CLIMBING AND MOUNTAINEERING GEAR

Perhaps the most famous climb in modern memory is George Mallory's third attempt at Mt. Everest in 1924. Mallory and assistant Sandy Irvine were last seen less than 300 yards from the summit – “moving expeditiously” toward the top, as one observer famously said – before they vanished. New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa, Tenzing Norgay, succeeded in 1953. Mallory’s remains were discovered in 1999, but the mystery of whether he and Irvine beat Hillary to the top remains.

Climbing Equipment (TL5)

Climbing is a complicated and potentially dangerous undertaking. Ropes fray, bolts pull loose, and high winds can toss a climber off a precipice without warning. Sometimes, though, tackling a crag (or an office tower!) is an only way to get the job done.

The well-equipped climber wears a harness connected to a safety line that is tied off to fasteners. This will stop his fall, should one occur. The results of a fall depend largely on the terrain and the precautions taken. In general, the maximum distance the climber can fall is twice the distance between the last fastener and his current position. Safety-conscious climbers tie off every few feet, guaranteeing a short fall with little chance of injury. Braver souls – and those in a hurry – tie off less often.

The easiest way to come down is to rappel. This requires rope, a harness, carabiner, descender, and 33 yards of 1/4” rope.

Humping, Tramping, and Yomping

Whatever you call it, marching cross-country under full kit is exhausting. The hiking rules in the Basic Set are intentionally simplistic – they assume fine weather, ideal terrain, and a grueling 16-hour day spent doing nothing but putting one foot in front of the other. Hikers often march for less than a full day, which can make it useful to know hourly movement rates.

Assume that speed in miles per hour equals Move/2. Adjust the pace as usual for terrain, weather, and roads; see p. B351. Note the FP costs for an hour of hiking given on p. B426 – good FP scores and the Fit advantage (p. B55) give a significant edge here! Extra effort works as usual (see p. B357). Each foraging attempt (p. B427) takes an hour; during which no progress is made.

Grappling Hook (TL5)

Getting a grapnel to the target requires a DX-3 or Throwing roll. Maximum throwing distance is ST x 2 yards. Load limit is 300 lbs. at TL5, doubled at TL7. When a grapnel lands on stone, concrete, or similar materials, it can ring loudly – make an unmodified Hearing roll at 1 yard. A padded grapnel (+1 lb.) gives -2 to Hearing. At TL8, double cost buys a non-sparking, nonmagnetic version. $20, 2 lbs. LC4.

Ice and Snow Gear (TL5)

If climbing is challenging and dangerous, then tackling a mountain or crossing a glacier can be downright deadly. There are over 120 corpses on Mt. Everest, with new ones added each year. Dangers include hypothermia, frostbite, avalanche, collapsing crevasses, and altitude sickness. Well-equipped modern climbers use the equipment below, plus air masks (pp. 72-73) and air tanks (p. 74).