during skill outings or on the alpine outings.

Finally, **you will be expected to take the lead!** If you aren't interested in lead rock climbing, this class isn't for you.

### **Class Meetings**

Class sessions last from 6:30 to 9:00 PM on the Monday night before an outing. They start with a discussion of the previous outing. Next, a seminar topic will be presented by one or more instructors and/or guests, and the topic is discussed in depth. Finally, there is time for making plans for upcoming climbs, carpools formed, and routes discussed. Students are expected to have done some research and have read class handouts concerning the topic prior to the class so that meaningful discussions can take place during the session.

### **Weekend Outings**

Students should plan on the weekend outings lasting from Friday night until late Sunday night. This will not always be the case, but it should be planned for. As with the class sessions, the students are expected to be the driving force behind the experience climbs, with the instructors acting in a "support role" rather than a guide or leader. This will not be true of the first climbs, but will certainly be a reality during the later climbs. Whenever practicable, the students are in charge



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of the climbs. Students should make their own route finding decisions, and assume responsibility for their own actions without having to rely on an instructor to keep things under control. **The instructor is not a guide.** It is the instructor's responsibility, as it would be of any climbing partner, to identify and avert unnecessary hazardous situations. When on an outing it is always all participants' responsibility to state when they believe it is unsafe to proceed, and to work as a team through the situation.

## **Equipment**

Students will be expected to provide all of the following equipment when required for the outing. Following is a list of the typical items needed for the course. Please note that the club has some items that can be borrowed. Students should not buy equipment until after the initial evening class, unless they have consulted with a class administrator.

- **Backpack.** Small enough to climb technical terrain with, but big enough to hold gear for a weekend. Maximum of approximately 55 L.
- **Rock Shoes.** Do not get these too tight. You will be climbing in them all day; will do a lot of walking in them; and may want to wear a thick pair of socks on cold days and/or Alpine Climbs.
- **Mountaineering Boots.** Your boots should have a half to full steel shank and be compatible with wearing crampons. While you may get by just fine with plastic boots, use them at your own risk.
- **Crampons.** Twelve points style to fit and match your boots.
- **Ice Axe.** General purpose - 60 to 80 cm. 80 cm is starting to get a bit long.
- **Bivy Sack.** Lighter than a tent and easier to set up on small ledges.
- **Sleeping Bag.** Should be small and lightweight.
- **Rain Gear.** Gore-tex, etc.
- **Standard Clothing.** fleece and polypro
- **10 Essentials.** Should be self-explanatory
- **Harness.** Adjustable and comfortable to walk in.
- **Rock Rack.** 10 assorted pieces, 15 carabiners, 10 slings, belay device and nut tool
- **Rope.** It must be 60 meters and UIAA approved as a single rope, less than 2 years old, and in good condition. 10 mm and 11 mm are acceptable but on the heavy side.
- **Climbing Helmet.** A definite requirement.
- **Headlamp.** Part of your 10 essentials. Necessary for finding your keys when you get back to the car after dark.

This list is only approximately what will be needed for an enjoyable long alpine route. Anything less would decrease comfort and reduce safety.





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## **Prerequisites**

This course is aimed at people who have all of the basic mountaineering skills and who have the desire and drive to climb some of the areas more technical routes. The ideal student is someone who has applied the basic principles of mountaineering by going out on their own to experience and learns beyond their basic mountaineering instruction.

Applicants must be competent in:

- Map and Compass Use
- Ice Axe Arresting
- Glacier Travel
- Belaying
- Tying standard knots (figure-8, bowline, prusik, water knot, butterfly)
- Rappelling

Applicants should have had experience with:

- Crevasse Rescue
- Top roping on rock

**Applicants must be in good physical condition**, (e.g., able to carry a 40 pound pack for a 10 mile approach). It is difficult to overstate the importance of physical conditioning on a student's overall class experience.

We recommend that students have a current Wilderness First Aid (WRFA or equivalent) certification.

## **Class Size and Acceptance Criteria**

In order to keep the student to instructor ratio low, and to ensure the quality of the course, we limit the class size. This limit depends on the instructor commitment for the given class year. The ICC administrators screen the applications in order to remove the obviously unprepared and inexperienced. Limiting class size is necessary to provide a quality and safe class. In order of priority, the basis for selection will be as follows for all applications received before the deadline:

1. Meets the class prerequisites
2. Has previously taken a portion of the Intermediate Class
3. Is a Boeing Employee
4. Has experience beyond a basic climbing class

## **Course Fees and Refund Policy**

The course fee is as follows and is due with your application:

- \$450 for Boeing employees who are members of BOEALPS
- \$490 for non-Boeing employees

After the first weekend of the course, one half of the cost is non-refundable, even if the student was cut from the class for safety reasons. Leaving the class for any reason after week:

- Week 1: 50% of course fee is refundable
- Week 2: 40% of course fee is refundable
- Week 3: 30% of course fee is refundable
- Week 4: 20% of course fee is refundable
- Week 5 or later: no refund





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## **Course Attendance and Completion**

To successfully complete the course, a student must show proficiency in all the skills taught; usually by conducting a graduation climb. The class is structured such that each class session and outing builds on those before it, therefore: **attending the scheduled evening sessions and weekend outings is vital.** In the case of the first three skill outings, student attendance is mandatory and non-negotiable. For all other outings, exceptions may be allowed at the discretion of the chief instructor for cases of family crisis, medical concerns, business travel, etc. In cases of exceptions, it will be the student's responsibility to schedule a make-up with a qualified instructor.

If you foresee difficulty attending classes and outings, consider that this may not be the right year for you to take the class. Failure to attend the necessary classes and outings may preclude further involvement in the course.

### **Intermediate Climbing Class Course Rules:**

1. Only currently registered students and instructors of the BOEALPS Intermediate Climbing Class may participate in class sessions and field trips. All participants must have signed a current BOEALPS liability release. Friends, relatives, climbing buddies, and pets cannot participate. On car camping field trips, friends and family are welcome to join us in the camping area after climbing activities are finished for the day.
2. Students and instructors will be prepared physically and mentally, and will have researched the plan by the designated meeting time. Do your homework!
3. Alcohol, illegal and recreational drugs are not allowed during class sessions and field trips. Do not show up or participate in any outing under the influences of mind altering substances. On car camping outings, there will be non-drinking instructors. Except for these individuals, students and instructors may consume alcohol at the camping area after climbing activity is complete. Students and instructors are expected to be healthy and capable to perform during all outings.
4. Proper clothing and equipment are required for students to participate in outings.
5. To participate in a scheduled field trip, students need to be on time and present when the class leaves the parking area.
6. Students should plan on each weekend outing lasting from Friday afternoon until late Sunday night. Students should not make evening plans following field trips. Parties are not overdue until noon Monday. In the event a party is overdue, students must inform their families and friends not to call Mountain Rescue, the County Sheriff, the National Park, Boeing or Instructors. There will be a designated "call in" instructor, which all parties need to call when they return from their outing. Be sure to give family the "call in" instructor's number to contact if concerned.
7. Harassment in any form (sexual, ethnic, physical, verbal or other) will not be tolerated and will result in immediate dismissal from the course.
8. Anyone violating the foregoing or acting in a manner that may endanger themselves or others is subject to immediate dismissal from the course.
9. To participate in any of the alpine experience field trips, students **must** first complete all four of the following skill field trips, or get equivalent experience with an ICC instructor:
  - Rock fundamentals (Horsethief)
  - Snow fundamentals(Snow)
  - Rescue fundamentals(Leavenworth)
  - Multi-pitch rock climbing(Smith)
10. Everybody participating in the BOEALPS Intermediate Climbing Course must wear a climbing helmet during outings approved by the International Union of Alpine Associates (UIAA).





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## **Danger and Risk in Climbing**

by

Ken Johnson, Founder of the BOEALPS ICC

Climbing, by its very nature, can be a risky and dangerous sport. The terrain that we climb on is constantly changing due to erosion, and is often in places where a slip will lead to a long fall if protection is not used. While there are ways to protect ourselves from the consequences of accidents and mistakes, there is no way that the risk of bodily injury or even death can be completely eliminated.

There are generally two types of danger encountered while climbing: objective and subjective. Objective danger is danger that exists independent of the climbers, such as avalanches, rock fall, loose holds, storms, lightning, etc. We can protect against these only by avoidance and preparation. Common sense, good route finding, knowledge of snow and weather conditions, and experience can provide a climber with the tools needed to make a rational judgment about the objective dangers of a given route. This judgment needs to be used to choose alternate routes, to turn back if conditions warrant, or to minimize the danger if the route is to be climbed. But even the most experienced climber cannot predict exactly when and where objective hazards will present themselves. In this light, we will be protecting ourselves by wearing helmets and practicing good belay techniques whenever possible and practical.

Subjective hazards are those presented by the climber. These include improperly placed anchors, inattention while belaying, poor climbing technique, inexperience, mental, emotional and physical fatigue, abrasive attitudes, and poor judgment. These are much harder to protect against since the climber tends to get into trouble while doing what he or she thinks is best. Experience is the best prevention, but even experience can lead to overconfidence which will contribute to poor judgment. Good protection technique, double checking anchors, and keeping a close eye on your companions will help, but again it is impossible to completely eliminate the risk.

Climbers must be aware of the combination of objective and subjective dangers. A case in point would be the climber on Denali who lets ambition drive him to climb too high too fast and is then caught in a storm. The climber gets pulmonary edema due to his rapid ascent and dies because he cannot retreat through the storm. Closer to home, consider a group of climbers who get off route on a climb and get into a loose gully that regularly sees rock- fall activity. While climbing the gully one climber knocks some rock down on his partner, breaking his leg. Or the group is caught in a sudden thunderstorm and neglects to double check their rappel anchors on the descent. You get the picture.

On the other hand, sometimes it is necessary to take risks. Such a case is climbing an avalanche chute to approach a climb. This should be done early enough to ensure that the route will be completed and descended before the slopes warm up enough to begin avalanche activity. Or in crossing a moat between snow and rock. These can be very hard to protect and are usually hard to climb, but they must be dealt with in to order to start the route. Again, judgment and good technique will go a long way towards limiting the risk.

Be aware of risks and hazards while climbing. Do not dwell on them excessively, but do consider your actions and their possible consequences. Being alert to the possibilities gives you a chance to cut down the risk. Being alert for a series of little things going wrong – they can quickly snowball into a major problem.

