



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®
MID-AMERICA COUNCIL



Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is this legal?

Yes! All appropriate authorities have been notified and all permits and insurance are in place.

2. I've never climbed before. Can I still participate?

Prior climbing experience is not necessary. Over the Edge is open to anyone who wants to challenge themselves to a once in a lifetime experience of rappelling down the Woodmen Tower. 95% of all Over the Edge rappellers have no previous rappelling experience.

3. How much does it cost to participate?

You must raise a minimum of \$1,000 in pledges to have the opportunity to rappel.

4. Where does the money I raise go?

All proceeds from the Over the Edge event benefit our Scouting programs, which provide quality, values-based programs to thousands of youth.

5. Will someone train me?

Yes. The reason we ask you to allocate 2-3 hours is due to the training you will receive prior to your big rappel. When you arrive on site, you will have a training session to practice rappelling from a lesser height. This will give you a chance to hang in the harness, find a comfortable position, and practice using the equipment. The same safety procedures are used in the training as in the long rappel. You can practice as often as you would like before heading to the top.

6. How safe is this?

As with everything, there are risks. It is important that during the training session, you listen to your rappelling instructors and follow their directions. The Over the Edge team is led by highly trained industrial rope experts who supervise all aspects of the rappel. Local fire departments, SWAT team, police, and experienced climbers are used to assist with non-technical portions of your experience.

7. How fit do I have to be to rappel?

Rappellers must weight more than 110 and less than 300 lbs. You need to be reasonably healthy to rappel, although you do not have to be physically fit. The speed of descent is controlled by technique rather than strength. Of course, if you have special needs, please let us know and we will discuss possibilities with you.

8. Can I rappel if I have a physical disability?

Absolutely. This event caters to able and disabled individuals alike. Extra time and attention is focused on those with special needs, ensuring the utmost safety. If required, a trained expert will rappel with you to provide assistance.

9. Is there an age limit?

Yes. All rappellers must be at least 14 years old. Any minor rappelling must be accompanied by their parent or legal guardian who can sign the necessary waivers the day of the event.

10. What should I wear?

You are going to be walking down the side of a building, so wear sneakers, climbing shoes or something with a soft sole. No sandals, slip-ons, flip flops, or steel toe boots.

Wear tighter fitting, comfortable long pants and a long-sleeve shirt. Athletic pants, tights and jeans are suitable. The harness goes around your legs, waist, and shoulders, so it is best to avoid anything too bulky. Shirts should be comfortable and without draw cords. Individuals with long hair should tie it back.

All equipment including a pair of leather gloves and a helmet will be provided.

11. What is the harness like?

You will be wearing a full-body industrial harness and using industrial equipment to go down. The harness will squeeze your hips and scrunch-up your shoulders. Some people feel as though rappelling is a good abs workout because of the semi-sitting position that is required.

12. How long will it take me to rappel?

Your rate of descent will be determined by your comfort level in terms of the speed you wish to rappel. It will take between 8 and 15 minutes to get to the bottom.

13. Will I be strong enough to hold the rope? Can I rest?

Yes and Yes. The speed of descent is controlled by technique rather than strength. You can stop to rest quite easily by using the proper technique. Also, either the top or bottom rappelling instructor can stop you.

14. Will I burn my hands on the rope?

No. The friction generated by the rope against the equipment will generate some heat. Maintaining a steady pace will help reduce the friction. You should avoid directly touching the equipment which is under friction as that will certainly be hot at the end of your rappel. Once again, good technique will reduce how much heat is generated from friction.

15. What if I let go of the rope?

If you let go of the rope, one of two safety systems will engage. Either the self locking mechanism at the top will stop you, or the person holding the rope at the bottom will brake for you. Depending on where you let go of the rope, you can expect to rappel 4 or 5 feet before the safety system engages.

16. What exactly do I do during the rappel?

To go down you will be squeezing a handle, and to stop you will need to let go of the handle (or pull back). You can go as fast or slow as you would like. You will be anchored to a back-up line, which is controlled from the top. Should you go too fast, or should the equipment fail, the back-up line will engage.

The squeezing motion to activate the stop requires quite a bit of force and using the same hand the entire way down can be tiring. You can stop to rest, or switch hands when you need a break. In general, inexperienced rappellers tend to find themselves with tired hands at the bottom.

17. Tell me about actually going “Over the Edge”.

Getting your weight off the roof and into the harness is the most difficult part for most people. Once you are over the edge, enjoy the nearly 500 foot rappel. Stop if you like, and take in the view.

If you keep your feet on the concrete wall it is easy to maintain the correct position. You won't spin around or fall into the building. If you push off with your feet you can bounce outwards. Please remember that bounding too far from the wall can throw off balance and footing.

18. What can I do to practice?

The most common complaint from participants after rappelling is that their forearm got sore during the descent. The squeezing motion required isn't hard, but over a long time it can get tiring and

most times you over squeeze due to anxiety. Proper technique and switching arms makes a lot of difference, but using a squeeze ball once in a while in the weeks before your rappel doesn't hurt either.

Go rock climbing or use a climbing wall. Not only does rock climbing strengthen your forearms, but it also allows you to hang in a similar harness. Although the harnesses we use are different, you will still get the idea of where you will be squeezed, and what muscles it takes to stay upright.

19. Can my family and friends come see me rappel?

Of course! Your family and friends are welcome in the ground level viewing area. Admittance to the rooftop and landing zone requires the use of safety harnesses and anchors, so unfortunately, friends of the participants will not be allowed up.

20. What if the rope breaks?

The rope will not break! It is rated for 4500 lbs, and we have two! One rope is primary; a back-up rope secures safety.

21. Can I bring a camera and phone?

We do not want any objects dropped over the side. Sorry, no cameras on the roof. Helmet cams are allowed as long as they are properly secured to your helmet. A photographer will be there to capture you going over.

22. How do I get started?

Go to www.mac-bsa.org/overtheedge.com and register. Get psyched! Tell your friends! You are one of 96 adventurers who will be rappelling from the Woodmen Tower! Congratulations!