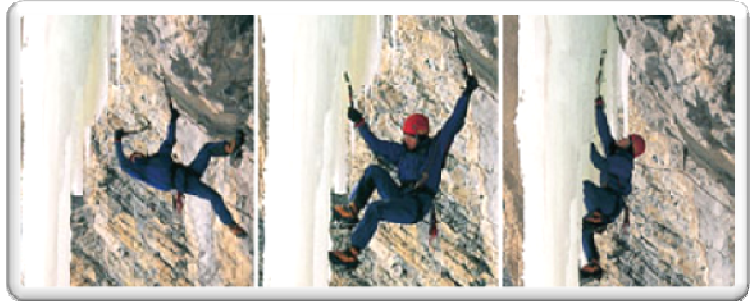


MIXED CLIMBING

Mixed climbing is a relatively new discipline. It is a hybrid of ice and rock climbing and is unlike any other discipline in the vertical world. A mixed climber uses ice-tools and crampons to scale bare rock in order to access frozen columns that don't touch the ground or continue through sections of ice divided by exposed rock.

From Ice to Rock & Back

Historically, ice routes that started high off the ground or that were split by stretches of exposed rock were considered un-climbable. However new ideas and ultra-strong, light, and maneuverable gear has allowed skilled ice climbers to move over rock without removing their crampons or ice-tools, moving freely from ice to rock and back again.



Mixed climbs can be short and intense or cover hundreds of meters of vertical ice, rock and snow. Climbers must have absolute confidence in their abilities and their gear. It is not unusual for a climber to suspend his entire body weight on a metal point smaller than a pencil while scraping and probing for another tiny hold with the free tool.

Route Ratings

Mixed climbs are usually rated on the "M" scale that runs from M1 to M10/11 (an open-ended and ever increasing scale). The M grade considers technical difficulties: how strenuous, tenuous and sustained the moves are. This rating for mixed climbing is often preceded by a roman numeral that indicates the commitment of the route. Additionally, a mixed grade may include rock and ice ratings to indicate the difficulty of each section. Mixed routes, like ice climbs, are ephemeral, they melt, break and change according to temperature and traffic, grades should be seen as guideline, something scratched rather than carved in stone.

Gear You'll Need

A modern, sporty mixed route can involve almost exclusively "dry tooling" (tools on bare rock) and be protected by clipping bolts. It's possible too that a mixed climbing line takes place high in the alpine and may require all the skills and gear associated with alpine climbing or mountaineering. Standard equipment includes boots, harness, rope, ice-tools, crampons, belay device, biners, slings and anchor material. Protection might be an assortment of rock and ice gear and possibly a snow picket or two.

• **Ice Tools**

used for mixed climbing can be the same as those used for ice climbing, but in the past couple of years leashless tools have entered the scene. (See our article for more info about getting unleashed.) Mixed climbers usually forgo the traditional adze head and climb with a hammer in each hand.

Picks are usually T-rated rather than thinner B-rated models, and most climbers have an extra pick somewhere close by.

- **Crampons**

can be rigid or semi-rigid, configured with single or double front points. Some come with advanced gadgetry such as removable, adjustable heel spurs. They usually have a variety of serrations to aid hooking, scumming, and grabbing.