

VERTICAL PLAYGROUND

Goal – Purpose of the activity.	
Challenge courses are also known as challenge ropes courses. <i>Participants</i> are required to use dexterity, strength, balance and complex physical movements to successfully traverse the element or course of elements. Challenge courses are often used for experiential learning, personal challenge or team building purposes but also for entertainment. Challenge ropes courses are designed to present physical and mental challenges to individuals and groups. This Vertical playground is made up of four elements that reach up to heights of 12m. The wall requires participants to work in pairs in order to make it to the top. The playground is one of our most physical activities and involves an amount of strength, flexibility and agility. As the team climbs higher the challenge increases. The ground based participants are involved in the Donkey Belay and offering encouragement and help. The climbers can be lowered to the ground at any time. Not everyone gets to the top but everyone enjoys trying! The Vertical playground is a “High Element” and is an element for which safety can no longer be achieved by spotting and requires a <i>belay system</i> using harnesses and specialist safety equipment or other established methods or systems.	
Participants	Leadership and Qualifications
Participants are those persons who undertake the activity, and who are not a leader or assistant leader for the activity. Dependent Participants are persons owed a duty of care by the activity provider who is reliant upon the activity leaders for supervision, guidance and instruction to support the person’s participation. All participants are to be considered Dependent Participants for this activity. There will be a maximum of 2 active participants (Vertical Playground), and minimum of 6 participants on each Belay Team (Donkey Belay).	Activity leaders should have or be able to demonstrate: • Core Good Practice Guide Leader General Competencies (Appendix M Core Good Practice Guide) • Specific competencies as outlined in the Challenge Course Good Practice Guide Appendix 9 Leaders may demonstrate their competency through any of the 4 recognised pathways: • Training Qualification and/or Training Course • Outdoor Sector and/or Organisation Accreditation Scheme • Leader Registration Schemes • Peer Recognition and Verification Process
Participant/Leader Ratios	
Ratio 1:20 + 1 School Staff Member (Assistant Leader) for school groups. Activity Leader is to provide Level 1 (Direct Supervision), Assistant Leader (school personnel) is to provide Level 2 Supervision.	
Operational Procedures	Location: Lake Cooby
Participants are to be briefed by the facilitator of the expectations of the group. Linking in with their values discussed at the start of camp. The group then is run through what to expect and do that session, depending on the weather and ability of the group. Pre-Activity The psychological preparation of students is as important as the physical preparation, especially for students who are anxious about the activity. Under no circumstances should students be pressured by staff or peers to participate beyond their readiness. A challenge by choice should be used for all participants. They should all be encouraged to fit a harness in preparation for the activity, or at least to be part of the belay team. A safety brief is given and a demonstration of how to wear a harness and helmet correctly and how to use the carabiners and ropes safety. • All participants must wear appropriate clothing and be sun smart with sunscreen, hat, etc. Everyone is to wear a harness (and a helmet when required) for the session and is not to take it off unless instructed by the facilitator or at the end of the session as directed. The Activity Leader must visually check to ensure that the harness has been fitted correctly and that the attachment has been checked prior to participants beginning to climb the Vertical Playground. • Once the safety brief is complete the group is split into 2 smaller groups. The Activity Leader may want to determine the groups based on confidence levels, ability, behaviours, etc. • The belay group will attach themselves to the belay ropes using carabiners and are given a verbal and visual description of what they would do prior to the climber beginning • The belay group is asked to do a SQUEEZE TEST (i.e. squeeze their carabiners to test that they are secured properly). If the gate is locked /closed the participants are to put their thumbs up. If the carabiner gate is open, participants must close it prior to putting their thumbs up. Thumbs up indicates all participants are safely attached to the rope. The Activity Leader may find it beneficial to walk up and down the	

group while conducting a SQUEEZE TEST in order to double check the gates are closed. Participants are then to wait for further instructions.

- Once the Activity Leader is happy with the ability of the group they will begin the activity.
- No one is to hold onto the rope while donkey belaying - this can cause rope burn.

During Activity

- Climbers must stay on the ground until instructed to start climbing.
- When belaying, there should be no slack in the rope. The donkeys should move backwards or forwards depending on the direction needed in order to keep the rope tight for the climbers. It should not be too tight as to cause discomfort for the climbers.
- Climbers should not begin climbing if there is slack in the rope.
- Both climbers and belayers must remain vigilant in the first 2m of the Vertical Playground (approx. the top of cargo Net). As there is some stretch in the belay rope, there is the potential for climbers to contact the ground if they fall off the vertical wall. Belayers must watch the climber carefully and be ready to react if the climber falls.
- Once the climbers have reached the top or indicate their intention to continue no further, donkeys will be asked to pause in order to give the instructions on how to lower the climber down.
- There should be good communication between belayers and climbers at all times.

Post Activity

All harnesses to be fully extended and placed into boxes for next session.

The Activity Leader will front load the participants before the debrief to think about how they may have improved on their values or maybe achieved a goal they set from them self or team before heading. They then will be challenged to apply those values/goals back at camp and home.

Weather

Effective planning requires access to up-to-date weather and fire information, which is generally available through newspapers, radio and television. The most up-to-date information is available on the website of the Bureau of Meteorology at www.bom.gov.au/qld . Or <http://www.eldersweather.com.au/qld/darling-downs/geham>

Equipment and Logistics

Equipment, whether hired, borrowed or owned by the school or students, must be in a safe condition and suitable for the activity

Belay Devices

Belaying devices must meet Australian standards. Devices must be in good working order.

Harnesses

Providers of artificial climbing and abseiling activities must refer to manufacturers and installers to establish appropriate operating parameters. These parameters must address the correct fitting and attachment of harnesses. The harness must also ensure the student or staff member will remain secure in the event of an inversion. Harnesses must be regularly checked and replaced, if necessary, with a recommended maximum life span of five years.

Helmets

Helmets which meet Australian standards must be worn by all students and staff using high elements and by those belaying or observing from below. Caps must not be worn under helmets.

Ropes

Ropes used on a challenge rope course must be used in accordance with manufacturer recommendations and meet Australian Standards. Before the activity commences, an experienced staff member needs to inspect the ropes.

The ropes' history and maintenance needs to be logged and the ropes must be stored in a cool, dry place free from ultraviolet light, chemical or physical hazards.

Shoes

Participants must wear covered and firmly fitting shoes with a non-slip sole.

First aid kits

First aid kits appropriate to the location and level of training must be carried.

Rescue equipment

Rescue equipment specific to the ropes course must be accessible at all times..

Clothing

Clothing is the individual's primary protection against severe and variable weather conditions.

Clothing lists need to be appropriate for the activity, environment and season. Items which are recommended not to be taken or worn (such as jewellery or rings) should be identified.

Glasses or sunglasses should be secured and long hair tied back to avoid being caught in belay devices or other equipment. Loose jewellery must not be worn and rings should be taped if not removed. Items of jewellery or rings which students remove should be placed in a secure location so they do not get lost.

All objects should be removed from pockets before participating. Gloves may be appropriate on elements involving a dynamic belay.

To protect against sunburn use broad-spectrum, water-resistant SPF 30+ sunscreen on all exposed parts of the body, applied according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Students who own sunglasses should be encouraged to bring and wear them when required.

Identification

Staff and students must be easily identifiable.

Staff must determine the most suitable system/s of identification, based on the assessment of the environment, students' skills, the type of activities to be undertaken and the age and number of students.

Levels of Challenge and Possible Variations

Safety Considerations

Sun Safety

Sunburn is a risk for anyone who participates in outdoor activities, particularly in Queensland. Leaders should take reasonable steps to prevent or minimise the likelihood of staff and participants suffering excessive sun exposure.

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Ensure all safety equipment is fitted correctly.

Ensure clear instructions are given to participants.

Do not use cable for support when climbing.

Be aware of splinters

Do not climb over the top rung. The top is considered when your hands are touching the top rung.

When being lowered down, participants should have a hand and legs out in front to ensure the rung does not hit them in the face.

Course construction and security

The construction of challenge ropes courses is an expert field and should be undertaken by qualified individuals and/or organisations specialising in the planning and construction of ropes courses.

Contractors must provide written confirmation that the materials, equipment and installation meet current industry requirements.

Staff must ensure that challenge ropes course elements are not accessible when unsupervised.

Maintenance

The owner of the course must carry out regular formal maintenance inspections which are fully documented and endorsed by an independent industry expert. Operators must be able to provide written evidence that a maintenance check has been conducted. Before each activity, the instructor should carry out a visual inspection of the course to ensure there are no obvious impediments to normal operation.

For more details please see corresponding RA

Emergency Management Procedure

- A** Assess situation, call emergency services, assist those in danger
- E** Evacuate students, staff and visitors, if appropriate
- I** Inform School Camp Leader onsite and off site, Camp Cooby Directors or Camp Manager if not onsite
- O** Organise resources, advise parents
- U** Undertake recovery operations and return site to normal

Risk Assessment

Danger	Risk Description	Risk Level	Management Strategies	Residual Risk Assessment – after Management Strategies
Environment				
Sun Exposure	Sunburn Dehydration Heat Exhaustion/ Stroke	M	Participants advised on appropriate clothing and equipment. Briefs and debriefs as well as team planning should be conducted in the shade where available. Clothing with sleeves must be worn. Participants carry minimum of 3L water. Refill stops. Particular pointers to apply sunscreen to backs of hands and inside thighs. (recommended minimum +30) Regular rest stops. Encourage peer reminders and monitoring. Review weather conditions prior to the activity. www.bom.gov.au/qld . Or http://www.eldersweather.com.au/qld/darling-downs/geham	L
Winds	Falling branches Falling trees.	S	Monitor winds before commencing activity. Assess participants ability to cope with increasingly difficult wind conditions. Aggressive movement of trees nearby are an indication of thinking about strong management strategies or cancellation. No activity will take place during strong winds, or near dead trees, no pulling or swinging on trees. All dead trees & fallen branches will be monitored in initiative area. All dead trees and branches deemed a risk will be removed from the area	L

			Review weather conditions prior to the activity. www.bom.gov.au/qld . Or http://www.eldersweather.com.au/qld/darling-downs/geham	
Rain	Wet Equipment Hypothermia Slips and trips	S	Pre-briefing and equipment list outlines appropriate clothing and wet weather gear. Participants are shown how to waterproof equipment. Group condition is monitored closely during wet weather. Group to be briefed on safe practice in wet conditions using extra caution. Participant will wear firmly fitting, covered footwear with a non-slip sole. Participants will be instructed to be aware of the ground underfoot, & to avoid walking on damp/wet areas & to be aware of trees, branches & brambles, & not to run. Review weather conditions prior to the activity. www.bom.gov.au/qld . Or http://www.eldersweather.com.au/qld/darling-downs/geham	L
Bushfire	Burns Smoke Inhalation Death	H	Participants advised on appropriate clothing and equipment. Participants carry minimum of 3L water. Encourage peer reminders and monitoring. Aggressive heat waves are an indication of thinking about bush fire management strategies or cancellation. Fires may only be lit in specified areas. Fires should not be lit in windy conditions. Participants will be briefed on emergency procedures. Review weather conditions prior to the activity. www.bom.gov.au/qld . Or http://www.eldersweather.com.au/qld/darling-downs/geham	L
Dead Trees	Impact Injuries from falling branches	M	Participants are briefed about the dead trees and the likelihood of tree fall. Participants are asked to stay on trails	L
Steep Banks	Sprains & Strains	M	Appropriate pathways are chosen to avoid any difficulties. Participant will wear firmly fitting, covered footwear with a non-slip sole	L
Rubbish	Cut Feet Embedded Objects	S	Participants are expected to wear closed in shoes at all times.	L
Environmental Impact	Wearing / erosion of tracks / vegetation	M	Participants are to be briefed on specific environmental factors that concern Cooby Dam. Ensure rubbish is 'carried out'. Ensure that the designated landing areas are used and soft fall material is provided under the element Maintenance of the belay track required to reduce dust / erosion and slipping of participants during lowering activities of climbers	L

Vertical Playground Activity Plan

Wildlife		S	Participants are expected to wear closed in shoes at all times. Appropriate pathways are chosen to avoid potential wildlife Participants will be instructed to be aware of the ground underfoot, & to avoid walking through unmown areas & to be aware of trees, branches & brambles which may be home to various wildlife, & not to run. Pathways are kept clear and mowed to ensure all wildlife can be seen and avoided. Participants will be instructed to give all wildlife a wide berth to avoid injury. Staff will inspect all activity areas prior to use to ensure no wildlife is in close proximity.	L
Danger	Risk Description	Risk Level	Management Strategies	Residual Risk Assessment – after Management Strategies
People				
Poor belay technique	A student falls from height.	H	Pre-activity planning will consider whether the planned challenge ropes course session matches the maturity and abilities of the group. Belayers and observers will be briefed on their responsibilities and closely supervised. Each climber will have a minimum of 4 belayers in a Donkey Belay System	L
Poor Belay Technique	A student holds rope while belaying, climbing participant falls resulting in rope burn.	M	Pre-activity planning will consider whether the planned challenge ropes course session matches the maturity and abilities of the group. Belayers and observers will be briefed on their responsibilities and closely supervised. Belayers are to hold the rope they are connected to, keeping the rope inline and not wrapping the rope around hands / arms	L
Inexperienced participants	Poorly fitted harness, resulting in soft tissue or skeletal injury	S	All participants will wear correctly fitted helmets and harnesses. These are to be checked at the start of the activity and throughout the activity, especially when a harness is removed or adjusted. Pre-activity planning will consider whether the planned challenge ropes course session matches the maturity and abilities of the group.	L
Entrapment (equipment)	A student or staff member catches their hair, clothing or jewelry in equipment, causing injury or distress.	H	Staff will advise participant that jewelry and rings must not be taken or worn, and suggest appropriate clothing (both in the pre-activity briefing and before the day of the activity). Staff will ensure that hair, clothing and jewelry are appropriately managed to avoid injury or mishap	L
Fear / psychological damage	Student or staff freeze	H	If a person freezes on a high element it is normally possible to talk them through. On a bottom top rope element (rock climbing Jacobs ladder milk crate stack and leap of faith) a person always has the option of stopping and coming down wherever they are located	L

Vertical Playground Activity Plan

Inconsiderate Participants	Participants being inconsiderate of other participants resulting in soft tissue, skeletal or emotional injury / damage	M	Participants will be briefed on the risks associated with the activity. Inconsiderate participants will be removed from the activity. Staff will ensure safety procedures are met and will cease any ideas which may result in a participant's safety being jeopardized.	L
Allergies	Environmental triggers (pollens, dust)	H	Check medical information, be aware of possible triggers.	
Danger	Risk Description	Risk Level	Management Strategies	Residual Risk Assessment – after Management Strategies
Equipment				
Faulty	Faulty equipment could result in further damage to equipment and increase risk of incident,	H	Staff will inspect all ropes equipment before and after activity. All equipment use will be logged. All equipment will be used and maintained according to the manufacturers recommendations. Camp Staff are responsible for set up and pack down of all High Ropes equipment. Personal protective equipment checked for correct fitting & monitored throughout activity by the instructor	L
Incorrect use of equipment.	Failure to use Vertical Wall element correctly resulting in injury	M	Clear instruction to climbers about where to hold for support when climbing Whilst climbers should be encouraged to work together and not hold onto wire ropes / hard points on the element, this can be done if one climber needs more support / buddy climber doesn't continue to the top Lowering to be done one at a time, with direction from staff and advising climbers to lean back / stay away from the element to avoid contact / potential injury	L

Consequence					
Likelihood	Insignificant 1	Minor 2	Moderate 3	Major 4	Catastrophic 5
A (almost certain)	S	S	H	H	H
B (Likely)	M	S	S	H	H
C (Moderate)	L	M	S	H	H
D (unlikely)	L	L	M	S	H
E (rare)	L	L	M	S	S

Risk Level

H – High risk: e.g. likely or almost certain to occur, with at least moderate consequence – at least medical

treatment required (See table below)

S – Significant risk

M – Moderate risk

L – Low risk

CONSEQUENCE RATING TABLE		
1	Insignificant	No injuries, No financial loss
2	Minor	First Aid treatment, Low financial loss
3	Moderate	Medical treatment required, Medium financial loss
4	Major	Extensive injuries, High financial loss
5	Catastrophic	Death, Major financial loss