

New to Bouldering?

By Kevin Pearson



If you are new to bouldering and need some help, then check out this Bouldering Mini-Guide to point you in the right direction. A lot of people start out bouldering through friends and/or curiosity. You go out, give it a try and the next thing you know.....you're hooked! At first you are going to notice that everyone else is a lot stronger and better than you are, unless of course you are born with some genetic climbing gene that makes you an instant rock star. For the rest of us, bouldering is something that you have to do often on a regular basis and may involve addition training on the side. But first things first; you are new to bouldering and need some guidance. This guide will go over some simple, novice advice with some to do & not to do's.



Climber on a steep overhanging boulder

Gear; What You Will Need:

The main pieces of gear that boulderers use are climbing shoes, chalk (usually stored in a chalk bag or bucket) and a crash pad. Your first couple of times out you will probably tag along with someone and not necessarily need all of this except for the shoes.

Climbing Shoes:

Climbing shoes come in different styles; lace up, velcro and slipper types. Everybody has their favorite style and brand, so don't go out and buy an expensive pair at first. Try different brands and styles that are snug, yet still comfortable. If you get shoes that are too tight you are going to be miserable and not enjoy the experience of climbing. If you go to a decent climbing shop, the salesperson hopefully will be able to assist you in your purchase. As you climb more you will become aware of what type and fit of shoe you need. This is why it isn't recommended you buy an expensive pair at first. When I first started I chose an expensive pair that was comfortable and wore them for about a year before the soles wore out. I went out and bought another pair of shoes and found a much better fit due to my experience of climbing for a year. If you can, buy a cheap pair of used shoes for your first time.



Lace Up's



Velcro



Slippers

Chalk & Chalk Bucket/Bag:

This will be your easiest to buy. Chalk is relatively inexpensive and a chalk bucket/bag could run you anywhere from \$10-30 dollars. A lot of boulderers prefer a chalk bucket that sits on the ground as opposed to a bag that is strapped onto your waist. Ask other climbers the pro's and con's or just go out, buy one and try it out.

Crash Pad:

Crash pads (aka Bouldering Pad) can get expensive. If you can, boulder with someone else who has a pad to get a feel for what you will need. Pad can run from the low \$100's up to over \$300.



Climber using multiple pads for protection in case of a fall

Warming Up:

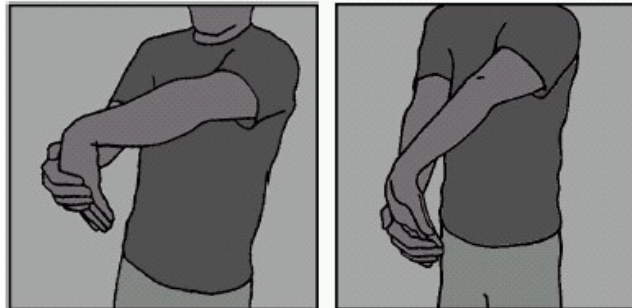
If there is one thing you remember from this mini-guide then it should be this: ALWAYS WARM UP FIRST before you climb. Bouldering puts an enormous amount of stress on your body, particularly your tendons. Warming up should consist of some walking or hiking, which you will most likely do just to get to the area where the boulders are. Just enough to get the blood flowing. This is then followed by some light stretching. Hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds in a static position. The following pages show some diagrams of typical stretches.

Biceps:



Use a tree or a boulder to gently stretch the bicep.

Forearms:



Forearm/Wrist Flexion

Forearm/Wrist Extension

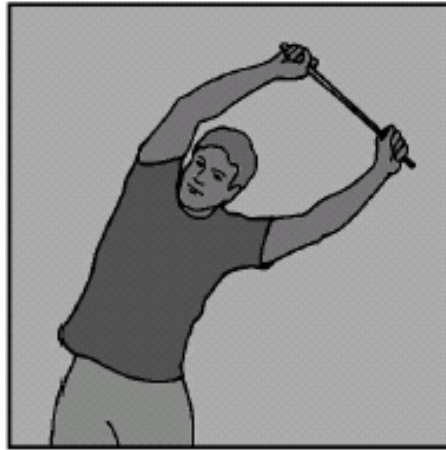
Shoulders:



Posterior Shoulder Stretch

Anterior Shoulder/Chest Stretch

Back:



Stretching should be followed by climbing on the easiest boulder problems you can find for about 30 minutes. All of this may sound tedious and boring, but it will greatly decrease any injuries you may come across in the future. Would you think a gymnast performs the Iron Cross or a runner sprinting the 40 yard dash without warming up first! Of course not!



Gymnast performing the Iron Cross

Terminology:

Climbers like any other sport, have their own jargon. This section will go over some of the common climbing terms that are used in the sport.

Arete: An outside corner of rock.

Barn-dooring: Swinging out from the rock like a door on a hinge.

Beta: Advice and/or instructions on how to successfully complete a particular boulder problem.

Campus: The act of climbing without using any feet.

Crimp: 1) A type of hold used when the climber can fit only their fingertips on the hold.

2) The process of holding onto a crimp.



Typical crimping technique

Crux: The most difficult portion of a climb.

Deadpoint: A dynamic move in which the hold is grabbed at the apex of upward motion.

Dyno: Essentially any movement that requires the climber to jump or to swing from one hold to another.

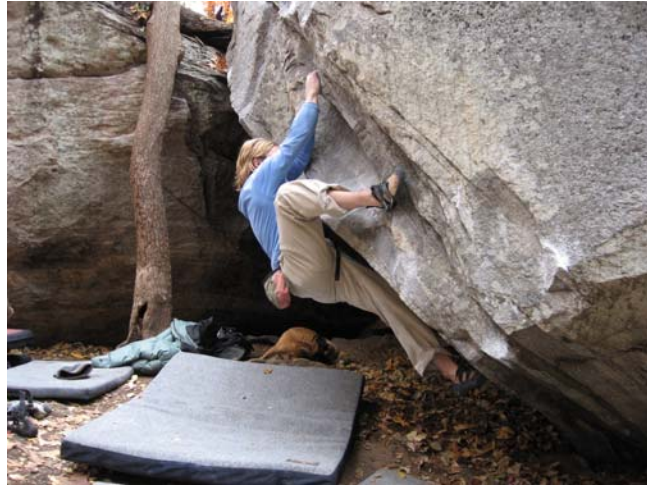
Flag/Flagging: Extending a leg as a counter-balance without placing the foot of that leg on a hold.

Flash: Completing a problem on the first try with no falls, but with beta.

Gaston: Pronounced like (gas-stone). A type of hold on the rock. Best described as a handhold that is only good from the side, but you must hold it with your elbows pointing out.

Grade: The level of difficulty of a particular problem/route.

Heel Hook: A technique involving hooking a heel or toe against a hold in order to balance or to provide additional support.



Heel hooking a tough problem

Highball: A term for a boulder that is so high, falling when close to the top could cause serious injury.



Potential highball

Jib: A particularly small foot hold, usually only large enough for the big toe, sometimes relying heavily on friction to support weight.

Jug: A hold that is large enough to allow the climber to reach their entire hand around.

Mantle: A move used to surmount a ledge or feature in the rock in the absence of any useful holds directly above. It involves pushing down on a ledge or feature instead of pulling down.



Boulderer mantling a problem

Matching: Matching implies that both climber's feet or hands are on the same hold.



Climber matching hands on a hold and using the heel hook technique

Onsight: To send a problem on the first try without falling and with no beta.

Problem: Boulderers climb problems, not routes like rock climbers using a rope and harness.

Redpoint: To successfully complete a problem after an attempt has already been made for that problem.

Send: To successfully climb a problem.

Sit-Start: A start to a problem beginning with the boulderer sitting on either the ground or on a crash pad, at the lowest point of a route.

Slab: A relatively low-angle (significantly less than vertical) section of rock, usually with few large features.

Sloper: A hold that tends to slope downward and usually is grasped with an open hand.



Boulderer on slopers

Smear: Pushing with the tip or ball of the foot where there is no hold.

Spot/Spotting: The act of being a spotter: this may include duties such as moving the crash pad, removing dangerous objects in the fall zone, and physically cushioning or modifying the trajectory of the climber in the event of a fall.

Top Out: To complete a problem by getting to the top of the boulder where one can stand upright.

Traverse: Generally a horizontal climb that involves traversing across a face or overhang, or sometimes around a boulder, occasionally finishing off at an arête in order to top out.



Traverse

Undercling: A hold or flake that is upside down.

V-Scale: A technical grading scale used by boulders, especially in the U.S. The range goes from V0 to V15.

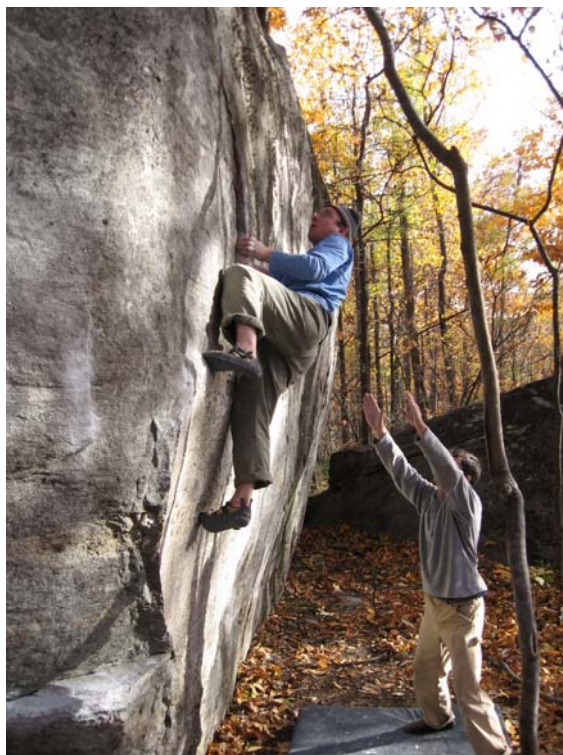
Spotting:

Spotting is very important and should be employed each time someone is climbing on the rock. Spotting involves keeping your eyes on the climber while holding your arms up not to catch, but to guide the climber onto the pad. Most importantly, protect the person's head. When climbing on a steep overhanging roof, where the climber's body is horizontal, support the shoulders so that you can redirect the climber's body to a vertical position when landing.

Your own safety as the spotter is as important, so make sure you aren't going to trip over an obstacle while in the process of spotting. This can be avoided by placing the pad/pads to cover all areas of a potential fall before the climber leaves the ground. This is important for traverses and anywhere where the climber may have moved out horizontally from the starting point.

It will be up to you as the spotter to decide when the climber has gone past the point of bouldering to soloing, which can place you at risk as well.

Use common sense and keep your eyes open.



Good spotting technique

Becoming a Better Boulderer:

So you know the basics and have been bouldering for awhile and now you want to get stronger and better. Becoming a better athlete at any sport requires dedication and commitment. It can require some addition training on the side accompanied by proper nutrition and rest. That means cutting out all that junk food and fast food. Garbage in, garbage out. I could spend another 10 pages on nutrition, but I would suggest that you go out and research the web or pick up a good book on nutrition. There are more than plenty out there. One more thing on nutrition; don't get caught up in fads like the no-carb diet. These kind of diets never work and fade out just like all other fads. As for getting stronger that would take another 20 pages! Some really good books that cover all of these subjects are 'Flash Training' by Eric Horst and 'Performance Rock Climbing' by Dale Goddard. And last, but definitely not least is **REST**. This is a really important one. I know this sport is the sweetest & baddest of all sports and I wish I could do it every single day, BUT your body needs rest. Muscles need approximately 48 hours to recover from strenuous workouts and tendons need much longer. It happens all the time, guys (& gals) go out & boulder as hard as they can multiple days in a row with out any rest, then the next thing you know....SNAP....you have a pulled finger tendon that may take months if not a year to fully heal. Now what are you going to do? Also, listen to your body; it will let you know when you need rest or if you have strained something. Anti-inflammatory drugs such as Ibuprofen are great if used properly. Taking a bunch to mask the pain and then climbing is a prescription for an injury.

Conclusion:

If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact me or BooneBoulders.com. We will hopefully have an answer. Good luck and happy bouldering!



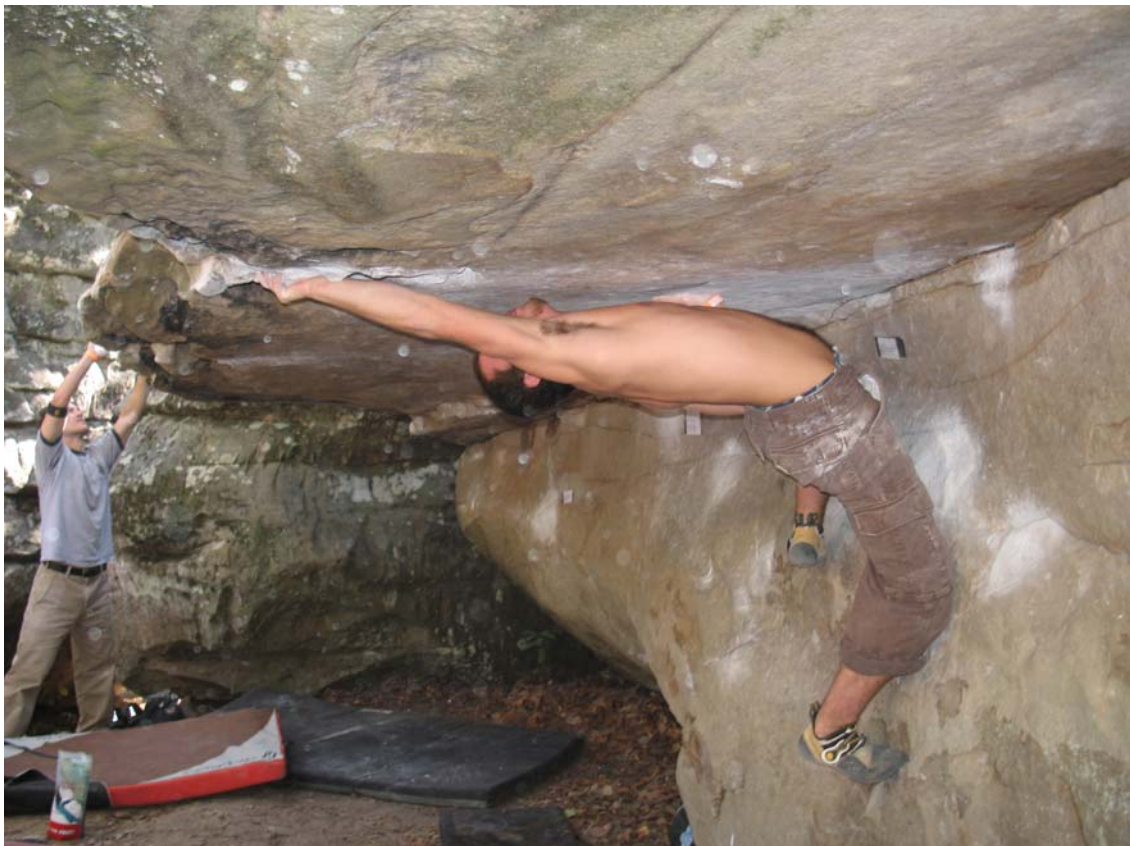
eat



sleep



boulder



Sometimes flexibility can come in handy!

Published by
BooneBoulders.com
Boone, NC
mountairy_1@yahoo.com
matt@booneboulders.com

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Pearson, Kevin

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