

HOW TO FALL

[Climbing 227, 2004]

| By Arno Ilgner |

FALLING IS PART of climbing. A hold breaks or we slip or pump out, and we're off. Instead of dreading falling, practice it so you improve your ability to respond.

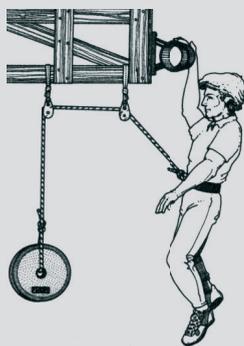
Practice in a zone that is slightly overhanging, free of protruding ledges, and with bomber protection. As you gain experience, you can practice more hazardous falling situations, such as vertical rock or slightly swinging falls. Keep plenty of rope in the system—at least 50 feet of rope between you and your belayer—to absorb the fall force.

If you're new to lead falling, engage it gradually. Begin by simply letting go right by the bolt. Then, climb a move or two above the bolt and take a fall. Increase

your fall distance in small increments.

Maintain proper form as you practice falling—arms and legs slightly bent, arms out in front at chest height—so you can respond to potential impact. Don't grab the rope. Step off gently rather than jumping out and back, which can cause you to slam into the wall. If you are holding your breath and feeling tense, practice more before increasing your fall distance.

Pay attention to the rope and your feet. If you are directly above the bolt, the rope should be between your feet. If you are to the right of the bolt, then the rope should be to the left of both feet. Enjoy your flight!



One-arm helper

[Quick Clips]

ONE-ARM PULL-UPS are a goal for many ambitious climbers. Problem is, most of us are too weak to even attempt one. Solution: suspend a weight from one end of a rope that runs overhead through two pulleys. Clip your harness to the other end of the rope. Now, when you try a one-arm pull-up, the weight will help lift you. As you get stronger you can decrease the weight, until one day you no longer need any weight at all. —Blake Madden

TOTAL FRICTION

[Climbing 281, 2009]

| By Matt Samet |

STYLE POINTS are nice, but avoiding a fall is better. Keep an open mind and use all your body parts for maximum grip.

THE HEAD: Sub-roof traverses can be punishing and awkward, but you can unweight your arms by scumming the back of your head, neck, and shoulder blades against the ceiling and pressing in opposition to your feet.

THE SHOULDER: With a declivity for your shoulder and a good foothold in opposition, you can lean hard against your shoulder from almost any angle. The basic move is the dihedral lean, but a savvy scumster can cop other shoulder rests, too. Look around for tufas behind you, or find footholds opposite a blank wall that you can lean on.

THE ELBOW: In holdless corners, chicken-wing into the corner, elbow first. Burly, yes, and not secure, but by leaning (and stemming) hard while scumming beaucoup arm skin, you can fashion a temporary hold.

THE BUTT: I've seen climbers cop a butt rest on overhanging terrain, using ledges or large protrusions. The hardest part is often turning around to sit; sometimes you can lock a heel or find a heel-toe against the wall below to counter any swing.

THE KNEE: Kneebars are old news, but don't neglect the classic beginner "mistake": using your knee on footholds. Rather than do a wicked highstep, place your kneecap on a high foothold. Lever onto the knee to elevate your hips, bringing the bottom foot higher until you finally turn your kneehold into a foothold.

MIKE CLELLAND

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