

Basic Rock Climbing Class

Southwest Outdoor Club

Tempe, Arizona

CLIMBING CLASSIFICATIONS

Climbs are classified in a variety of ways. In the United States two common systems are used which rate different aspects of the individual climb. One is called Class, and the other is called Grade.

Class attempts to define the technical difficulty of the climb. The most common "Classification" system in the US is called the YDS or Yosemite Decimal System. This is an open ended system beginning with walking on a flat trail and going all the way to the most horrendous overhanging face with only finger pockets or finger tip cracks to cling to. The current range goes from Class 1 to Class 5.14b or something like that.

Grade attempts to define the overall physical energy or endurance necessary for the climb. It is intended to be independent of Class but usually correlates to a certain degree. That is to say, Grade has meaning to a person climbing at the technical competency level of the climb. It most closely corresponds to the time it would take a person climbing at that technical level to complete the climb.

The generally accepted definitions are given below:

Class 1	Cross country hiking, hands are not required
Class 2	Scrambling, hands helpful, rope not needed. Some parties may carry a rope as a safety precaution
Class 3	Easy climbing, scrambling with the use of the hands. Elementary climbing technique helpful, Rope suggested if inexperienced climbers are along
Class 4	Less experienced climbers always rope up for Class 4 climbing. Belayed climbing is the rule. Some moves may be Class 5, except for the security of short pitches. Some climbs become Class 4 by default since there is no place for intermediate protection.
Class 5	Roped climbing requiring intermediate protection with artificial means such as slings around trees, slings to fixed protection such as bolts, chocks in cracks, pitons, spring loaded camming devices.
Class 6	Aid Climbing - in the US. pulling on anything artificial attached to the mountain. Could entail attaching rope ladders to chocks placed in cracks in the rock.

Grades, on the other hand are used to express a combination of factors which determine the required level of general mountaineering skill and commitment.

Grade I	Short in length, up to a few hours, no water required (except in Arizona)
Grade II	Slightly longer, perhaps a half day, water bottle should taken; but forget about lunch
Grade III	Slightly longer, not quite a full day. Bring water (2 liters) plus lunch
Grade IV	A Full Day (maybe longer) Could extend into a day and half. an overnight's stay is guaranteed.
Grade V	Multi-day's worth of climbing.
Grade VI	An expedition.

Of course an experienced climber will climb faster than the above grades might indicate; and an inexperienced climber will climb slower than indicated. That is to say that "Grade" is a general classification and should be used only as a relative indicator,