

A close-up photograph of a rock climbing crack. The rock is dark and textured. A green climbing device is wedged into the crack. A silver carabiner is attached to a green webbing strap. A black and white rope is visible, along with a red climbing shoe. A piece of white paper is tucked into the crack.

# 1001 CLIMBING TIPS

andy kirkpatrick

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*“Never listen to any advice, including this.”*

**ANDY KIRKPATRICK** – HULL'S SECOND BEST CLIMBER

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The author bushwhacking to the Troll Wall, Norway.

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## **BASICS (1-240)**

*“A week of good instruction is worth  
a year of getting it wrong.”*

## BASICS (1-240)

### ACTIVE PROTECTION (84-95)

**84.** Treat your cams like a Marine treats his rifle; keep them clean and free of dirt, as you depend on them to stay alive. Grit, salt and dirt will reduce the locking action of the cam, and can lead to failure. Clean your cams with lukewarm water and a toothbrush, then dry them, and finally add some lubricant. I use WD-40, which some people say actually attracts dirt, but even if it does, it just means you'll clean them more, which can only be good.

**85.** If your cam's axles are damaged or the heads are deformed, then bin the cam, as most designs require all the cams to be fully functional in order to work.

**86.** Store all cams in a separate bag when travelling to the crag, rather than just throwing them into the bottom of your sack. This will stop the cams getting battered and twisted which can cause the cables to break.

**87.** The main reason a cam will stop working is due to the trigger cable breaking. If this happens mid-route there is very little you can do, apart from trying to hand-place it, but on multi-day climbs or trips you need to be able to repair the cam. Always carry a few metres of 1-millimetre kite Dyneema and 2-millimetre Dyneema, as well as some thin cable and swages. With this you should be able to make running repairs on your cams. You can crimp swage with a Leatherman tool or a rock and a nut tool (stick the nut tool on the swage and bash with the rock).

**88.** The more cams you place, the more of a feel you get for them; you soon realise that a cam can be rubbish one way, but great another. The main thing to remember is that the outside cam lobes should always be going on the widest area of rock (vital on shallow placements).

**89.** With a cam you're trying to achieve three points of contact, with the two wide cam lobes opposing the two narrow lobes. You actually only need three cam lobes in contact for a cam to work, so if the two outside lobes are good, and only one inside lobe is camming, then that's still a good placement.

**90.** Cams are faster to place and remove than nuts, making them the gear of choice if you're trying to climb fast.

**91.** Double-axle cams have many advantages, but their main one is that they have a much-reduced chance of becoming stuck. Why? I have no idea, but I just know that they always come out.

**92.** If a cam is stuck then focus on the cams themselves and ignore the trigger, using your nut tool to jerk the individual cam lobes loose. (Usually it will only be one or two that are stuck.) Work out which ones are moving, and then focus on those that aren't.

**93.** Sometimes you can force a cam all the way around, so the stem is in the inside of the crack, and just pull it out.

**94.** If the cam is totally stuck, then you can try hammering the cam sideways into a wider spot (a cam is not a cam when going sideways, it's just a lump of alloy). To do this place your nut tool over the axle and bash it with something heavy (large hex or rock) until it moves.

**95.** Remember that many cams become stuck, but few remain stuck for long, so just be stubborn – they always come out in the end.



## SLINGS, QUICKDRAWS AND CORD (96–111)

**96.** Always carry a range of quickdraw sizes, as this reduces the chances of 'biners being loaded over edges. These should range from medium-length 'draws (15-centimetre to 20-centimetre) to long 'draws (25-centimetre to 30-centimetre). Unless you're sport climbing, 10-centimetre 'draws are pretty much a waste of time.

**97.** Always include a mix of sewn express slings (slings sewn together to make a strong, quite stiff sling) and open round slings (just sewn into a loop with a bar tack). This increases your flexibility, as express slings are stronger and keep their karabiners well orientated, but generally only allow one karabiner at each end, while open slings can accommodate multiple krabs and a long one can be clove-hitched. (Always carry at least one 30-centimetre open Dyneema sling.)

**98.** Organisation is key when it comes to slings, and if possible try to use a set colour for each size; such as grey for 240-centimetre, red for 120-centimetre and purple for 60-centimetre. If I had my way I'd make it an EU directive, like cam colours, as there's nothing worse than using someone else's rack and finding at the belay that the rat's nest of slings you thought to be a 240-centimetre is in fact several 60-centimetre slings. By having set colours you should get the right sling first go, and it's vital when it comes to racking slings on your harness instead of over the shoulder.

**99.** Rubber retainers are recommended for the rope-clipping 'biners in extenders, as they stop the 'biner spinning around, potentially causing cross loading. Petzl Strings are best for this (those little black rubber things), but elastic bands or 'castration rings' also work very well until they perish.

**100.** I try and avoid ever having slings around my body, as they invariably tangle up, and can be a hazard in a fall. Instead, I make all 60-centimetre slings into quickdraws. To do this, clip a 'biner at each end, then simply pass one 'biner through the other and clip this back into the loop that's formed. This gives you a 20-centimetre extender that can be lengthened by unclipping one strand of sling and pulling. Avoid using rubber karabiner retainers on these quick-slings, as they can create a dangerous situation where you think the karabiner is attached to the sling when in fact it's only hanging from its retainer! (Figure 2)

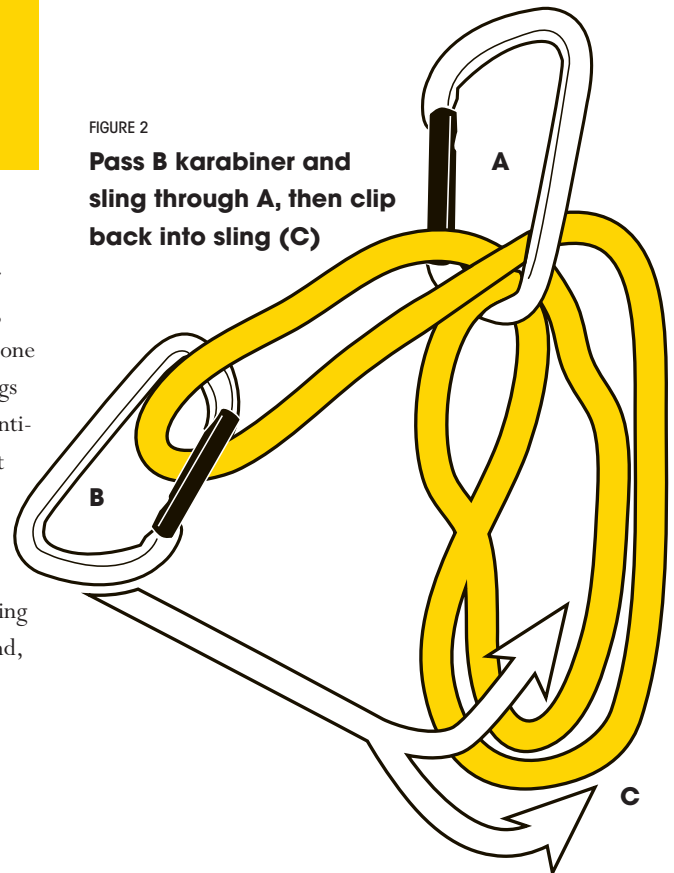


FIGURE 2

**Pass B karabiner and sling through A, then clip back into sling (C)**

# 1001 CLIMBING TIPS

**covers the following areas:**

## **BASICS (1-240)**

From how best to rope up and the importance of climbing partnerships, to racking your gear correctly and how to sleep in a harness. This section is designed for both novice and experienced climbers.

## **SAFETY (241-327)**

The name of the game in climbing is staying alive and coming home in one piece. This section covers loose rock, rescue, dealing with heat and what to do if you get caught out.

## **BIG WALL (328-434)**

Knowledge on tackling large multi-pitch climbs, with advanced topics such as pegging, jumaring, hauling and speed climbing. These tips will be an aid both to those new to multi-pitch climbing, as well as more experienced climbers.

## **ICE (435-481)**

Tips on all aspects of ice climbing, including movement, protection, looking after your gear, mental strength and – of course – not falling off.

## **MIXED (482-503)**

With a focus on Scottish and Alpine winter skills, these essential tips focus on how to use your tools on snowed-up rock, leading, gear and footwork on mixed ground.

## **MOUNTAIN (504-802)**

Essential reading for mountaineers, hill walkers and rock climbers, this section has almost 300 tips on living and staying alive in the mountains, be that in the UK, Alps or Greater Ranges.

## **TRAINING (803-876)**

A range of tips on how to overcome fear, improve strength and endurance, as well as diet and nutrition advice for climbers.

## **STUFF (877-1001)**

A mix of esoterica, such as how to rap off a fifi hook, what books to read, how to make your own kit, how to get sponsored, photo and video advice, and how to go to the toilet in tricky spots.

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