

**Buckden
House OEC**

**Low Ropes
Course**

Introduction

The low ropes course is a set of problems designed to challenge the individual's physical and mental abilities, It also challenges the group's ability to work as a team and to give encouragement to each other.

The challenge is to get from one end of the low ropes course to the other end without touching the ground. It is not a race to see who can get round the fastest but a challenge to see who can complete the course without putting their feet on the ground. It is a team effort.

Students need to wear helmets when on the low ropes course which need to be fitted correctly.

All the elements are only a short distance off the ground and a lot of the problems involve balancing and thinking how to move along the element. The challenges get progressively harder as the course develops.

If there are two members of staff the group can be divided into two with each half working as a separate group. Instead of following closely together, one group can start at the beginning and the other at the platform before the oil drums.

The various types of elements are:

Platforms - at various points along the ropes course there are platforms that can be used as collecting points to gather the group together before moving on to the next section.

Bridges - different types including:
planks with or without hand rails
rope bridges

Balancing elements:
metal bar to walk along while holding chains
poles to balance along
metal chain to move along while holding another metal chain
wooden stepping stones
see-saws
swinging stirrups

rolling bar
swinging bars

Vertical cargo net to climb along

Hanging oil drums to climb through

Zip wire to travel from one element to the next

Risk Assessment

As with any other session you are responsible to the Head of Centre for the safety and good conduct of you group for the duration of the session. If faced with a situation not otherwise covered by this document, use your common sense and err on the side of caution.

Staff Competency: the leader of these activities will be expected to have experience of working with similar groups (if only in the classroom environment), to have read and understood this document and have the approval of the Head of Centre or designated other.

Hazard	Action taken
Slips and trips	Helmets must be worn by all students. Before the sessions it is a good idea to check the grip on footwear and that they are well fitting. Be aware of the specific hazards on the low ropes course especially if it is wet.
Archery	Make the students aware of any archery session that may be running concurrently with activities run in the garden. No students should enter the exclusion zone marked by a red rope.
Environmental hazards	Dress for the season (and check what students are wearing under waterproofs). Long sleeves and trousers guard against grazes, sunburn and insect stings or bites. In the summer make sure that students are well hydrated.
Stream in grounds	Avoidance, briefing and awareness of group members.
Traffic	This is a relatively small hazard when in the grounds and the students can be briefed beforehand.

Students running away

Students can disappear into the toilets, village shop and many other places. Know how many there are in your group and know where they should be at all times. If a group look tired or are losing interest, change the activity or take a break. Students without concentration are students with reduced safety.

Hazards

General

The low ropes course needs close supervision. It is not an 'adventure playground' and the group need to work together as a team. They should not be allowed to run around as a 'free for all' session.

Helmets must be worn by all students on the low ropes course and should be correctly fitted with the chin strap done up.

Students should wear long trousers and a long sleeved top so that their skin is protected from grazes, bumps etc.

Footwear must be suitable - there must be a good grip on the sole and they must be fastened tightly.

In wet or damp conditions students need to be aware that things will be slippier and extra care is needed.

Be aware of the possibility of general bumps and falls especially if the low ropes course is damp.

The member of staff must be aware of where the students are at all times and watch for students disappearing inside or out of the grounds.

In the summer there is the possibility of midges under the trees. Students are best wearing long trousers and sleeves and using midge spray if they have some. If the conditions get too bad move into the open ground to do something else and come back to the ropes course later.

Elements of the ropes course should not have more than two or three people on them at the same time. Some elements will only be able to have one person on it at once. On certain elements having more than one person on it makes it much harder due to wobbling etc.

Specific elements

Cargo net

Watch that students do not climb too high or get their feet tangled in the net.

Hanging chains or ropes

If swung too hard when passing them to the person following they could hit people.

See-saw

These are heavy and care needs to be taken when they fall back into place after someone has stepped off the end. Make sure that nobody as their feet or shins where the see-saw is going to land. This should not happen as the students should not have their feet on the ground.

Zip wire

Care must be taken with the zip wire and it should be supervised closely at all times. The pulley will automatically gravitate to the lower end of the wire. When a student is ready to use the zip wire a member of staff needs to pull the pulley up to the student by using the rope attached to it. The student needs to hold the bar with both hands close to the middle and then just lifts his/her feet up. The pulley will gravitate to the receiving platform. There is no need to push or jump on to the pulley to make it go. At the receiving platform the student needs to lift his/her feet up so the shins don't hit the platform and also need to be aware of bumping into the tree. If some of the group are already on the receiving platform they can help the student to land.

Stirrups

These are single foot sized wooden bars attached to swinging chains. These can be difficult to control and students will give up and fall off. They need to be supervised and be aware of students falling.

Roller bar

This element is a round wooden pole that rolls with a rope to hold on to. If a student's feet roll off the pole and they are leaning over the rope they could catch their face/neck on the rope.

Running the session

To run this session the member of staff must be aware of all the potential hazards on the low ropes course and must keep close supervision of the students at all times.

Before the session starts check that the students are wearing long trousers and a long sleeved top and have suitable footwear (good grip and done up tightly).

Each member of the group needs to **wear a helmet** which needs to be fitted correctly. There is a supply of helmets kept in the team building shed, if you cannot find them ask a member of Buckden House staff.

The group can either been shown round the whole course before starting in order to point the various elements and the hazards, or they can do the course without having seen the elements. It should be emphasised to the group that it is not an 'adventure playground' and that it is a team effort.

The group start on the platform and progress along the various elements. They should help each other and give encouragement. There are platforms where the whole group can gather before proceeding to the next section. There should not be large numbers of students on each element at once.

Special care needs to be taken on the zip wire which should be supervised at all times. When a student is ready to use the zip wire a member of staff needs to pull the pulley up to the student by using the rope attached to it. The student needs to hold the bar with both hands close to the middle and then just lifts his/her feet up. The pulley will gravitate to the receiving platform. There is no need to push or jump on to the pulley to make it go. At the receiving platform the student needs to lift his/her feet up so the shins don't hit the platform and also need to be aware of bumping into the tree. If some of the group are already on the receiving platform they can help the student to land.

Variations

Counting foot touches

The member of staff can count the number of times the group touch the ground while completing course. Every time someone puts a foot on the ground it counts as one point. The aim is to get round with as few points as possible. The group can then do the course again and see if they can better their score.

Water carrying

The group can carry a bucket of water around the course. They still need to try and get round without touching the ground. This needs team work and discussion on how to carry the bucket round. The amount of water can be measured at the beginning and again at the end to see how much water they have managed to get round.

To make this a bit harder the group can carry two buckets of water round.