

EQUIPMENT: SPORT CLIMBING

As far as climbing with a rope goes, sport climbing could be considered the minimalist's approach. All you need are shoes, a harness, rope, and quickdraws. Bolts are already permanently placed in the rock, so you do not have to carry your own protection like you do with trad climbing. There is a lot of gear crossover with trad (harness, shoes, helmet, rope), but subtle differences in design and style make certain models specialized for each discipline.



↑ Above Sport climbing near the Howe Sound in Squamish, Canada.



BELAY DEVICE: PETZL GRIGRI

Sport climbing involves a lot of falling, so the belayer's performance is even more important than the climber's, and a good belay device can make or break that performance. Since its introduction on the market in 1991 as the first assisted-braking device, the Petzl Grigri has been the top choice for bolt-clippers around the world. Assisted braking means it has a mechanical camming component that helps the belayer stop the rope from moving through the device. While the belayer must remain alert and ready to catch a fall at all times, the Petzl Grigri adds a lot of safety and control to every catch.



BELAY GLASSES

This eyewear is composed of glasses with a prism instead of regular flat lenses. The prism bends the perspective so that belayers can look forward but actually see the climber above them. With sport climbing, belayers spend a lot of time craning their heads upward while the climber rehearses a hard climb repeatedly. Belay glasses keep the eyes, head, and neck in a neutral position, preventing the overuse injury commonly known as "belayer's neck."



QUICKDRAWS

Also known as draws, these gadgets are essentially two carabiners linked together with sewn webbing (called a dogbone). Clip one end to the rope and the other to the bolt, and keep climbing. Often sport-specific draws have a thicker dogbone, making them easier to grab when the climber needs to make a desperate clip.



HARNESS

Sport climbers only carry about 12 to 16 quickdraws with them, so the harness doesn't need to be as beefy as in trad climbing. It should be slim and lightweight, but still comfortable enough to hang in for a bit—and cushy enough to handle big falls.



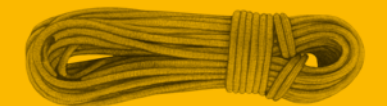
CHALK BAG

This is a small sewn pouch that acts as a chalk container and is worn around the waist while climbing. They are a little larger than hand size so climbers can dip their hands into the fine white powder any time they feel like their hands might be sweaty.



SPORT CLIMBING SHOES

The type of climbing shoes you use for sport routes is a matter of terrain and personal preference. If you are climbing steep overhangs, then you might want to go with a tight, downturned shoe, similar to boulder shoes. If you are climbing techy vertical faces, then you might want to go with a fitted (but not tight) flatter shoe, similar to trad, that lets you stand on edges. Sport climbing shoes must strike a nice balance between performance and comfort—you will be climbing hard, but you will also be wearing your shoes for 5 to 30 minutes at a time.



ROPE

Any single dynamic rope designed for climbing will work for sport climbing, but many bolt-clippers prefer a thinner diameter (less than 10 mm) for sport climbing in order to save weight. The biggest drawback is that thinner ropes are less durable than thick ropes, and thus will wear out faster. Rope length is also important, as it will dictate the routes you can climb. 60 meters is the minimum, but modern sport routes are getting longer, so 70- and 80-meter ropes are becoming more common.