

# Just Go Up

Climbing lawyer's guide



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# 1. Scope

The purpose of this guide is to provide a concise set of tips to enhance your climbing skills. It is designed to be compact and structured enough to be quickly accessible during climbs, whether on paper or on your phone.

While numerous websites, videos, and courses cover climbing techniques, they are often fragmented and dispersed, requiring a significant amount of time to locate and revisit. Even comprehensive books on climbing can be time-consuming to read through. This is why I wanted to create a quick summary of all the basics.

This guide focuses on key techniques, terms and most popular drills. It does not cover anything related to hardware and covers only the moves that are common across various climbing disciplines (bouldering, top roping, etc.). As such, it is aimed at beginner to intermediate climbers.

## 2. Drills

These drills can be used as a warm-up before climbing or practiced independently. Perform them on routes that are a few grades below your current level. In addition to making you better at climbing, the drills create interesting challenges on routes that would otherwise be too simple. While combining multiple drills is possible, you will find it difficult to focus on too many of them, and it is better to do fewer but to do them well. Also, doing some core exercises before climbing can help activate your abs and improve your performance during the climb.

- 2.1. The golden triad of footwork that helps with control consists of:
  - 2.1.1. Ninja Feet: Place your feet on holds without them making any sound;
  - 2.1.2. Sticky Feet: Once placed, do not reposition your feet. If you placed them poorly, work with what you got; and
  - 2.1.3. Accurate Feet: Position only the toes of your shoes on the hold and only at a 90° angle to the wall.
- 2.2. Sticky Hands: Similar to Sticky Feet, do not reposition your hand once placed.
- 2.3. Hover Hands: Stabilize yourself and, before grabbing the next hold, hover your hand in front of it for a second. This helps with stability and control.
- 2.4. The Robot: when moving an appendage to a new hold, the rest of the body cannot move at all. Improves stability and makes you think of new solutions. Similar to locking off.
- 2.5. Baby Steps: Make three foot moves for every hand move. You could also use place your feet on the wall to practice smearing.
- 2.6. Practice speed Time yourself on a route and aim to beat your own time. This improves dynamic climbing and eliminates efficiency errors.
- 2.7. Touch the next handhold with your nose before grabbing it. This practices rockovers and increases reach. Requires firm foot positioning.
- 2.8. Match your feet on each foothold on a route.
- 2.9. Match every hand hold. Matching is often a must for shorter people.
- 2.10. Climb without pinching the holds and with fewer fingers on the holds. This forces proper technique use and improves balance. However, be careful as this drill can cause injury.
- 2.11. Climb one-handed. This improves dynamic climbing and balance.
- 2.12. Climb one-footed. Use pogoing: the free leg is swung with every move to provide momentum.
- 2.13. Climb with no hands by taking small steps on a slab. Many slab routes incorporate no-hand moves.
- 2.14. Strong Feet: Climb overhangs while maintaining body tension, avoiding heel and toe hooks.
- 2.15. Traverse a wall, keeping arms as straight as possible. Can be combined with matching feet and hands (see p. 20) or with stepping through (see p. 26).
- 2.16. Climb with straight arms as much as possible. This will require more backstepping (see p. 6).
- 2.17. High Feet: place each foot as high as you can with each move. This requires mobility. The move can be made easier by moving hips away from where the foot is placed and then rocking over.
- 2.18. Low Feet: the opposite of high feet. Keep your legs as stretched out as possible.
- 2.19. Climb the same route statically first (with lock-offs), and then as dynamically as possible.
- 2.20. Downclimbing: after finishing the route, instead of jumping off, climb it all the way down, retracing your steps.
- 2.21. Analyze every move you take and consider how to execute the same move with less force.

## 3. Climbing moves

Various climbing techniques and maneuvers

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### 3.1. Backstepping (a.k.a. turning in or twisting)

Rotate your hips until both of your knees are pointing in the same direction, away from the next handhold, which will bring your arm closer to that hold and you have a stable base to stand on while you're reaching. Turning in isn't always more efficient. Try also climbing frontally with spread knees instead (especially when climbing outside corners/arete's). See also Twist & lock on p. 27.



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### 3.2. Bat hang

Hanging upside down with your feet on the hold. As with all toe hooks, it is important to get as much of the toe inside as possible and make the initial angle with the shins as sharp as possible. Bat hangs can be used as rests and, rarely, as problem-solving technique.



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### 3.3. Bicycle

Grabbing a hold between your feet. This alleviates the weight from your arms and stops you from swinging. One foot pushes into the hold while the other one is pulling, by doing this you create a stable tension with your feet. Used on overhang and roof like routes.



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### **3.4. Bridging / stemming**

Maintain pressure with your feet against two opposing surfaces or in a corner, doing the splits.



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### **3.5. Bump / Intermediate**

Grabbing one hold and then grabbing the next hold with the same hand. For example, sometimes the hold is not great, but you can still use it as an intermediate hold on your way to a better hold.

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### **3.6. Campus**

Climbing using hands only. It is almost never a solution to a problem, but it is useful as a training tool for strength and control.



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### 3.7. Compressing

Pulling on two opposing holds to keep the body in place. Especially important when pinching is not a good option.



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### 3.8. Crack climbing techniques

#### 3.8.1. Jamming

Stick your hand or loose fist into the crack or between two holds and then tense up the muscles to lodge the hand inside.



#### 3.8.2. Paddle hands



Jamming a part of your hand in a crack, often without the whole thumb, and then tensing the fingers together to lodge them in the crack. It is more often used when the crack is in the ceiling.



#### 3.8.3. **Thin hands**

A crack that is too small to allow an entire hand to be jammed. Roll your hand into the crack, starting with the thumb on the bottom, and then twist the hand to lodge it in place.



#### 3.8.4. **Thumb stack**

In case there is even less space, stick the thumb and some of the fingers in, and then stack the fingers on top of the thumb.



#### 3.8.5. Ring lock

Form a ring with your fingers and jam the ring into the crack.



Other options:

In case of very small cracks, you may need to use just the pinkie finger, but this is ill-advised.

In case of very large cracks or if the crack is in a corner, you may be able to use laybacking.

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### 3.9. Cross-over

Crossing your arms when reaching for holds. This move is often used for traversing, where it is more efficient than matching your hands on each hold.



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### 3.10. Cut loose

Taking both legs off the wall, usually for dynamic moves. It's not desirable, but sometimes unavoidable.

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### 3.11. Drop knee

Done in a backstep (see p. 6). The knee of one of the legs points downward toward the ground, creating a stable triangular base. The more the knee is turned downward, the more pressure (and therefore friction) is created.



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### 3.12. Dynamic moves

Dynamic moves are any moves that rely on momentum. Momentum, for our purposes, is a force generated either by muscles or gravity that propels the body in a particular direction. It can be used to get you further or it can be a hindrance. When using dynamic moves, you ideally want to grab the next handhold at the deadpoint. Deadpoint is the apex of a body trajectory, at which the momentum of your body is the smallest, allowing you to grab the hold with minimum effort and in a balanced manner, because you don't have to fight momentum to push or pull on that hold.

The general rules of dynamic moves are:

- i. Push hard with your legs;
- ii. Ensure that your body and especially your hips, are pulled close to the wall at some point before letting go with your arms;
- iii. Pull the target handhold towards yourself slightly before the deadpoint.

**Common problems:** legs refusing to push hard enough because the body is scared of the move; sitting too low (try jumping to a basketball hoop from a crouched position – it doesn't work well); not pulling yourself towards the wall or not pulling in for long enough; the timing of the deadpoint is wrong when catching the hold (overshooting is common on shorter sideways jumps).

#### 3.12.1. Upwards

Crouch down only a little, pull yourself towards the wall and push off with your legs. This gives you upward momentum. You can pull yourself to the wall before jumping or just before letting go of the hold, but pulling toward the wall is essential, or else you will jump away wall.

Then, at the highest point of your jump, grab the next handhold and pull yourself to it. Time it, so that by the time you've pulled yourself toward the wall, you are "motionless".



### 3.12.2. Sideways short

Try to not to just go sideways, but up a bit so that you're travelling in an arch. If all of the momentum is directed sideways, then stopping yourself from overshooting will be very difficult.



### 3.12.3. Sideways long

Start on one side of the side pull (see p. 24), then begin swinging sideways with straight arms, which will take you further away from the wall, keep holding the handhold as you swing back to the wall on the other side of the side pull hold and only then let go with your hands (or even keep one hand on the hold) and jump. With other words: in, out and in. It is important to swing back towards the wall or you will never be able to cling to the next handhold.



*To be replaced with a proper picture or drawing.*

#### 3.12.4. **Diagonal dyno's**

Start to one side of the handhold, then swing downward like a pendulum of a clock and let that swing take you to the other side of the handhold and back up towards the hold you're aiming for.



#### 3.12.5. **In overhang**

On overhang, thrust your hips towards the wall at the same time as pushing with your legs, which will transfer that momentum to the shoulders, which in turn will allow you to reach the next hold above you. Don't just hump the wall briefly and let go (this will simply pull you right back down), but hold your pelvis near the wall for the length of the entire maneuver by tightening the muscles of your legs and your core.





#### 3.12.6. **Paddle dyno**

Swinging to a hold using an intermediate hold on the way, which allows to continue the momentum to the final hold. It's a bit like a Bump but in a Dyno.



#### 3.12.7. **Pogo**

Swinging a leg to create momentum in a specific direction. It is often used in dynamic traversing, when crossing a section that has no handholds. Stay as close to the wall as possible.



#### 3.12.8. **Lache**

Swinging back and forth, while hanging from a handhold, then letting go of the handhold to swing to the next hold.



And in each of these cases, once you grab the hold, try to pull up on it to stop yourself from swinging, especially in overhang.



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### 3.13. Figure-four

Putting one of your legs over the opposite arm to create a lever (the legs then look like the figure “4”). Almost never used. It is used in ice-climbing because the figure-four is easier in certain cases than to pull up on the ice axe, but in bouldering is easier to simply pull in on the hold normally.



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### 3.14. Flagging

Putting the free foot up against the wall, while reaching for the next handhold. The purpose is to stabilize the body but also to push on the wall, in order to move the center of gravity to the base of support.



### Inside Flag

When the flagging leg is crossing the other leg. While outside flags feel natural, inside flags are easy to forget, and yet they can be very useful when the available footholds do not provide a stable base of support and you need to avoid barn dooring (see the Glossary).




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### 3.15. Foot swapping

Swapping one foot for the other on the same hold. Stepping through or stepping back into a back flag could be easier. Several ways possible.

Option 1: placing one foot on top of the other foot, then sliding the bottom foot out from underneath.





Option 2: jumping off with one foot and jumping on with the other. It is not very accurate or controlled, but it may be the simplest and quickest option.

Option 3: by smearing. Find a way to put the foot on the wall and then put the other foot on the hold.

Option 4: swiveling one foot to the side and placing the very tip of the other foot in the available space. Least favorite for beginners, but probably the best way. It could be combined with a little hop from option 1 and 2.



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### **3.16. Fronting / frontal climbing**

Climbing with the front of your body towards the wall. It's the opposite of backstepping. When top roping, beginners are taught to twistlock (see p. 27 below) as much as possible, but frontal climbing is sometimes the better way. It requires and allows the hips to be close to the wall. The knees should be rotated outward. This is especially useful when climbing aretes.



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### **3.17. Gaston**

Pulling sideways away from yourself (note the raised elbow). The closer the hold is to the body, the easier this is.



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### 3.18. Guppy

Grabbing a hold with the hand turned sideways. It's especially useful on volumes.



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### 3.19. Heel-toe cam

Wedging first heel and then the between the hold and the wall.



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### 3.20. Heel hook

Placing a heel on a hold. Can be used in rockovers or to take some of the weight off your hands, or simply to pull yourself towards a hold. It uses hamstring and glutes.



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### 3.21. Kneebars

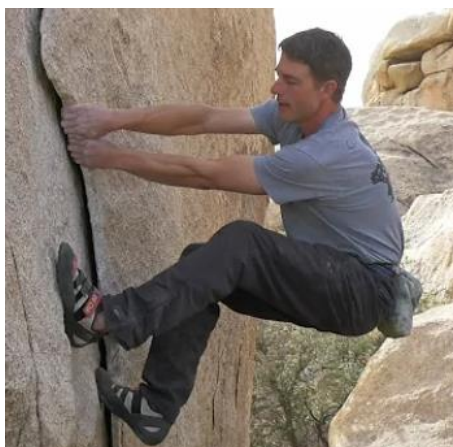
Wedging your knee against a hold. Used to achieve static control, relieve load from your hands, freeing up a hand and for resting mid-route.



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### 3.22. Laybacking

Pulling on a long vertical handhold, while pushing with your feet on the wall, using the opposing pressure to stay up. Useful when there are no foot holds. It is often used with vertical cracks and in corners.



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### 3.23. Locking off

When you grab a handhold, pull up on it, bending the elbow, and then hold yourself in that position, usually while reaching for the next hold with your other hand. It could be seen as the opposite of

deadpointing. It is considered bad to overuse lock-offs as they are less efficient than moving dynamically.



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### 3.24. Mantling

Climbing onto a ledge (often not a flat ledge). Put your foot or heel high onto a mantle and then push down to get the rest of your body up, like a lever, and at the same time pull with your arms, and once you're over the edge, use combination of pulling and pushing with your arms to get on top.



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### 3.25. Matching

Putting both hands or both feet on the same hold.



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### 3.26. Meat hook

Wrapping your hold hand around a large hold. See also “Guppy”, which this may be a synonym of, but the meat hook is a term that is reserved specifically for guppying on large slopers, where the wrist is also bent around the hold. This move is often converted into a pressing/mantling move, once you rise above the hold.



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### 3.27. Palming

Placing your hand on the wall. Like flagging or smearing but for your hands. It is useful also to stop yourself from swinging.



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### 3.28. Piano match

Like a shadow match but you swap your hands finger by finger. Used on small crimps. Often found on difficult traversing routes.





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### 3.29. Pressing

Push onto a hand hold to keep yourself balanced and in place, while moving the foot to the next hold.



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### 3.30. Rockover

Start with a heel hook or with the whole foot on a foot hold, then move your weight onto that foothold. The point is to transfer your weight and the center of gravity to the new foot hold and stand up on it. You may need to pull with yourself to the hold with your leg first, if that foothold is too far away.



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### 3.31. Rose

A type of cross-over, where one of your hands is holding a hold and you cross your other arms under it to reach the next hold above you. It is used in very specific situations that call for it, like when you want to show off your muscles.



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### 3.32. Shadow match

Swapping hands on a handhold, when there is no space for matching.



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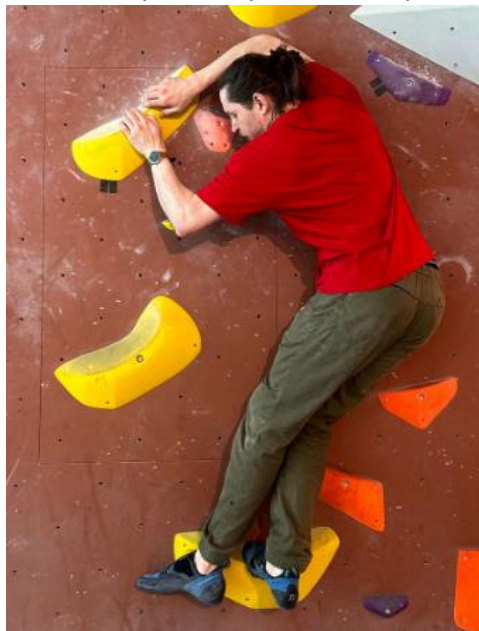
### 3.33. Side pull

Side pulls are simply when a hold is on its side and must be pulled on.



Usually, if the hold is to your left than the right foot goes on the foothold below it. Otherwise, you barn door off the wall.

However, if the side pull is right above your center of gravity, then you need to transfer your weight to the side. This may require you to bend your body into a C shape.



Alternative solutions to this problem are heel hooks, compression with a hold on the other side or pressing against another hold with your free hand if there is one.





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### 3.34. Smearing

Pushing off the wall when there is no foot hold available. Very important to have the heel down, maximizing the contact of the shoe with the wall for extra friction.



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### 3.35. Stack

Keeping both hands stacked on the same hold. Don't just hang your body weight on a stack without tensing up the muscles, or you'll tear up your ligaments.



### 3.36. Stepping through

Moving one foot past the central line of your body and past your other foot to the next foot hold. It's an alternative to matching your feet.



### 3.37. Toe hook

Putting the toe of your shoe on a hold. The more of the toe is hooked in, the better. Before putting pressure on the toe hook, make sure to first make at least a 90° angle with your shin, and keep the leg straight if possible. It is useful for relieving the weight from your hands. The move uses shin and hip flexors.



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### 3.38. Twist & lock / Twistlock

Involves backstepping but includes additional elements. One arm is on the handhold. The body is twisted to the side (away from the wall) and around the arm. The feet form a stable triangular base, sometimes with drop knee included. Once the body is locked and stable, the free arm reaches high for the next handhold. This is the opposite of frontal climbing.



## 4. Types of climbing holds

and how to use them

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### 4.1. Crack

A rock feature used for jamming your hands and feet in.



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### 4.2. Crimp

A small hold that only allows to be held by the pads of your fingers.

There are 3 official ways to hold it:

- 4.2.1. Openhanded. The DIP and PIP joints (see the definitions below) are rounded into a half circle, but the knuckles are not bent or are barely bent. The thumb is low. Of the 3 options, this one has the least strength, but also the least chance for injury and it requires you to rely more on technique.



- 4.2.2. Half crimp or closed crimp. The DIP joints are straight or start bending the opposite direction. The DIP joints are either straight or bending outward. The knuckle is bent. The thumb is somewhere on the grip.



4.2.3. Full crimp. The DIP joints are bending outward (the freaky direction) and the thumb is pressing on the index finger and maybe even the middle finger, locking them in place. This is considered dangerous because A. you could hang on and tear the tendon of your index finger and B. you are hyperextending the DIP joints. Generally, this is to be avoided.



There is some debate about what a “closed crimp” is. Some people call full crimp a closed crimp, some people call a half crimp a closed crimp and some people say it is somewhere in between, but the closed crimp, generally, does not have the thumb on top of the index finger.

In practice you can use a grip that is a hybrid between these three. I personally recommend something closer to a half crimp, if the situation allows for it. Press with the thumb on the side of the hold, like the crimp is a pinch (see Pinch).

Important note: once you grab a crimp openhanded and put your weight on it, it becomes nearly impossible to close the hand, even if you wanted to. So, if you want to use a half or full crimp, you should do so before you put weight on the hold.

Note also that crimp grips are not limited to crimps and can (and should) be used on all types of holds.

DIP and PIP joints:



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#### 4.3. Sloper

Round holds. They require as much contact with the skin as possible for maximum friction and the body to be as close to the wall as possible. Watch out, as they can hurt your wrist.



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#### **4.4. Pinch**

Holds that require pinching between the fingers and the thumb. The wider and the shallower the hold, the harder it is to hold. Some pinches don't have enough space for all the fingers.



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#### **4.5. Jib**

A very small foothold, large enough for the big toe.



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#### **4.6. Jug (a.k.a. a bucket)**

Easiest hold that has a deep enough pocket for the hand to grab it like a handle.





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#### 4.7. Pocket

A hold you can stick your fingers in.



##### 4.7.1. Hueco

A pocket with lots of space inside. Sometimes you are meant to climb it using laybacking (see p. 19)



##### 4.7.2. Monos

A small pocket with only enough place for one finger.



##### 4.7.3. Slots

Like pockets but narrow, like cracks. Difficult to use with dynamic moves because they require more accurate placement. Often used like crimps.



##### 4.7.4. Split pocket / split hold



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#### **4.8. Undercling / undercut**

Any hold you're meant to cling to from underneath. Keep your body high enough above it so that the undercling is located around your midsection. Requires counterpressure from your feet and the engagement of your core muscles to hold.

If the undercling is above you, you may need to hold it with the thumbs or your palm.



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#### **4.9. Volume**

Used to modify the shape of the wall in an indoor climbing gym. They are free to use in any way possible, but are especially useful for pressing/mantling.





## 5. Glossary

### Definitions of climbing terms

Ape index: your span minus your height. A positive number indicates greater reach. A negative number indicates less reach.

Arete: a protruding outside corner of a rock formation.

Backstepping: see p. 6

Barn door: an unintentional, uncontrolled rotation away from the rock face.

Bat hang: see p. 6

Belaying: the act of managing the rope for a climber, including paying out or taking in slack.

Beta: a way to climb a specific route (usually refers to the most efficient way).

Bicycle: see p. 6

Break: a horizontal, often rounded, crack in the fall.

Breaking the beta: Discovering an alternative method to complete a move that was not initially intended by the route setter, but is still valid.

Bridging: see p. 7

Buildering: the act of bouldering on buildings

Bump: see p. 7

Camming: The process of expanding and lodging an object inside a crack to hold you.

Campus: see p. 7

Chalk: a powder used to keep hands dry and improve grip, usually magnesium carbonate.

Chimney: a wide crack that is large enough to climb in or a corner between two walls. Often ascended using bridging/stemming.

Chipping: the unethical practice of creating or enhancing a climbing hold by altering the rock surface.

Choss: loose, dirty, or otherwise undesirable rock surface.

Chunking: separately climbing specific sections of a route to better understand how to complete it.

Crack: see p. 28

Crimp: see p. 28

Cross-over: see p. 10

Crux: the most challenging move of a climb.

Cut loose: see p. 10

Dab: Unintentionally touching an object that is off-limits during an ascent, such as the ground, a tree, or another boulder, which invalidates the climb (unless you realise: who cares?!)

Deadpoint: see p. 11 **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Drop knee: see p. 11

Dynamic: any climbing move that utilizes momentum.

Dyno: a jump, during which none of the body has contact with the wall. Informally, it can refer to any jump where the climber lets go with both hands or both feet.

Edging: Standing with the very edge of the climbing shoe (usually on very small footholds).

Elvis leg: shaking or trembling leg due to fear or (most likely) fatigue.

Figure-four: see p. 15

Flagging: see p. 15

Flake: A thin, partially detached slice of rock.

Flapper: A loose patch of skin, usually on the hands, that flaps around due to injury.

Flashing: Successfully finishing a route on the first try. Used synonymously with on-sight, but flashing may include prior knowledge or preparation, such as knowing the beta.

Foot Cam: A technique where the foot is rotated around the heel until it wedges in securely. It is usually used in cracks.

Foot swap: see p. 16

Frogging: positioning the hips parallel and as close as possible to the wall with the knees pointing outwards, used during frontal climbing.

Fronting: see p. 17

Gaston: see p. 17

Guppy: see p. 18

Heel hook: see p. 18

Heel-Toe cam see p. 18

Highball: a longer than usual bouldering route.

Hueco: see p. 31

Jamming: see p. 8

Jib: see p. 30

Jug: see p. 30

Kneebar: see p. 19

Lace Ups: climbing shoes that use laces instead of Velcro.

Lache: see p. 14

Laybacking: see p. 19

Lock off: see p. 19

Loose hands: a crack that is too wide for a secure hand jam.

Mantling: see p. 20

Matching: see p. 20

Mono: see p. 31

Morpho: route where your height makes a big difference.

On-sight: often used synonymously with flashing, but implies no prior knowledge or preparation.

Paddle dyno: see p. 14

Paddle hands: see p. 8

Palming: see p. 21

Piano: match: see p. 21

Pinches: see p. 30

Pocket: see p. 31

Pogo: see p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Problem: a bouldering route.

Project: a route you're still working on.

Pumped / pumpy: describes the state of having fatigued arm muscles, resulting in a potential loss of grip strength.

Redpoint: climbing a route from start to finish after studying it.

Ring lock: see p. 10

Rockover: see p. 22

Roof: very steep overhang.

Rose: see p. 23

Sandbagging: the act of assigning a climb a lower grade than it deserves, making it seem easier than it is. A sandbag is a route that is tougher than advertised.

Sending: Similar to "redpoint", but just means to finish a route (usually without falling).

Shadow match: see p. 23

Side pull: see p. 24

Sloper: see p. 29

Slot: see p. 31

Smearing: see p. 25

Soft: easier than the grade specified.

Soloing: climbing long routes without a rope  
Spotting: watching the climber, ready to protect them from injury by guiding their fall.  
Split pocket: see p. 31  
Stack: see p. 25  
Stemming: see p. 7  
Stepping through: see p. 26  
Thin hand/tight hand: see p. 9  
Thumb stack: see p. 9  
Toe hook: see p. 26  
Topping: reaching the final hold.  
Topping out: finishing the climb by mantling on top of a boulder or mountain.  
Traverse: climbing horizontally.  
Twist and lock: see p. 27  
Undercling or undercut: see p. 32  
Volume: see p. 32  
Whipper: a big fall.