

General advice on the fundamentals of bouldering indoors

1. Warm Up

A thorough warm-up is essential if you want to climb well and avoid injury. Get into the habit of warming up and be patient, it can take up to an hour before you are ready to climb at your limit.

Your warm up should consist of the following three parts:

Pulse Raiser: If you haven't walked or cycled to the wall then do a short jog or some skipping to get the blood flowing. A few minutes is sufficient.

Stretching: Gently move your fingers, wrists, elbows, shoulders, neck, back, legs, hips, and ankles through their ranges of motion, focusing on the upper body. Remember that your goal is to lubricate the joints and loosen the muscles, you aren't trying to increase your range of motion (do that after you are finished climbing).

Climbing: Start by climbing some very easy problems or traversing on big holds, focusing on moving smoothly and efficiently. Gradually increase the difficulty, taking plenty of rest between problems.

2. Think Before You Move

Climbing and bouldering in particular, are incorrectly seen by some as an activity that requires great strength. And while you can never be too strong, it's technique that will determine how good a climber you become. To establish good habits try and focus on technique from the very start of your climbing career.

Before you start up a problem try and figure out how you are going to climb it. Make a plan - decide what hand and foot holds you are going to use and in what order – and then put it to action. If something doesn't feel as you expected then you shouldn't be afraid to improvise. Once you are back on the ground, whether you get to the top or fell, you should review your plan. Ask yourself what worked and what didn't, did you follow your plan exactly, are there any refinements you could make, etc.

This continuous loop of planning, climbing, reviewing is how you learn to climb.

3. Watch Other Climbers

Paying close attention when others are trying your problem can be very useful, but don't fall into the trap of blindly copying other climber's sequences. Everyone has different strengths, weaknesses and physical attributes, so what works for them may not be suitable for you, this is the beauty of bouldering, everyone has to find their own way.

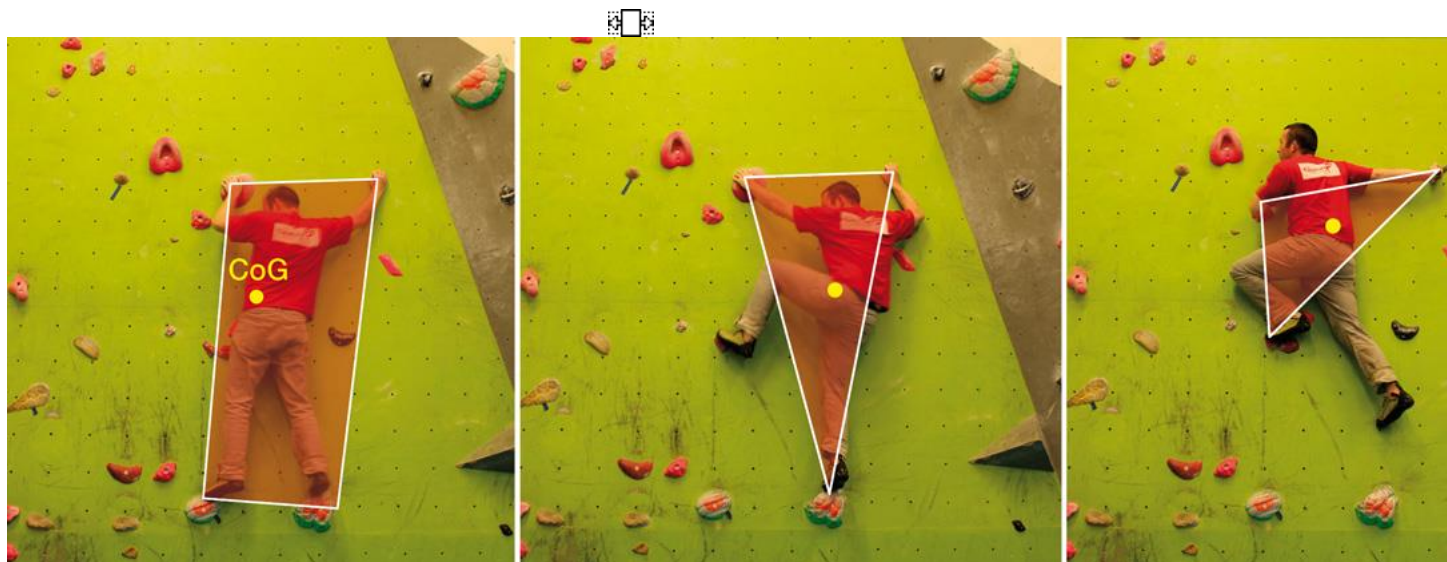
Embrace the challenge of problem solving, it's a central part of bouldering, there isn't just one single 'right way' to do a problem. You will soon learn that there is nothing more satisfying than figuring out a devious solution to a problem that you initially thought was beyond you.

4. Focus On Balance

Balance is the glue that binds all the other aspects of climbing technique together. It's excellent balance and body positioning that allows talented climbers to do moves that feel physically impossible to other less accomplished, but equally strong, climbers.

In climbing terms, balance can be defined as; 'the relationship between a climber's center of gravity and their base of support'. Your center of gravity is the theoretical point where the entire mass of your body is concentrated, it's usually just above the belly button. The base of support is the area created by connecting your points of contact (your current hand and foot holds).

You should aim to climb in a slow controlled style. While you reach between holds your body should stay reasonably still. There are plenty of situation in bouldering when lunging for the next hold is the right option, but if you find your body swinging uncontrollably every time you move your hands, then you need to pay more attention to body positioning and balance.



The center of gravity's position relative to the points of contact is constantly changing as you climb. David Flanagan at Gravi

5. Work Your Weaknesses

Success or failure on a problem depends on many factors and often it isn't immediately apparent which factors are limiting progress. Consider, for example, a climber struggling on a steeply overhanging problem. They are having trouble hanging onto the small holds, let alone moving between them. Their instinct is to blame a lack of finger strength, but it's just as likely to be a weak core or sloppy footwork that is preventing them from transferring their weight onto the foot holds and away from their fingers.

We tend to experience the most pleasure doing things that we are good at. In bouldering terms we spend most of our time climbing problems that suit us. One consequence of this is that our weaknesses, if neglected, become even more pronounced, this drags our overall performance down.

Spending time and effort focusing on your weaknesses is an excellent investment as it requires a lot less effort to make large gains in areas of weakness than it does to make small improvements in areas of strength. This is especially relevant for most climbers who have only limited time to train.

6. Be Safe

In climbing terms bouldering indoors is as safe as it gets, but there are a few things to bear in mind:

Warm up well. You will be able to climb better for longer and there is nothing more frustrating than being injured.

Never walk or stand in the potential landing zone of a climber on the wall. Get into the habit of checking that the landing is clear before you jump down.

Most walls have excellent matting but watch out for gaps, edges or soft spots.

Fall properly by soaking up the impact with your legs and rolling onto your side if necessary. Don't get into the habit of relying on the matting to absorb the impact.

7. Stay Relaxed And Don't Get Frustrated

The 'fight or flight' response isn't very helpful for climbers as it's rare that a difficult situation in bouldering is best overcome by a massive physical effort. It's more likely that we have, in our slightly panicked state of mind, overlooked a foot or hand hold that will enable us to get more comfortable. When you are bouldering try and to stay relaxed and loose, if you feel yourself start to flail, take a few deep breathes and have a good look around at your options. What's the worst that can happen?

Bouldering is difficult, that's the whole idea, embrace the struggle.

Failure is a central part of bouldering, don't let it frustrate you, be patient and enjoy the process of problem solving.

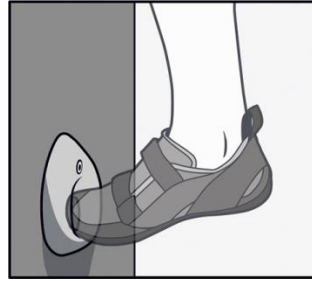
8. Climb Circuits

A circuit is a collection of problems of similar difficulty. The circuit concept originated in Fontainebleau, France where aspiring alpinists linked together dozens of problems to build endurance for the Alps. Nowadays most bouldering centers gather their problems into circuits of between 10-30 problems that are identified to color.

Completing an easy circuit is a great warm-up or an easy workout in itself. As most circuits feature a broad range of problems, attempting to do every problem in a circuit (whether in a session or over the course of many sessions) will force you to spend more time on your weaknesses than your strengths. This is an excellent way of improving your technique and raising your all round climbing ability.

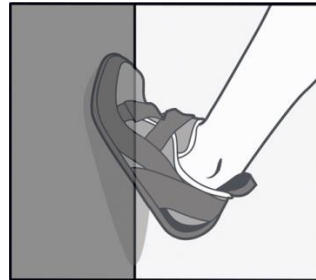
Cheater Stones A cheater stone is a large rock or stack of rocks piled beneath a boulder problem to allow short climbers to reach holds that they otherwise couldn't grab. To use or not use cheater stones is really an [ethical question](#). A purist says, "No to cheater stones." Part of the boulder problem is to start from the ground and figure out how to use the first holds. Cheater stones allow you to do exactly that-to cheat your way up the first moves. Your choice. If you do use cheater stones, watch you don't break an ankle on them if you fall off. Also remove the cheater stones from the base of the problem before you leave.

- **Previsualize the Moves** Before attempting a boulder problem, stop and look at the problem. Imagine yourself climbing the rock. Look for the [handholds](#). Decide where you are going to place your feet. Ask yourself: What is the sequence from bottom to top? How will you grab the handholds? Will the moves make you off balance? Where will you land if you fall? [Previsualize yourself](#) stepping off the ground, latching the crucial layback flake, stemming your foot on a pebble, and mantling onto the boulder summit. Now step up to the rock and try your sequence.
- **Check Out the Top Out** When you're [bouldering](#), you have to decide how you are going to top out on the problem. Is it a mantle move? Are you going to have to heel hook and roll onto the summit? Is it a beached whale move where you inelegantly flop onto the top? It here is an easy route to the top, boulder up and check out the final moves from above. Find any hidden holds, clean dust and dirt off the crucial holds, or move leaves and debris. If you know what to expect when you are pulling onto the top, you will be more likely to finish the problem.
- **Check Out the Descent** Okay, you've checked out the top out moves. Now check out the descent. Before climbing a boulder, walk around it and see if there is an easy way off. Sometimes it will be a short downclimb. Other times it might be a downclimbing problem to a jump off. If it is an easy boulder problem, you might want to climb up and down it so that you are familiar with the moves. There is nothing more embarrassing then climbing a problem and finding that you are marooned on top. Don't call 911, just call your buddy to get you down. Yep, that's embarrassing.



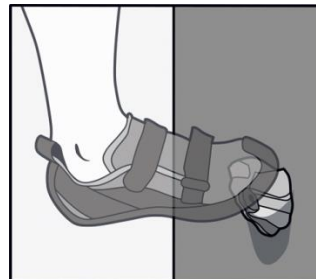
Pocket

- > Place pointed toe precisely in the opening
- > Press down with forefoot
- > Raise heel slightly to engage calf



Flat Wall

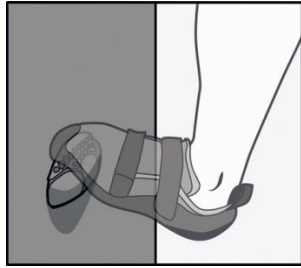
- - > Smear like on a slab (p. 30)
 - > Drop heel as far as possible to maximize contact
 - > Bend toes upward to engage forefoot



Small

Edge

- - > Focus on the most positive section
 - > Keep ankle at about 90°
 - > Wrap toes around hold



Sloper

- - > Drop heel to maximize contact
 - > Push toes and forefoot down
 - > Stay up high on hold

