

# Ropes Director

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## Overview

The ropes program is an exciting and popular activity at camp, especially with some of our younger kids. The combination of the high and low elements provides an excellent challenge for individuals along with cabin groups and can help teach many important skills to campers. The diversity of elements throughout the course allows for an endless amount of activities, games and adventures for campers and staff so remember to be creative and have fun!

## Daily Tasks

Set-up of the ropes course takes place at the start of camp and generally is a fairly simple and fast task. Once everything is in place, there is little that needs to be done on a daily basis outside of checking equipment and supplies to ensure everything is in good working condition. If you encounter any problems while setting things up, you should speak with Libby and/or Camp Director as they can help point you in the right direction.

At the start of each day, take a look at what cabin and age groups you have coming throughout the day so you can plan in advance what elements will be used and what each staff member will be doing. You should plan in advance what days you would like to be at the climbing wall as it is located at a different area from the ropes course.

## Programming

Before the summer officially begins and the campers arrive, take some time to explore all ropes elements. Ensure you are comfortable and knowledgeable with every element and able to supervise and teach each one. It is a good idea to go over the different award levels and understand which awards go with each low and high element. As all elements require strict supervision, it is best to plan each period around either the low or high elements, not both; therefore, individual choice periods should be planned by level.

Beginner climbers are for either first time campers and/or JT's. Progress from low to high ropes over the first few days and then work your way through the various high elements. Intermediate climbers are for campers who have done ropes before and have both high and low ropes experience. Advanced climbers have experience on all elements and are comfortable throughout the course. Advanced climbers should progress through more advanced elements while trying new skills such as walking backwards or even blindfolded. Be creative with the elements and challenge advanced climbers to push themselves (yet in a safe manner at all times).

While campers of all ages can go on the zip line, it should be used after campers have worked their way through a variety of high and low elements first.

The climbing wall is a great challenge for many campers. As kids grow more comfortable and have tried a few of the different climbs, you can introduce new challenges by incorporating timed climbs, blindfolds or side by side races.

The ropes course requires good listening skills, team work and respect for fellow campers and staff. Different campers will advance more quickly depending on their skill set, comfort levels and risk taking abilities. The ropes course can be a fantastic accomplishment for a timid camper or anyone who may be afraid of heights. Watching a camper finally walk the catwalk after days or weeks of trying can be extremely rewarding. Regardless of skills, encourage campers to be open minded and to try new things. There is always something new to be done throughout the course.

As the ropes course is located within the woods, it can often be a deterrent for some campers and staff – find creative ways to motivate these individuals and get them excited about the course. Come up with fun demonstrations outside of the woods that you can perform in front of the entire camp to get them excited.

On top of individual choice periods, You will also get cabins once during block schedule each month, twice if they are lucky. This is a great opportunity for cabin bonding, and this can be especially helpful for cabins struggling to get along and/or listen to each other and their counsellors. Talk to the cabin counsellors beforehand to see there are any themes the counsellors think you should base your programming around (i.e. sharing, listening, leadership, etc.). Make sure to do this in advance so you have time to set-up and be prepared.

## **Awards**

Kids love to earn awards and are a great way for them to set personal goals each summer. It is best to use your individual choice periods for the various awards and group them according to their skill set. High level awards should take 2-3 weeks, more information on this will be given to you at camp.

## **Staff**

The ropes program generally has two specialists that are hired in advance of the summer for the sole reason of working on the ropes course and helping the director. These specialists will have some training in advance of the summer and should be used for multiple responsibilities. Additional staff or CITs may not be as familiar with the ropes course and should therefore be used for more simple tasks such as putting on harnesses and getting kids organized. Be sure to double check all harnesses carefully especially if CITs have been putting them on.

CITs or other staff can be a great resource for keeping kids occupied and having fun while a fellow camper is on one of the elements. Having only one person climb at a time can become somewhat boring for large cabin groups so be creative with activities you can do on the ground while other are waiting. Songs or games can be great to prevent boredom!

## **Safety**

While we always encourage campers and staff to have fun at everything they do, safety is paramount. The ropes course can be a very dangerous place if not supervised correctly. Helmets must be worn at all times while on the high elements and the ropes director must ensure that all harnesses and belays are on properly before campers begin to climb. Be aware

of any issues relating to bad weather when equipment may get wet and slippery and do not use the elements in those circumstances. If for any reason inadequate staffing exists at any time, then the high elements cannot be used. Staff MUST carefully watch all climbers at all times and campers must be aware of the safety rules before climbing. If any camper is not listening or understanding the climbing rules then they should not be allowed to climb at that time. Safety is our number one priority at all times on the course. In the event of a storm, the ropes course cannot be used until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder or lightning.

## Rules of the Course

1. Some key terms that I have found useful for the campers:

1. ROCK EMPIRE = "R" is for Right Side to remember the harness
2. SCRATCH YOUR NOSE NOT PICK IT = to put the beaner through the harness
3. SCREW DOWN, SO YOU DON'T SCREW UP = the way to lock a beaner
4. BRAIN BUCKET, SKID LID, BUCKET = Helmet

2. No one is permitted to go superman style!

- The zip line is now on a back up system. Both lanyards go behind chest harnesses. First carabineer through top red and blue belay loop. Second lanyard just through blue belay loop. Carabineers must be back to back, gates opposite, screwed down. When getting kids off the zip line, it's a good idea to hold their chest harness carabineer when they climb down as they have to be on the top step to un-clip.

(check the Ropes Rules board posted at the Ropes Course)

## Ropes Suggestions from previous Ropes Directors

### Sample Schedule

#### MONDAY:

- Cookouts

#### TUESDAY:

- Usually last day of individual choice- do zip line if possible. This is usually sign-up night.
- Easy to do individual choice by age. Especially as older campers doing high awards need to help campers doing low awards.
  - Period 1: JTs / High Awards
  - Period 2: Intermediate (med. -- about 12)
  - Period 3: Advanced(high awards – about 12).

#### WEDNESDAY:

- Rock Wall – introductions of equipment and rules.

#### THURSDAY:

- Heebejebe, multi-vine and Boardwalk

## FRIDAY:

- Playpen, Catwalk, make a whole session out of low ropes. Groups of 2 or 3 can spot and have the campers go to whichever low rope they want.

## SATURDAY:

- Bosen steps, Postmans

## SUNDAY:

- Zip-line

## Notes

- When campers belay, we are their back up, with one hand on the rope and usually another camper anchors them
- Involve kids by having one anchor the belayer, one picking up the space rope and encouraging the climber
- When campers go on lobster claws they are on belay. We used the catwalk element and then they can finish the catwalk. However, they can use any element with leap anchors.
- Attach another set of lobster claws at the top of the zip line platform so that as soon as the climber reaches the top they can be detached from the rope and it can be let down
- Introduce a session exclusively for less confident campers so that they aren't forced into anything and reward them at the end of the week once they have conquered their year.
- Hanging from Loon Lodge works really well for Proprietary notion.
- Cabins usually want the zip-line. The ideal time seemed to be 10-11 campers in 50 minutes.
- Splitting larger groups in two for the low ropes and getting them to compete in sports works well
- I found that setting the course up before breakfast worked very well. Therefore it is set up and ready to go. Give yourself about ½ an hour to set up. Awards sessions... kids can help assist in setting up with supervision.
- Allow high awards kids to join the JT session, if there's space, so they can work on getting their 5 people to level 3.
- Always make sure on the first session of both individual choice or block schedule that you go through the ropes course rules even if they say they have done them before.
- It's very useful to record what elements have been used for each Individual Choice period or have been used with a cabin so options can be checked and no repetition occurs.
- IMPORTANT: The two orange ropes marked with black striped tape are retired and are unsafe for climbing. They are solely used for belay activities and teambuilding games.
- AUTONOMY: make it the norm to establish that all campers should be able to put on a harness and helmet by themselves and that the ropes staff are only there to check they are worn properly.
- Always ensure that your staff are ready to begin as soon as the campers show up to the activity.
- Ensure all campers and staff know the awards levels and what it takes to achieve each one.
- Have a knot tying class - with ODF/SAIL.
- Remember to announce award winners after breakfast.
- For large cabins that want to do zip line, block 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> period and split the cabin in half, do low ropes with 1 half while they wait.

- Lay out harnesses before session begins.
- Music can help liven up the area, but during explanation of safety and rules music MUST be off.

## Additional Programs

### THE NOT SO SCAREDY CAT PROGRAM

This program was introduced as a special Individual Choice program for those campers who are afraid of signing up for ropes for various reasons. These sessions are smaller and only contain those campers who are a little more timid on the ropes course. The focus is on pushing an individual's comfort zone. A weekly glance at the NSSC program may look like this:

- Day 1) Low ropes - teambuilding and trust exercises
- Day 2) Introduce the high ropes course
- Day 3) Begin climbing and trusting the belay system
- Day 4-6) Gradually push comfort zone by climbing higher and higher  
\*\*\*\* With this group positive re-enforcement is more than necessary!!

### ROPES COURSE GAMES

- Camper using the least number of holds to get to the top wins
- Fastest time
- Blind-folded
- One handed or one legged
- Two teams have to transport something to the top/bottom of wall - i.e, water
- Hang various articles of clothing on wall, campers have to put on clothes as they climb
- Simon says
- Relay race
- Memory test - use the holds

### Summary

We know this is a lot of information. We do not expect you to memorize all of it. We do expect you to read it, take notes, and ask questions! We hope you are as excited as we are to have you with us on South Tea!

## **ROPES RULES**

### **Ropes Course**

- The Ropes Course is completely off limits without the Ropes Staff present
- Running shoes must be worn at all times
- Long hair must be tied back
- Be sure to sit on benches until it is your turn to climb
- Only use encouraging words
- There is no running allowed anywhere around the Ropes Course
- “You are the first person that needs to keep yourself safe”
- Have Fun and Respect

### **Climbing Wall**

- The Climbing Wall is completely off limits without the Ropes Staff present
- Running shoes must be worn at all times
- Long hair must be tied back
- Be sure to sit on benches until it is your turn to climb
- Only use encouraging words
- There is no running allowed near the Climbing Wall
- “You are the first person that needs to keep yourself safe”