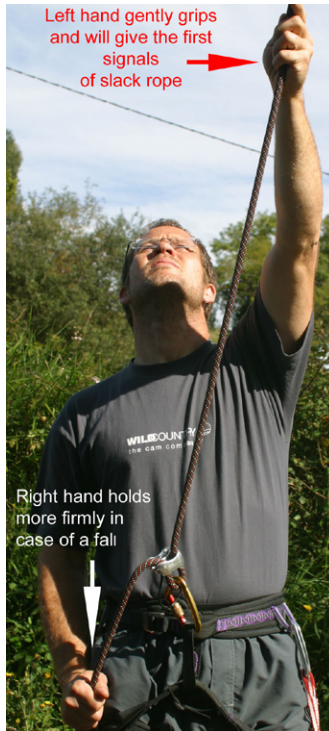


Top Rope Belaying - An Eight Step Guide

Below is a simple guide to the art of Top Rope belaying, the first thing any climber needs to learn before venturing outside or even to a wall. It is a pretty simple technique which uses a **belay device** (friction plate) to trap the climbing rope when pressure is applied to it i.e. when the climber falls, allowing the belayer to be able to hold their partners weight quite easily

There is only really one golden rule; never, ever, let go of the rope **below the belay device**, - as it is this rope (the control or **'dead' rope**) which allows you to hold your partner should they fall. The rope above the belay device (or **'live' rope**) cannot be used to hold a fall - it hasn't travelled through the belay device and therefore would burn your hands very badly if you tried to take someones weight on it alone.



Step 1

The starting position is as shown here. The RH is on the 'dead' rope - the rope below the belay device - and the LH gently grips the 'live' rope - above the belay device. It is this higher LH which will get the first signals of 'slack' rope as the climber moves up the rock. My personal method is almost to lean on the the upper rope so that as it becomes 'slack' it is really obvious as you will start to fall forward. When this happens you need to move to Step 2....



Step 2

All belay devices are designed to give friction and they do so by bending the rope through a tight angle. So to make it easier to 'take in' any slack rope you are best lessening this angle. This is done by raising the RH so it takes the ropes to an almost parallel position giving a smooth 'in-out' through the belay device. As this is happening the LH starts to gently pull down the slack that has appeared above.

From this position one moves to Step 3



Step 3

The left hand grips tighter & pulls the rope down towards the device taking up as much slack rope as possible. The right hand pulls up and away from the device at the same time, smoothly drawing the rope through until either there is no more rope to pull or the arm is at full extension.



Step 4

The right hand then moves in an arc back down towards the side - the starting position. While the left hand stays gently on the 'live' rope.



Step 5

Essentially this picture simply shows from another angle how the hands end up after the loop of slack has been pulled through the device.

Note that unlike the original starting position there will be some slack between the Right Hand and the belay device. This is very important for step 6.

Left hand stays fairly static

right hand is back down by side

Note slack rope



Step 6

Here the Left Hand becomes the key and moves from the live rope to very tightly grip the 'dead' rope just above where the right hand is holding it. At this point the Left Hand is in control of the rope.

Note: it is essential to leave a gap between the Left Hand and the belay device for step 7.

Left hand leaves live rope & moves to dead rope between right hand & belay device

Right hand stays where it is...

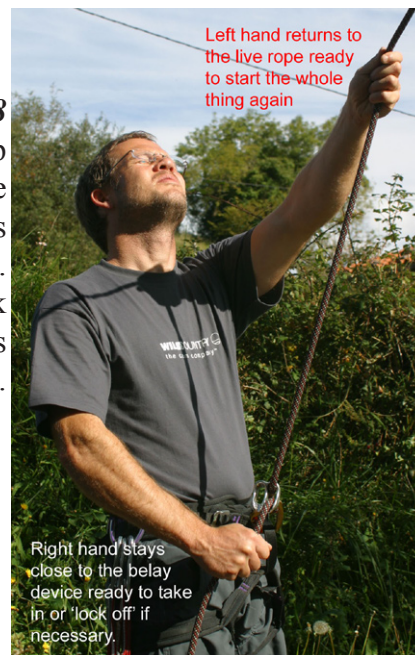


Step 7

Now the Right Hand crosses the Left Hand and grips the rope closer to the belay device and takes full and sole control of the dead rope once again.

The right hand crosses the left to regain control of the 'dead' rope closest to the belay device

The left hand stays where it is on the rope



Step 8

The Left Hand is freed up and returns to the live rope exactly as it started and gets ready to feel for any slack. As soon as there is any slack the whole process starts again.

Left hand returns to the live rope ready to start the whole thing again

Right hand stays close to the belay device ready to take in or 'lock off' if necessary.

Some general hints:

1. Never ever let go of the 'dead' rope - always keep at least one hand on it.
2. Always try to watch the climber at all times - you can see if he is struggling or maybe if he is going to fall and prepare for that.
3. Practice, practice, practice, so that you can take in quickly and smoothly without taking your eyes off the climber.