



Outdoor Council of Australia

National
Outdoor
Leaders
Registration
Scheme

Abseiling (Natural Surfaces) REGISTRATION LEVELS AND ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

NOLRS VERSION 2.2

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Outdoor Council of Australia

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Introduction

This document contains information on the minimum skills required to achieve Registration within the National Outdoor Leader Registration Scheme (NOLRS) at specific levels within the activity of Abseiling (Natural Surfaces).

Additional documents are available at www.outdoorcouncil.asn.au that provides information about the Scheme and the registration process *includes*:

- *NOLRS Registration Guide* - information about the registration requirements and process
- *NOLRS Re-registration Guide* - information about the re-registration requirements and process
- *Application for Registration*
- *Application for Subsequent Registration*
- *Application for Re-registration*
- *NOLRS Partnered Assessment Providers* - a guide for organisations that conduct assessment of outdoor leaders, detailing how to have their course outcomes recognised as equivalent to the skill and knowledge requirements of the NOLRS

What is Abseiling (Natural Surfaces)?

Abseiling (also known as rappelling) on natural surfaces involves descending vertical (or near vertical) natural features, using ropes and descending (friction) devices. This document refers to the independent activity of abseiling and not necessarily to the abseiling conducted by a rock climber to descend after a climb.

In the majority of situations, abseiling involves descending by walking or bouncing backwards. Some groups undertake forward facing (Geneva or rundowns) descents and where this is the case, the leader must consider the added risks. It must also be considered that standard harnesses are NOT designed to have an attachment on the back so specialist equipment is required for forward facing descents.

Abseiling Registration Levels and Description

Abseiling (Natural Surfaces) registration levels apply to guides and instructors who conduct abseiling activities on natural rock surfaces/cliffs using natural, fixed or artificial anchors.

The following registration levels are available within the NOLRS within the activity of Abseiling (Natural Surfaces):

- Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces)
- Single Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces)
- Multi Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces)
- Multi Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces)

Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces):

A person designated as a Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) has the skills, knowledge and experience to work autonomously within a closely defined range of skilled operations involving known routines, methods and procedures, where a small amount of discretion and judgment is required in the selection of equipment, services or contingency measures. This person may conduct activities independently only within clearly defined contexts where there are clearly defined Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and relevant documented guidelines for the activity, they are familiar with those SOPs, and where assistance is readily available should a non-routine situation arise.

A Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) leads or guides reliant participants in single pitch abseiling activities. There is no intention of imparting skills or knowledge to participants beyond that which is necessary to enable their safe participation in the abseiling activity. At the end of a session or program with a guide, the intent is not for the participant to have acquired the skills to independently participate in the activity

A Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) may conduct activities only at sites which have documentation which defines the key safety features and risk management procedures for the activity. *They may only work at sites which:*

- Provide the opportunity for single pitch abseiling;
- Have natural and/or fixed anchors;
- Have been deemed as appropriate abseiling sites by a person at least equivalent to Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Experienced). (This analysis of suitability may result in the establishment of a recognised local abseiling site, or sites assessed and used by specific organisations)

A Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) does not have the ability to adequately assess the suitability of a new abseiling site and its anchors or to independently develop procedures for the conduct of abseiling activities. They may work as an assistant with a more experienced leader in potentially non-routine or more complex activities and programs (e.g. in multi-pitch situations).

A Single Pitch Abseiling Guide must possess the skills, knowledge and experience that enable them to:

- Plan and implement minimal environmental impact
- Undertake risk analysis of activities
- Interpret and apply weather forecasts
- Apply relevant legislation
- Follow defined Occupational Health and Safety policy and procedures

- Facilitate groups and deal with conflict
- Apply single pitch abseiling skills on natural surfaces
- Establish ropes for single pitch abseiling on natural surfaces
- Guide abseiling on natural surfaces (single pitch)
- Respond to emergency situations
- Perform vertical rescues

Single Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces):

A person designated as a Single Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces) facilitates skill transfer or development to participants in order that they may independently abseil on single pitches on natural surfaces. This requires the instructor to be able to transfer required skills and knowledge, apply a variety of appropriate instructional strategies, and assess a participant's skill and knowledge acquisition during and at the end of a program or session.

Single Pitch Abseiling Instructors (Natural Surfaces) may only work at sites which:

- Provide the opportunity for single pitch abseiling;
- Have natural and/or fixed anchors;

A Single Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces) has the knowledge, skills and experience of a Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) as well as additional skills and experience in leadership, emergency response, risk management and training and assessment. *A person at this level of competence may instruct participants to enable them to:*

- Apply single pitch abseiling skills on natural surfaces
- Establish ropes for single pitch abseiling on natural surfaces
- Perform vertical rescues

A Single Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces) must possess all the skills, knowledge and experience required of a Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) PLUS those that enable them to:

- Manage risk in outdoor activities
- Train small groups
- Provide leadership to groups
- Instruct abseiling on natural surfaces (single pitch)
- Coordinate emergency response

Multi Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces):

A person designated as a Multi Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) has the skills, knowledge and experience to operate independently at a broad range of venues with a variety of different participant groups and within a broad range of varied contexts that may be complex and non-routine. A person at this level of competence may perform a broad range of skilled applications. These may include the evaluation and analysis of current practices, development of new criteria and procedures for performing current practices and provision of some leadership and guidance to others in the application and planning of the skills.

A Multi Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) has the ability to deal with complex, unpredictable and non-routine situations and may work at sites which:

- Have natural, fixed or artificial anchors;
- Are multi-pitch;

- Have the potential to provide non-routine situations (e.g. adverse weather conditions, complex rescue situations)

A Multi Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) has the knowledge, skills and experience of a Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) as well as additional skills and experience on multi-pitch surfaces, and enhanced leadership, emergency response and risk management knowledge and skills.

A Multi Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) must possess all the skills, knowledge and experience required of a Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) PLUS those that enable them to:

- Manage risk in outdoor activities
- Provide leadership to groups
- Apply multi pitch abseiling skills on natural surfaces
- Establish ropes for multi pitch abseiling on natural surfaces
- Guide abseiling on natural surfaces (multi pitch)
- Coordinate emergency response
- Perform complex vertical rescues

Multi Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces):

A person designated as a Multi Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces) has the skills, knowledge and experience to instruct participants in order that they may acquire multi-pitch abseiling skills or multi-pitch abseil guiding or instructional skills to enable independent operation. This requires the instructor to be able to transfer required skills and knowledge, apply a variety of appropriate instructional strategies, and assess a participant's skill and knowledge acquisition during and at the end of a program or session.

A Multi Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces) must possess all the skills, knowledge and experience required of a Multi Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) PLUS those that enable them to:

- Instruct abseiling on natural surfaces (multi pitch)

Abseiling Skill, Knowledge and Experience Requirements

Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces):

Critical aspects of a Single Pitch Abseiling Guide skills and knowledge include:

- Ability to identify, and plan for, basic requirements of a single pitch abseiling activity (i.e. equipment, food, water, clothing)
- Knowledge of first aid procedures relevant to abseiling
- Facilitation of a group including conflict resolution strategies
- Knowledge of, and compliance with, relevant Occupational Health and Safety requirements
- Ability to follow workplace procedures for hazard identification and risk control
- Knowledge of, and compliance with, relevant laws and legal requirements
- Application of risk analysis principles in an abseiling context
- Knowledge of environmental impact issues associated with abseiling and methods to minimise impact
- Ability to apply and interpret weather information relevant to an abseiling activity
- Underpinning knowledge about abseiling equipment (advantages, disadvantages, limitations, Australian and international standards, manufacturer's design specifications and recommendations, accepted industry best practice or recommendations)
- Underpinning knowledge of knots (end-of-rope knots, mid-rope knots, rope joining knots, tape knots and friction hitches)
- Knowledge of equipment storage and maintenance requirements relevant to abseiling equipment
- Independent selection of abseil and belaying equipment appropriate to the situation and participants
- Information about sites to abseil (appropriate to skill level)
- Selection of natural anchors (e.g. trees, rock bollards) and fixed anchors (e.g. bolts, chains) for abseiling
- Rigging of ropes using single and multiple anchors to accommodate different belayer and abseiler abilities at a variety of locations. (Anchors must be selected from a diversity of locations, offering different environmental conditions, e.g. rock type, tree type, type of weather and resultant effects)
- Establishment of belay systems at the top of the pitch which ensure abseiler and belayer safety and facilitate rescue and establishment of back up belay systems, where required
- Establishment of belay/braking systems at the bottom of the pitch, where required
- Establishment of communication systems with belayer(s) and abseiler
- Single pitch abseiling on natural surfaces over a minimum of three (3) descents including efficient abseiling using a self belay and at least two different types of descending device (e.g. plate, tubular, auto-locking devices, friction hitches)
- Negotiation of simple obstacles (e.g. ledges, trees, falling water, overhangs, squeezes, traverses)
- Efficient belaying of participants to accommodate different participant abilities and situations and an ability to arrest falls
- Identification of safe access to and egress from the site, and 'safe areas'
- Ability to plan and guide abseiling sessions at a number of different locations to suit available resources, environmental limitations and different types of participant groups with differing needs and activity aims
- Maintenance of a participant's physical and emotional safety during an abseiling session

- *Response to emergency situations and performance of self rescue and rescue of participants including:*
 - Release of jams
 - Assistance to frozen abseiler
 - Approach from above and below
 - Ascent and descent of rope
 - Raising and lowering of conscious abseiler
 - Raising and lowering of unconscious abseiler with assistance

In order to demonstrate currency, an applicant seeking registration must have verifiable evidence of instructing or guiding a minimum of four (4) abseiling sessions (minimum of three hours per session; at least three sessions must be guiding) in the past twelve (12) months. In addition, evidence must be supplied of 'in-house' or external vertical rescue training within the past twelve (12) months, or participation in vertical rescue of 'real' participants.

Newly trained outdoor leaders require verifiable evidence of instructing or guiding a minimum of six (6) abseiling sessions (minimum of three hours per session; at least three (3) sessions must be guiding) at different locations.

Single Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces):

Critical Aspects of a Single Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces) skills and knowledge include Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) skills and knowledge **PLUS** the following:

- Ability to identify, and plan for requirements of a single pitch abseiling activity (ie. equipment, food, water, clothing) where extreme environmental conditions could potentially occur; and/or at a diversity of locations
- Ability to coordinate a response to emergency situations associated with single pitch abseiling situations
- Group leadership techniques
- Ability to identify and record the potential risks and hazards in an activity, and develop management strategies to lessen their potential impact, evaluate risk management and risk management plans.

Skills to:

- Plan an instructional session for teaching abseiling skills on natural surfaces
- Select appropriate resources required to teach abseiling skills on natural surfaces
- Establish a positive learning environment
- Introduce, conduct and conclude and evaluate an instructional abseiling session
- Apply appropriate teaching techniques for an abseiling session, recognising different participant abilities and teaching to suit individual needs
- Provide constructive feedback which enhances the participant's learning
- Demonstrate abseiling techniques or skills accurately
- Apply knowledge of safety practices to conduct a safe instructional session in accordance with risk management plans, industry guidelines and occupational health and safety requirements

Ability to demonstrate and/or teach the following:

- Independent selection of abseil equipment appropriate to the situation
- Underpinning knowledge about abseiling equipment (advantages, disadvantages, limitations, Australian and international standards, manufacturer's recommendations, industry accepted practice, storage and maintenance requirements)

- Information about sites to abseil (appropriate to skill level), access and egress, ethics and philosophy of abseiling
- Environmental impacts of abseiling and ways to minimise
- Hazards associated with abseiling and ways to minimise risk
- Selection of natural anchors (e.g. trees, rock bollards) and fixed anchors (e.g. bolts, chains)
- Rigging of ropes using single and multiple anchors
- Establishment of belay systems at the top of the pitch
- Establishment of belay/braking systems at the bottom of the pitch
- Efficient belaying to accommodate different abilities and situations
- Efficient abseiling in single pitch situations using a self belay
- Knowledge of, and ability to perform, vertical rescue techniques appropriate to single pitch abseiling.

In order to demonstrate currency, an applicant seeking registration must have verifiable evidence of instructing or guiding a minimum of four (4) abseiling sessions (minimum of three (3) hours per session; at least three (3) sessions must be instructing) in the past twelve (12) months. In addition, evidence must be supplied of 'in-house' or external vertical rescue training within the past twelve (12) months, or participation in vertical rescue of 'real' participants.

Newly trained outdoor leaders require verifiable evidence of instructing or guiding a minimum of six (6) abseiling sessions (minimum of three hours per session; at least three (3) sessions must be instructing) at different locations.

Multi Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces):

Critical Aspects of a Multi Pitch Abseiling Guide's skills, knowledge and experience include critical aspects of a Single Pitch Abseiling Guide (Natural Surfaces) skills and knowledge **PLUS:**

- Ability to identify, and plan for requirements of a multi pitch abseiling activity (ie. equipment, food, water, clothing) where extreme environmental conditions could potentially occur; and/or at a diversity of locations
- Ability to coordinate a response to emergency situations associated with multi pitch abseiling situations
- Group leadership techniques
- Ability to identify and record the potential risks and hazards in an activity, and develop management strategies to lessen their potential impact, evaluate risk management and risk management plans.
- Multi pitch abseiling skills on natural surfaces using a minimum of four different types of descending device (auto locking devices, circular devices, plate devices, tubular devices, improvised devices, in line devices) in a wide variety of contexts in different locations encountering varying hazards, obstacles and situations
- Knowledge of the requirements of a guide in potentially complex and challenging abseiling situations
- Ability to deal with complex, unpredictable and non-routine situations
- Ability to independently plan and guide single and multi pitch abseiling activities on natural surfaces at a broad range of venues with a variety of different participants
- Application of an extensive knowledge of equipment and discrimination between features of different equipment
- Selection of natural and fixed anchors and placement of artificial protection for anchors in single and multi-pitch situations

- Rigging of ropes and establishment of belay systems in single and multi-pitch situations and *the ability to*:
 - Apply knowledge of the factors affecting the stability and selection of anchors (fixed, natural and/or artificial) to select anchors for simple and complex, single and multi pitch abseils
 - Establish a broad range of belay systems to accommodate different belayer and participant abilities, types of anchor and location requirements
 - Use a variety of different belay systems and knots in routine and non - routine situations
 - Apply considerable discretion and judgment as to the type of belay system required
 - Rig pitches for abseiling using fixed and natural anchors and artificial protection
 - Rig pitches for abseils in single and multi pitch contexts in routine and non-routine situations
 - Establish suitable safety systems in multi pitch situations
 - Handle ropes efficiently on multi pitch abseils
- Maintenance of a participant's physical and emotional safety during abseiling sessions in a diversity of situations (e.g. bad weather, extended periods of time).
- Coordination of emergency response and performance of self rescue in complex situations
- Ability to perform complex rescues of self, equipment and participants, including:
 - self-rescue in complex situations (e.g. multi pitch, numerous obstacles to negotiate, limited human resources, extreme environmental conditions)
 - raising conscious participants in complex rescue situations with assistance from others with limited rescue skills
 - lowering conscious participants in a controlled manner in complex rescue situations with assistance from others with limited level of skill
 - raising or lowering an unconscious person using the assistance of an unskilled person
 - rescuing persons in situations without assistance from others
 - participation in the rescue of a person on a stretcher
- Establishment and use of mechanical advantage systems using simple (e.g. z-drag) and compound pulley systems (e.g. pig-rig) in rescue situations
- Performance of complex vertical rescues i.e. *rescues which may include the following contexts*:
 - Multi pitch
 - Numerous obstacles to negotiate, e.g., ledges, trees
 - Limited anchors
 - Rescuer is unconscious
 - Limited physical resources
 - Limited human resources/no assistance
 - Extreme environmental conditions
 - Application of the following rescue methods:
 - Raising
 - Lowering
 - Assisted rescue from above/below
 - Assisted rescue from above or below requiring diagonal or horizontal (traversing) techniques
 - Pluck off

In order to demonstrate currency, an applicant seeking registration must have verifiable evidence of guiding or instructing a minimum of four (4) multi-pitch abseiling sessions (at least three (3) sessions must be guiding) in the past twelve (12) months. In addition, evidence must be supplied of 'in-house' or external multi-pitch vertical rescue training within the past twelve (12) months, or participation in vertical rescue of 'real' participants in multi-pitch situations.

Newly trained outdoor leaders require verifiable evidence of instructing or guiding a minimum of six (6) multi-pitch abseiling sessions (minimum of three (3) hours per session; at least three (3) sessions must be guiding) at different locations.

Multi Pitch Abseiling Instructor (Natural Surfaces):

Critical Aspects of a Multi Pitch Abseiling Instructor's skills, knowledge and experience include critical aspects of a Multi Pitch Abseiling Guide's skills, knowledge and experience
PLUS:

- Knowledge of the requirements of an instructor in potentially complex and challenging abseiling situations
- Ability to plan and instruct single and multi pitch abseiling sessions appropriate to participants needs, available resources and environmental limitations

Skills to:

- Plan an instructional session for teaching multi-pitch abseiling skills on natural surfaces
- Select appropriate resources required to teach multi-pitch abseiling skills on natural surfaces
- Establish a positive learning environment
- Introduce, conduct and conclude and evaluate an instructional multi-pitch abseiling session
- Apply appropriate teaching techniques for abseiling, recognising different participant abilities and teaching to suit individual needs
- Provide constructive feedback which enhances the participant's learning
- Demonstrate multi-pitch abseiling techniques or skills accurately
- Apply knowledge of safety practices to conduct a safe instructional session in accordance with risk management plans, industry guidelines and occupational health and safety requirements

Ability to demonstrate and/or teach the following:

- Independent selection of abseil equipment appropriate to the situation in multi-pitch abseils
- Discrimination between features of different equipment
- Underpinning knowledge about abseiling equipment (advantages, disadvantages, limitations, Australian and international standards, manufacturer's recommendations, industry accepted practice, storage and maintenance requirements)
- Information about multi-pitch sites to abseil (appropriate to skill level), access and egress, ethics and philosophy of abseiling
- Environmental impacts of multi-pitch abseiling and ways to minimise
- Hazards associated with multi-pitch abseiling and ways to minimise risk
- Selection of natural anchors (e.g. trees, rock bollards) and fixed anchors (e.g. bolts, chains) and placement of artificial protection
- Rigging of ropes using single and multiple anchors (natural, fixed and artificial) and efficient rope handling on multi-pitch abseils
- Establishment of belay systems for multi-pitch abseils
- efficient belaying to accommodate different abilities and situations

- Efficient abseiling in multi-pitch situations using a self belay, in routine and non-routine situations
- Knowledge of, and ability to perform, complex vertical rescue techniques appropriate to multi-pitch abseiling

In order to demonstrate currency, an applicant seeking registration must have verifiable evidence of instructing or guiding a minimum of four (4) multi-pitch abseiling sessions (at least three sessions must be instructing) in the past twelve (12) months. In addition, evidence must be supplied of 'in-house' or external multi-pitch vertical rescue training within the past twelve (12) months, or participation in vertical rescue of 'real' participants in multi-pitch situations.

Newly trained outdoor leaders require verifiable evidence of instructing or guiding a minimum of six (6) multi-pitch abseiling sessions (minimum of three (3) hours per session; at least three (3) sessions must be guiding) at different locations.