

Rescue Scenarios

Two commandments of any rescue situation:

- 1) Take your time and plan your solution.**
- 2) Always tie catastrophe knots!**

Lowering two heavy seconds simultaneously using an autoblocking belay device

Rigging the release sling as a 2:1 pulley (after setting a munter for both ropes on your harness) will probably work. If not, use a load releasable friction hitch to lock off the weight of one of the climbers so they can be lowered one at a time. This will probably cause rope-on-rope abrasion at the belay device.

Retreating off an overhanging route or a sport route mid-pitch.

Lower first climber down who clips bolts. Second climber trams and cleans. Use a prussik to tram if lowering off a single bolt.

Lowering off a 110' steep sport route with prehung draws. Fall one or two bolts. Lower to ground.

You and a partner are double rope rappelling down a climb. Three rappels up, when pulling the rope, you forget to untie the stopper knot and the very end of the rope gets jammed in the rap station 60m above. The EDK reaches your current rap station.

Lead the climb. You've just learned a valuable lesson in untying stopper knots.

If you're too tired to lead the climb, consider: aid leading, using the second rope to get down by building intermediate rap stations, or ascending the stuck rope (as a very last resort). Or, if there's another climbing party nearby, see if you can join up with them.

You're leading during the Gunks course, and all of a sudden the rope goes taut. The belayer yells that he let the rope fall off the belay ledge and get caught on a flake 20' below him, and cannot give you anymore slack.

Options to get back to the belay ledge:

- 1) Downclimb. Yeah, it'll suck. Tell your belayer not to let any more rope fall off the ledge.
- 2) Build an anchor, fix the rope, and rappel (with autoblock!) or down prussik (with backup knot!)

Now you're at the ledge:

- 1) Use your finesse to gently negotiate the rope free of the flake. That isn't working, so...
- 2) You're going down. Decide if you want to climb the route or ascend the rope when you come back up.
- 3) Either way, fix the end of the rope and stick a belay device in there so you have both options.
- 4) Rappel or down prussik till you unstuck the rope. Coil remaining rope and backpack it (a pain-in-the-ass alternative involves building an anchor and having your second pull up the rope – but I wouldn't trust him, he's the one who let it fall off the ledge in the first place)
- 5) Ascend the rope or tie in and climb the route with your second belaying. Guess who's doing camp dishes tonight?
- 6) Use this teachable-moment to teach rope management.

While doing a double rope rappel, you're trying to move quickly. While you pull the rope, your partner is already threading it through the current station. Just as your stopper knot gets jammed in the previous anchor, your partner tosses his end of the rope into a tree. Both ropes are now stuck.

Get the rope outta the tree first. Fix the end to the rap station, rap down usng an auto-block, and get the rope out of the tree. Alternately, you may need to use your mad prussiking skills to go down and over, keeping as much weight on the rap anchor as possible. Ascend the rope.

At the rappel station, visualize Jeff's flow chart for unsticking ropes:

- 1) Lead climb on the second rope
- 2) Get down on the second rope alone
- 3) Ascend the stuck rope very carefully

Once back at the rappel station, your partner and you can lecture each other about untying stopper knots and lowering rather than tossing rap ropes.

You're at Rumney, belaying your partner on a 50m route. She's too pumped to clip into the anchor and whips down smashing her ankles. With only 30 feet of rope on the ground, you can't just lower her.

If you are 100% sure it will work, tie off your belay with a mule and lower her by climbing up (simul-climb style). Once she's grounded, build an anchor and rappel to the ground. Be sure not to have your lives hanging on a single bolt.

You weren't 100% sure that would work, so you're going for a less sketchy alternative.

If your partner is alert enough, she could build her own freaking anchor, fix the rope, and rap down. You could help by hauling her up to her last bolt or piece of gear. This is probably asking too much, but my climbing partner has a ridiculously high pain tolerance.

You can prussik up using her as a counterbalance. At an appropriate height (if she hasn't moved during your ascension, appropriate height is 20 feet below her or higher), build an anchor, lower her, and rappel to the ground.

Since this is Rumney, assume this is a very overhung climb and you don't have any trad gear. Just a few extra draws. How does that change the answer. Can you do this without ever having your life on a single bolt?

You're climbing at a choss pile. For the follower belays, you're belaying directly off your harness because your anchor is 2 fixed bashies and a #1 nut (placed in the wide orientation- you already used the #3!) Your follower's rope breaks off a flake that hits his right arm & leg. He's 40' from you. You're at the top of the climb.

Lower him to the ground if possible.

Of course, it isn't.

Get your hands free and assess the situation. How alert and helpful is the climber? What is the hike down like? Is there another section you can rappel off? Did the other belay ledges on this climb provide good anchoring?

Consider your options:

- 1) Rap down off this climb
- 2) Haul your partner up and hike/carry/rap back down

Unless you're belaying a little tiny kid who you can haul off your harness, you'll need to shore up the anchor you're at.

Consider:

- 1) Look through the gear rack again

- 2) Lower a loop or rope to your second and have him send up all the gear he cleaned. Maybe he has your #3!
- 3) Jammed knot protection!
- 4) Jam and sling rocks.
- 5) No matter what you do to improve the anchor, equalize the hell out of it. If one of the pieces blows, ensure that it will still be equalized (hope you read the new anchors book!)

Putting the options above into play:

1) IF your second is capable of building an anchor at the next belay ledge down and IF you have enough gear to make good rap anchors 'till you hit the ground, do that.

2) You can't rap down from the climb. You'll have to haul your partner. Carefully consider the forces on the anchor. A haul system multiplies forces on the anchor. First escape the belay and weight the anchor VERY slowly. Decide how much help your partner can be. Will he be able to do a one arm and one leg climbing technique without bouncing on the anchor? There's enough rope to send a bight down to him and have him help with the hauling –will he be able to? Does he know how to use a prussik so he can use his body weight (with the uninjured leg) to pull on the haul system? Be damn careful and treat the anchor like it's made of glass.

Excellent analysis. One thing to consider with weak anchors is that putting yourself between the load and the anchor can reduce overall load on the anchor. Slingshot belays or hauling can double the load on the anchor. Assisted haul is probably the best solution in this case. I really like the idea of beefing the anchor first by having the second send up cleaned gear.

You are rappelling at the Gunks. Half way down the rope you discover that the end of your rappel rope is stuck in a tree - overhead!

Ascend toward your rappel station to keep the forces on the rap station and not the tree. Then prussik out toward the tree and untangle the mess...or just rap over the limb if feasible.

Key is to keep forces on the rap station and not pendulum out of control back to the cliff.

You are rappelling at the Gunks. You stack the students on the rope with extended devices and then rappel down to the ground. A student gets half way down and gets something stuck in the rappel!

Basic approach is to prussik up to the student, tie a catastrophe knot, clip into their belay device, make sure the autoblock is solid. Then set a prussik above the belay device so you can both stand in it. Go down together.

Key is making sure there is always a backup for the student. And stuck hair doesn't count. Easiest solution is to get your weight above the stuck rap device, then rig a foot prussik above the device for the student. They unweight and you fix the problem. But you have to have backups in place. And if the backup is just a knot that jams in the student's device, you have the same problem again, just a few feet lower.

You have just led the second pitch of a climb at the Gunks. The pitch is more than half a rope length long. You put your student on belay. Your student starts crying and refuses to leave the belay ledge. Refuses, in fact, to do anything.

Fix the rope, rappelled or down prussiked to the student. Calmed them down, anchored them with a runner, ascended the rope and rapped down (possibly doing two rappels)

Best solution is to cajole them into climbing with a very tight belay. Two rappels and leaving gear is your last ditch attempt. Note that you have to be sure that the line to the student is always secure if there is any chance that they have disconnected from the anchor. Also, double rope rappel so you aren't using the student as a counterweight. It is just nicer.

You are seconding a huge roof. You fall off and prussik to the last piece of pro. You are so tired and the roof is so blank that you can't un-weight to pro to clean it or even unclip the rope.

This one often stumps students. An easy solution is to use a cordalette or the tail of the rope to create a 2:1 haul system and pull yourself into the piece. Clean what you can and lower yourself out. This can be done by hand or with a munter or with the belay device. Doesn't force you to move prussiks which is time consuming. For traversing aid climbs where you have to do this often, keep a 12' length of cord on your harness and use that.

You are rappelling at the Gunks. You stack the students on the rope with extended devices and then rappel down to the next anchor. The first student follows. Upon arrival at the anchor, it is impossible to unlock the rappel device carabiner.

Feed enough rope through the device to get the other students down. Bring them down, anchor them, etc. Try messing with the carabiner again. It's now cool enough to handle, the metal mighta contracted a bit, one of your students might be Brurly Strongfingers, who knows? Were you twisting the locking barrel the wrong way? Compare with another biner to find out.

That doesn't work, so untie the stopper knots and unthread the rope through the device. Give the student your belay device and rap off a munter (or lower the student to the ground if you are sure they will make it). Teach students about not over-tightening carabiners.

There are two tricks to unsticking stuck biners. 1) Bang the locking sleeve a bit. 2) Put body weight on the biner (girth hitch slings to it and hang it off the anchor) then unscrew the collar. This almost always works. If it doesn't, unthreading the rope should always work.

On GT ledge, student is anchored loosely. Falls off ledge and is dangling just out of reach below a roof.

Easiest solution is to drop a ladder made of rope or slings. 2:1 assisted haul would also work, though you can't set it up through an autoblocking belay device because you have no slack to put one in the system.

Mark's 12/2008 Version:

You're a Gunks leader, at the top of the second pitch. Your second moves off the belay, climbs 30 feet, under a roof, out of sight and out of voice contact. Suddenly the rope goes tight. And stays tight. For a good long while. What do you do?

You and a partner are double rope rappelling down a climb. 3 rappels up, when pulling the rope, you forget to untie the stopper knot and the very end of the rope gets jammed in the rap station 60m above. The EDK reaches your current rap station. What do you do?

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that hits his right arm & leg. He's 40' from you. You're at the top of the climb. What do you do?

As you pull your rappel ropes, they get stuck in tree overhead, god damn it. What do you do?

You are rappelling down a route at the end of the day. It is getting dark; so dark, in fact, that you do not notice that the remaining 50 feet of your rappel rope are caught in a tree 20 feet away from the cliff. You rappel down until the break hand starts to point up. What do you do?

You stack your students on rappel and head down to the ground. Student gets half way down and gets something stuck in the rappel. What do you do?

You stack for students on rappel and head down to the ground. Student gets half way down and a rock falls out of the sky, hitting the student and knocking them silly. The student hangs senseless on their autoblock. What do you do?

You have just led the second pitch of a climb at the Gunks. The pitch is more than half a rope length long. Your student starts crying and refuses to leave the belay ledge. Refuses to do anything. What do you do?

You are seconding a huge roof. You fall off, prussik to the last piece of pro. You are so tired and the roof is so blank that you can't unweight to pro to clean it or even unclip the rope. What do you do?

You stack your students on rappel and head down to the anchor, one rappel left to go. Your first student follows. Upon arrival at the anchor, it is impossible to unlock the carabiner. What do you do?