Rock Climbing

**History:**

Man has been climbing up mountains since the dawn of the Earth, but it was during the late 1880s that it started to become fashionable as a sport, after the famous first solo ascent of the Napes Needle by Walter Perry Haskett Smith. Ever since then, rock climbing has become a popular sport among the general population, with more and more people flocking to mountains and high cliffs.

**About rock climbing:**

The goal of rock climbing is to climb either a natural rock formation or an artificial rock wall, and reach the summit or endpoint without falling, although to successfully complete a climb, you must return to your point of origin after having reached your goal. It is usually during the descent that accidents occur.

There are many forms of rock climbing, though the most popular in the modern day are aid climbing and free climbing. Below is a list of the most common forms today.

1. *Aid climbing:* Still the most popular method of climbing big walls, aid climbers make progress up a wall by repeatedly placing and weighting gear which is used directly to aid ascent and enhance safety.
2. *Free climbing:* The most commonly used method to ascend climbs refers to climbs where the climber's own physical strength and skill are relied on to accomplish the climb. Free climbing may rely on top rope belay systems, or on lead climbing to establish protection and the belay stations. Anchors, ropes and protection are used to back up the climber and are passive as opposed to active ascending aids.
3. *Bouldering:* Climbing on short, low routes without the use of the safety rope that is typical of most other styles. Protection, if used at all, typically consists of a cushioned [bouldering pad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bouldering_pad) below the route and a spotter, a person who watches from below and directs the fall of the climber away from hazardous areas. Bouldering may be an arena for intense and relatively safe competition, resulting in exceptionally high difficulty standards.
4. *Solo climbing:* A style of [climbing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climbing) in which the climber climbs alone, without somebody [belaying](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belaying) him. There are many different methods of solo climbing.

Rock climbing can occur either inside, on an artificial rock wall, or outside, on a real cliff or mountain. Although not an Olympic sport, it is recognized by the International Olympic Committee as a sport nonetheless.

**Equipment:**

Rock climbing, whilst a fun activity, is also a dangerous one, and you need to put on a lot of safety gear before you can climb. Harnesses and clips keep the participant attached to the climbing rope, and a belay system is set up in case the participant falls. Some climbers may choose to wear a helmet. In addition to safety equipment, climbers often use climbing chalk to dry their hands of sweat. Most also choose to wear special rubber climbing shoes, which are tighter and help find a better hold.

**Health:**

Rock climbing is a physically and mentally challenging sport, testing your strength, agility, endurance, and balance, along with your mental control, especially on difficult courses. It is not entirely uncommon for climbers to attempt a course, only to give up part way through. Rock climbing does not just develop your physical abilities, but your mental ones too. It takes a great deal of control to finish a difficult climb.