

ADVANCED MOUNTAIN CLIMBING RULES

In Fifth Edition, mountain climbing is relegated to no more than a line or two between the three core books. At most, it's "difficult terrain" that slows characters down. Real life is a different story. Mountain climbing is an intense affair; it's slow, dangerous, and costly. When introducing a mountain in your campaign that the characters will need to climb, there are a few things you will need to determine in advance.

HOW DIFFICULT IS THE CLIMB?

There are four types of mountains that characters can climb.

Easy Climb. Mountains that are easy to climb stand between 5,000 to 10,000 feet. A mountain that is comparatively easy to climb lacks many of the dangers, steep cliffs, environmental hazards, and harsh weather that the other types of mountains do. Of course, this isn't to say an easy climb isn't without its own dangers. However, a properly equipped party can expect to summit an easy mountain quickly. Japan's Mount Fuji would be considered an easy climb.

Moderate Climb. A step above easy climbs, moderate climbs involve tough terrain, some dangerous weather, and environmental hazards. They are typically 10,000 - 20,000 feet in height. A moderately experienced party with at least one ranger should have no trouble climbing a moderate mountain. The Breithorn in Switzerland is a good example of a moderate climb.

Difficult Climb. Difficult mountains are those that stand 20,000 feet or taller and are loaded with hazards, poor weather, and treacherous terrain. Only extremely experienced adventurers should try to climb one of these. The real-world prototype for a difficult mountain would be Everest.

Deadly Climb. The toughest and most dangerous of mountains are all deadly climbs. These mountains reach dizzying heights of 25,000 feet high or more, lack breathable oxygen, suffer from poor conditions all around, and overall, have high mortality rates. Annapurna and K2 are both considered deadly mountains in the real-world.

HOW TALL IS THE MOUNTAIN?

It's also important to know how tall the actual mountain is. Using the climb difficult guidelines explained above, choose a height for your mountain. Everest, the tallest mountain in the real world is 29,029 feet high. However, you're free to set whatever height you like in your fantasy world.

RESOURCES FOR MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

Climbing a mountain can be costly. The base cost for climbing any mountain is 50 gp per character plus an additional 10 gp per day spent climbing. One day of supplies weighs 5 lbs. Supplies can only be purchased in advance; at the start of each day, note the number of remaining supplies. If the characters fail to bring enough supplies, it may affect their chances of successfully summiting the mountain (see below).

HIRING A GUIDE

If the characters lack proficiency in the Survival skill, they may hire a guide to help them climb the mountain. The guide costs an additional 5 gp per day spent climbing the mountain. The guide uses the **commoner** stat block, except with expertise in the Athletics and Survival skills (+4 check to each).

RESOLUTION

Unless the group hired a guide, one character must chosen as a guide for the mountain-climbing expedition. At the start of each climbing day, the guide makes a Wisdom (Survival) check to determine the result of the day's climb. The check may have bonuses or penalties depending on a number of factors.

Ranger. This check gains a +5 bonus if the guide is a ranger whose favored terrain is mountains (if using the UA ranger, the bonus is automatic for a ranger guide).

Acclimatization. The Mountain Climbing Progress table assumes that the characters must slowly acclimate themselves to the mountain as they climb. (Refer to chapter 5 of the *DMG* for details on High Altitude acclimatization). If the entire party is already acclimated to high altitudes or have magic items such as *necklaces of adaptation* that allows them to breathe in such environments, they gain a +5 bonus to the check.

Extreme Cold. The Mountain Climbing Progress table assumes that characters are dressed appropriately for cold weather. If any of the characters are not properly dressed, the check receives a -5 penalty unless all of the characters have resistance or immunity to cold damage.

Strong Winds. Checks made for climbs beyond 15,000 feet are subject to high winds, receiving a -5 penalty to the climb in addition to the other drawbacks of high wind as detailed in chapter 5 of the *DMG*.

Supplies. During the climb, it's possible that the characters may run out of supplies. If this happens, the check receives a -1 penalty for each day they climb without the proper supplies (to a maximum of -5).

COMPLICATIONS

Already, the typical hazards prevalent with mountain-climbing were noted above. However, there are even more dangers characters could face while climbing. A result of No Movement on the Mountain Climbing Progress table automatically results in a complication. In addition, the GM may decide to introduce a complication even if the check was a success. The GM can choose a complication or roll on the Mountain Climbing Complication table.

Lost. The party gets turned around during their climb, putting themselves in a position where they can't go any further. They will need to backtrack and start over.

Minor Injury. Each character must make a Strength (Athletics) check. The character with the lowest result suffers a minor injury, taking 1d6 bludgeoning or cold damage (GM's choice).

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING PROGRESS

Result	CHECK TOTAL				
	Daily Progress	Easy Climb	Moderate Climb	Difficult Climb	Deadly Climb
No Movement*	0 feet	< 2	<2	<6	<10
Slow Climbing Pace	480 feet	2-5	2-5	6-10	11-20
Normal Climbing Pace	720 feet	6-10	6-15	11-20	21+
Fast Climbing Pace	960 feet	11-15	16-20	21+	—
Slow Travel Pace	1 mile	16-20	21-25	—	—
Normal Travel Pace	1.5 miles	21-25	26-30	—	—
Fast Travel Pace	2 miles	26+	31+	—	—

*Involves a complication.

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING COMPLICATIONS

d6	Complication
1	Lost
2	Minor Injury
3	Major Injury
4	Encounter
5	Storm
6	Avalanche

Major Injury. Each character must make a Strength (Athletics) check. The character with the lowest result suffers a major injury as the result of a fall, trip, or some other hazard. Choose an injury or roll on the Major Injuries table below to determine the nature of the injury.

Storm. The mountain is pounded by a powerful storm. The group's guide or one character in the group must make a Wisdom (Nature) check. Refer to the Storm Check Results table to determine the results of this check.

After a storm, progress speeds are cut in half for 1d4 days.

Avalanche. Lose rocks or ice slide down the mountain. Each character must make a DC 15 Strength or Dexterity check (target's choice). On a failed saving throw, a character takes 28 (8d6) bludgeoning damage (or cold damage for snow) and is buried under 1d6 feet of rocks or snow; the character is restrained until it is uncovered. While restrained, the character takes 1d8 bludgeoning (or cold damage for snow) damage at the end of each of their turns and they begin to suffocate. A character can use its action to try to dig itself out. In order to do so, the character must make an Intelligence (Nature) check. If successful, they move 1 foot closer to escaping. Otherwise, they cannot sense where they are and remain stuck. Another creature can locate a trapped character by making a successful DC 15 Natural (Survival) check.

If the initial saving throw is successful, a character takes half as much bludgeoning or cold damage and suffers no other ill effects.

After an avalanche, progress speeds are cut in half for 1d4 days.

STORM CHECK RESULTS

Check Total	Result
<11	Each member of the party must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take one level of exhaustion. In addition, half of the party's climbing supplies are lost in the storm.
11–15	Each member of the party must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take one level of exhaustion.
15+	The party survives unscathed.

MAJOR INJURIES

d10	Injury
1	Blindness. The character is blinded from the wind or snow. Each day, the character can make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a successful saving throw, their sight is restored.
2	Exhaustion. The character suffers one level of exhaustion.
3	Loss of a hand. The character's hand is crushed or severely damaged from frostbite. Until it receives magic such as the <i>regenerate</i> spell, it can no longer hold anything with two hands, and it can hold only a single object at a time.
4	Loss of a foot. The character's foot is crushed or severely damaged from frostbite.
5	Limp. The character's speed on foot is reduced by 5 feet. After making a Dash action, the character must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. The group also suffers a -3 penalty to daily climb checks. Magical healing removes the limp.
6–10	Severe Fall. The character falls from a great height. Roll 3d6. The falling damage the character takes is 1d6 times the result. After the fall, roll again on this table, ignoring results of 6-10.