



AMGA

Single Pitch Instructor

Program Handbook | 3rd Edition



AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDES ASSOCIATION

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AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Program Handbook

Published by:

[American Mountain Guides Association](https://amga.com/)

2805 Wilderness Pl • Suite 100

Boulder, CO 80301

(303) 271-0984

<https://amga.com/>

Edition 3 - Revised January 2024



This handbook builds upon the previous work and advice of many AMGA SPI Providers and Provider Trainers. Special thanks goes to Adam Fox for his early development of this handbook, Ron Funderburke for his contributions as SPI Discipline Coordinator, and Ed Crothers for his input during his tenure as Climbing Instructor Program Director. All three made considerable contributions to this document while serving in their respective roles at the AMGA.

The 2024 revisions to this handbook were completed under the direction of Andrew Megas-Russell, AMGA Climbing Instructor Program Manager. Additional support was provided by Dale Remsberg, AMGA Technical Director, Jane Soucy, AMGA Deputy Director, Matt Wade, AMGA Executive Director, Jesse Littleton, AMGA Guide Program Manager, and Ted Teegarden, AMGA Accreditation and Scope of Practice Manager.

Produced by Andrew Megas-Russell

Front cover photo courtesy of Irene Yee [@ladylockoff](https://www.instagram.com/ladylockoff) during the pilot program of the all Women's Affinity SPI Course in 2018 partnered with American Alpine Club, Brown Girls Climb, and Flash Foxy. Back cover photo courtesy of Andrew Megas-Russell.

This handbook is made possible with the generous support of our corporate sponsor Mammut

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Introduction

The widely known American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) Single Pitch Instructor program was first created in 2008 and gained UIAA endorsement in 2009. Since then, the curriculum and program format has remained relatively the same. Looking back, the 2014 curriculum was split between this handbook and the supplemental text book [Rock Climbing: The AMGA Single Pitch Manual](#). More recently in 2018 AMGA began offering Affinity Programs and served over 230 students of underrepresented populations from 2018-2023. There have been minor developments in technical systems but no significant program changes until now. As of 2024, we are excited to release a revised edition of this handbook.

Things that have changed:

- Revised introduction including updated program policies and recertification guidelines
- Revised evaluation templates Including updated assessment categories, proficiency definitions, and an updated scoring system

Things that have not changed:

- The program format, duration, curriculum, and certification length remain the same

This handbook contains information for SPI candidates and AMGA licensed SPI Providers offering AMGA SPI Programs. It is intended to be used in conjunction with the SPI textbook [Rock Climbing: The AMGA Single Pitch Manual](#), Gaines and Martin. Operational frameworks and guidelines are provided which ensure that continuity is maintained from program to program and between instructors and examiners. Continuity provides a uniform standard for candidates who are taught, coached, and examined by a variety of instructors and examiners over a period of years. Continuity also assists in ensuring the program presents a professional image to candidates and outside observers, and it eases the workload of organizing, preparing, and operating courses.

Audience: Candidates on Single Pitch Instructor Courses and Assessments. This manual was written to help candidates prepare for and complete the AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Course and certification Assessment. AMGA members may find this a helpful resource for conducting programs in the field. This manual will supplement their previous training and certification.

Program Overview

Many people are introduced to the sport of rock climbing on single pitch cliffs across the country. A vast majority of them take part in group climbing trips such as those sponsored by schools, churches, climbing gyms, scout groups or summer camp programs. Many will hire an instructor from a guide service for their first climbing adventure or take a course

from a nationally recognized organization. Through the Single Pitch Instructor Program, the AMGA seeks to ensure that a high standard of climbing instruction, risk management and enjoyment is provided in these programs. The SPI program also seeks to foster appreciation and protection of the finite resources of single pitch crags. These high standards are achieved through experience, personal qualities, training and credentialing.

The AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Program is designed to enable instructors to “proficiently facilitate and instruct the sport of rock climbing in a single pitch setting”. The program is for currently active rock climbers that have a real desire to teach rock climbing in a single pitch setting. Candidates should be passionate rock climbers who have their own equipment, regularly climb and have at least 12 months of outdoor rock climbing experience. Candidates could be current university professors that teach climbing, climbing instructors, scout leaders, summer camp professionals or climbers who wish to undergo additional training, experience and certification to gain employment as a climbing instructor in the outdoor adventure/education industry.

The SPI Course is not a “climbing” course. It is an instructor training course for active, proficient rock climbers and for current climbing instructors who wish to gain SPI certification. Single Pitch Instructor certification is the second stage of the AMGA’s Climbing Instructor Certification Program and will significantly help candidates who wish to work toward the next stage, the AMGA [Rock Guide Course \(RGC\)](#). The SPI course presents many instructor specific topics such as professionalism, teaching techniques, risk management, group site organization, climbing site conservation/LNT and assistance/rescue skills.

The SPI Program is a three day (27 hour) training course and separate two day (16 hour) assessment. Certification is valid for three years as long as the candidate keeps current AMGA Membership and First Aid Certification. After three years, current SPIs can re-take the SPI Assessment to renew SPI certification. Any current SPI who attains certification in any Mountain Guide Program discipline attains permanent SPI certification status provided they maintain AMGA membership and the appropriate level of medical certification.

Participation Statement

The AMGA recognizes that climbing and mountaineering are activities that involve the potential for serious injury or death. Those participating in these activities should be aware of these risks and assume responsibility for their own actions. That being said, professional climbing instructors can help clients manage risks, learn valuable skills and maximize their enjoyment of the sport. The AMGA provides training and assessment courses and associated literature to help instructors facilitate the best possible experiences for their clients as they enjoy climbing and mountaineering.

AMGA Mission Statement

To be the leader in education, standards, and advocacy for professional guides and climbing instructors.

AMGA Code of Ethics and Conduct

The AMGA Code of Ethics and Conduct demonstrates the commitment AMGA members make to uphold high standards of ethics and professionalism. The AMGA Code of Ethics and Conduct ensures exceptional service to the public, promotes respect and integrity among AMGA members, and advances the professionalism of the industry.

1. Managing risk and the welfare of our clients is our prime concern.
2. Where possible and practical, we should provide assistance to persons having difficulty by offering help which is appropriate under the circumstances. In providing assistance to others, we should avoid compromising the welfare of our clients.
3. Our clients have the right to expect us to be up-to-date on the latest methods and techniques and to use appropriate and well-functioning equipment.
4. We must be aware of our own physical, technical, and experiential limitations. We should use routes and terrain that are within our expertise and capabilities.
5. We are expected to teach and practice Leave No Trace principles and to be knowledgeable of local natural history.
6. We facilitate a welcoming and inclusive environment for all people, regardless of their intersecting identities whether based in gender, race, sexuality, religion or any other identity.
7. We will not engage in any form of discrimination, harassment, or other prohibited behavior as described in the Anti-Harassment and Prohibited Behavior Policy.
8. As representatives of the AMGA we must conduct ourselves in a manner that reflects well on the AMGA. This applies during AMGA programs as well as anytime we are interacting with clients, the public, our fellow guides, government agencies, and others.
9. We must understand our level of training and certification as defined by the AMGA Scope of Practice (SOP). After July 1, 2022, we will work only within our training and certification level(s) as defined by the SOP.
10. We will accurately and unambiguously represent the level of our training and certification to clients, the public, government agencies, and others as described in the AMGA Brand Use Policy.
11. We must work within the regulatory, permit, certification, and aspirant requirements of the country and/or land management agency in or under which we intend to work. We must obey all laws, rules, and regulations applicable to our guiding or other activities.

Course and Exam Conduct

A successful outcome for these programs depends on the conduct of students and the Program Provider (instructor). Appropriate conduct is expected throughout the program and can be summarized by:

- Conservative Risk Management
- Mutual Respect and Cultural Competence
- Openness to Learning and Collaboration

Risk Management -

A conservative approach to risk management should be followed by the students and instructors at all times. A primary duty of a professional climbing instructor is to manage risk. The instructors will role model this while demonstrating tools, techniques and concepts as well as managing risks at the crag. Students will need to emulate this.

Mutual Respect and Cultural Competence -

Acknowledge the uniqueness and vulnerabilities of every student. It is the responsibility of the instructors and students to create a safe learning environment. Appreciate that a degree of vulnerability is integral to learning. Certain behaviors compromise a safe learning environment. Vital ways to maintain respect and project an appropriate tone are as follows:

- Avoid inappropriate jokes, innuendo and cliques.
- Don't make assumptions. Every student and every instructor is unique. Make an effort to get to know each other as you would clients with openness and respect.
- Recognize and appreciate differences. Opinions, feelings and perspectives are unique to individuals and not necessarily shared by others. Be open to valuing other perspectives and acting respectfully to each individual on the course.

Be open to learning and collaboration -

The least effective use of time is to spend these courses validating what is already known. Instead, seek to learn new ways of doing things, accept constructive feedback and observe the Instructor's teaching styles. If students are not open to learning, the course will not be productive.

- Take the opportunity to try new skills and make non-critical mistakes
- Assist other students with skills that may be more familiar
- Ask for help and clarification - don't feel a need to "prove" skills that are unfamiliar

AMGA Scope of Practice

The AMGA believes that all professional members and accredited businesses should operate under clearly defined minimum standards as is outlined in the official [AMGA Scope of Practice \(SOP\) document](#). The primary goal of SOP is to support and promote safety, quality of experience, and the public interest by establishing training and certification standards for the AMGA community of professional members and accredited businesses.

The SOP framework defines appropriate guiding roles and supervision needs for professional members at all levels of training and certification. It is the responsibility of all AMGA professional members and accredited businesses to familiarize themselves with the SOP and make every effort to comply with these standards.

No training or certification structure, including SOP, can provide a guarantee of safety given the inherent and other risks associated with climbing and skiing.

AMGA Single Pitch Instructors, those who have passed the SPI Assessment, and Single Pitch Instructor Course graduates, can operate in SPI terrain as stated below within the Supervision guidelines.

Single Pitch Instructor Terrain

Single Pitch Instructor terrain is outdoor terrain up to Grade I, that is climbed without intermediate belays. Approaches and descents to and from climbing venues present no difficulties such as significant route finding, scrambling, or short roping. The routes should not exceed Grade I or be more than one pitch in length.

Supervision

Supervision is a working relationship between Instructors or Guides certified by the AMGA in a given terrain type and Instructors or Guides in training for that terrain. Supervision implies working in close proximity in a single-pitch setting at close crags.

- Single Pitch Instructors, Multi-Pitch Instructors, Rock Instructors, Apprentice Rock Guides, Assistant Rock Guides, Rock Guides, Apprentice Alpine Guides (excepting Alpine Skills Course Graduates), Assistant Alpine Guides, Alpine Guides, IFMGA Guides, and Tenured Guides can work Unsupervised in this terrain.
- Graduates of the Single Pitch Instructor Course or Alpine Skills Course can work under the Supervision of a Single Pitch Instructor, Multi-Pitch Instructor, Rock Instructor, Rock Guide, IFMGA Guide, or Tenured Guide.

[Visit the AMGA Scope of Practice Resource Center](#)



The official [Scope of Practice](#) document is the standard for compliance. See document for complete details on supervision, terrain descriptions, and other scopes not included here.

Program Policies

SPI Program Hours and Ratios

An SPI Course is:

1. A minimum of 27 hours, normally run as three consecutive nine-hour days or day-field sessions with evening classes.
2. Not to exceed a ratio of six students to one current SPI Program Provider.
3. Not to exceed twelve total students directed by one current SPI Program Provider and, at a minimum, one AMGA approved SPI Assistant Provider.

An SPI Assessment is:

1. A minimum of 16 hours run over two consecutive days. Candidates who meet the assessment prerequisites may take the assessment directly after an SPI course though this is not recommended.
2. Not to exceed a ratio of six candidates to one current SPI Program Provider.
3. Not to exceed a total of twelve candidates under the direction of one current SPI Program Provider and one AMGA approved SPI Assistant Provider.

Because both the course and assessment address group leadership and site management issues, assessments may include the participation of outside clients during the second day.

Gaining SPI Certification

To gain SPI Certification candidates must:

1. Successfully pass the SPI Assessment.
2. Hold current AMGA Membership at Professional level.
3. Hold current First Aid Certification (see SPI Certification First Aid Requirements).

SPI Certification First Aid Requirements

First aid training is not a pre-requisite for participation in a course or assessment. For SPI certification to be valid, however, instructors must hold appropriate medical certification for the location in which they will be working. SPI certification is not valid for instructors whose medical certification has lapsed. It is the responsibility of individual instructors to maintain appropriate medical certification.

SPI Certification Upkeep and Recertification

Instructors must maintain AMGA membership. If instructors allow their AMGA membership to lapse, their SPI Certification is invalid until they re-establish their AMGA Membership.

Single Pitch Instructors' professional responsibility includes ensuring they maintain current AMGA membership and first aid certification.

SPI Certification is valid for three years from the date of certification.

To keep SPI Certification current, SPIs should seek out recertification before the expiration date of their certification. Candidates who let their certification lapse will have a 12-month re-entry period where they can take part in an SPI Assessment but they will not hold any certification between their SPI expiration date and successfully passing an SPI Assessment. From a professional standpoint this is not advisable.

Three options for certification renewal:

1. Certified Single Pitch Instructors can pass the two-day SPI Assessment to renew their certification.
2. Certified Single Pitch Instructors who successfully complete any higher level AMGA course are granted SPI certification for three years from the course end date
3. Certified Single Pitch Instructors who become certified in any discipline in the AMGA Mountain Guide Program are granted permanent SPI certification

NOTE: SPI Certification must be valid or within 12 months of expiration for any of the above options to renew SPI Certification. Upon completing options 2&3, the SPI must contact the AMGA so that their records can be updated.

12-month SPI/CWI Certification re-entry period:

- Any certified SPI or CWI who's certification expires will have a 12-month re-entry period to regain certification.
- During the re-entry period their certification is no longer valid.
- In order to regain certification they must pass a 2-day SPI Exam during the re-entry period.
- If they do not pursue recertification during the 12-month re-entry period, they will be required to retake the entire SPI Course prior to an SPI Exam or the entire CWI Program to regain certification.

2-Year SPI Course sunset time:

- The SPI Course has a sunset time of two years. After two years, if the SPI Course graduate has not passed an SPI Exam, they will need to retake the SPI Course prior to pursuing the SPI Exam.
- There is no minimum time frame between successful completion of the SPI Course and when you can participate in the SPI Exam, as long as the candidate meets the prerequisites for the SPI Exam. Most successful candidates practice their skills for 3-6 months prior to taking the SPI Exam.

Program make-up guidelines:

- Make-up options are available for students/candidates who receive an “incomplete” final mark on any SPI or CWI Program earned because of factors limiting attendance including but not limited to weather or an emergency.
 - Students/candidates would be able to pursue a make-up day by hiring a Provider to complete the necessary components missed.
- Make-up options are not available for students/candidates who receive a “no-pass” final mark because of deficient performance, failure to meet the program prerequisites, failure to complete eLearning requirements, or a breach of the AMGA code of conduct and ethics.
 - Students/candidates who receive a no-pass as outlined above would need to retake the entire course or exam that they received a no-pass final mark.

Required Skills

There is a large amount of material to cover during the SPI Course. All participants have a responsibility to take the time to read through this handbook and to put in the effort to prepare for the program. The below pre-requisites are absolute minimums and most candidates exceed them.

SPI Course Candidate Pre-Requisites

Candidates meet the pre-requisites for enrollment in an SPI course if they:

1. Have a genuine interest in rock climbing and instructing on single pitch crags.
2. Are at least 18-years old at the time of the course.
3. Have at least 12 months prior outdoor climbing experience.
4. Are active climbers with traditional lead climbing experience (leader placing pro).
5. Have traditionally led a minimum of 15 rock climbing pitches (any grade).
6. Are capable of comfortably climbing 5.8 while on a top rope.

The above pre-requisites are absolute minimums and most candidates exceed them. Without this minimum experience candidates are unlikely to be able to contribute to the course or make the best use of the training. Candidates who are unsure of their qualifications would benefit from hiring an AMGA Certified Multi-Pitch Instructor, Rock Guide or Mountain Guide to evaluate and enhance their skill level prior to enrollment in an SPI program.

SPI Assessment Candidate Pre-Requisites

Candidates may enroll in an SPI assessment immediately after successfully completing an SPI Course if they meet the other Assessment pre-requisites. Most successful candidates practice their skills for 3-6 months prior to taking the SPI Exam.

Candidates meet the SPI Assessment pre-requisites if they:

1. Have successfully completed an AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Course within the past 2 years. For those renewing, their SPI certification must be valid or within 1 year expiration.
2. Have traditionally led a minimum of 40 rock climbing pitches. A large number of these should be at the 5.6 grade (or higher) in various locations and on a variety of different rock types.
3. Are capable of comfortably lead climbing (leader placing own protection) on any 5.6 traditional route. Candidates will demonstrate their leading ability on a variety of routes during the assessment.
4. Are capable of comfortably climbing 5.8 with a top rope belay. Candidates will demonstrate their top rope climbing ability during the assessment.

Required Resume Submission

In order for your application to be considered complete, you must submit a resume listing the requisite number of climbing routes for each program. Options for submission may include emailing to the Program Provider, or uploading to your program on your [myAMGA account](#) under the programs tab. Click these links to download the resume templates. The Program Provider instructing your program will inform you if they have a preferred method of resume submission.

[SPI Course
Resume
Template](#)



[SPI Exam
Resume
Template](#)



Required Reading

It is required that all SPI Course students have access to [Rock Climbing: The AMGA Single Pitch Manual](#), by Gaines and Martin. Published by Falcon Guides, the book is intended to be used in conjunction with this handbook. Most successful candidates review both resources in entirety and practice skills prior to joining the SPI Course.

Required Online E-learning Modules

All SPI Course students are required to complete the AMGA online e-learning lessons. The Program Provider instructing the course will send you more information and a discount code to complete the modules for free prior to your course. *Do not pay for these if you are enrolled on an SPI Course!* Failure to complete the modules will result in a no-pass final mark on the SPI Course. [Link to AMGA SPI Online Programs](#)

Recommended Viewing

The AMGA Rock series of *Member Tech Videos* on the myAMGA website includes many complex skills beyond the curriculum of the SPI, however there are a few relevant videos that may be useful to review:

- Munter Mule Overhand ([Members Only Rock>Rescue](#))
- Top Rope Tethers ([Members Only Rock>SPI](#))
- Ground Anchors ([Members Only Rock>SPI](#))
- Friction Hitches <https://vimeo.com/200033921>
- Raising Systems 3:1 <https://vimeo.com/200846829>
- Rappel Extensions <https://vimeo.com/263894231>
- Belaying with a Munter (Top Site) <https://vimeo.com/265034166>
- Belaying with a Gri Gri (Top Site) <https://vimeo.com/265034756>
- Back Up Belaying <https://vimeo.com/265036177>

*[View the
Member Tech
Video Library](#)*



Preparing for the Course

Be sure to complete the above required reading and online e-learning modules. If there are questions regarding the course application, enrollment, payment, travel/lodging, course content, equipment, or logistics call or email the Program Provider instructing the program. Review and bring all equipment required. Make sure all personal gear is in good working condition and marked. Buy or borrow venue specific guidebooks and area specific geology and natural history books to supplement knowledge of the local terrain.

Review each day's itinerary and be flexible to changes that commonly occur with the plan based on unforeseeable circumstances and weather. Practice the techniques outlined in this handbook before the course to the best of your ability. If something doesn't make sense, make a note and ask the instructors before or during the course.

There is a large amount of material to cover in the 3-day course. It is imperative to familiarize yourself with the topics outlined in this handbook before the program. All participants have a responsibility to take the time to read through this handbook and to put in the effort to prepare for the program. Please arrive to the course focused and ready to learn in order to maximize individual and group outcomes.

Most recreational climbers who arrive to the course looking to develop skills as a professional instructor have never used the munter hitch. It is recommended that participants practice the munter hitch and tying off the munter hitch with a mule/overhand. This is a fundamental skill in which participants commonly arrive to the program with a lack in familiarity. This limits one's ability to successfully engage in practice sessions. Therefore it is important to practice in a low risk setting in preparation for the course.

Equipment

The equipment brought on a day of single-pitch instruction has a tremendous effect on the quality of the experience, for both the instructor and clients. As a professional instructor all equipment should be in good working condition, marked and appropriate for the planned outing. Each trip, climbing venue and client population is slightly different and may have varying requirements; the instructor will need to adjust accordingly.

During this program, considerable time will be spent on exposed, but not necessarily technically difficult terrain. To maximize security for the client and the instructor, both need to travel as unencumbered as possible while still carrying needed gear. In general, instructors should choose just enough equipment for the task, and avoid carrying functionally redundant gear. Single-pitch terrain should not be remote in nature, therefore the instructor can bring an abundance of equipment and more than the typical rock or alpine guide. Being able to moderate this with regards to pack weight will be key to effective travel to the base and top of the crag.

Clothing

Clothing should be appropriate for the activity and environment. Depending on venue and season, temperatures may fluctuate from sub-freezing to wet to hot—sometimes all in the same day, so please arrive prepared. A system that allows for multiple layering options is recommended.

- *Examples: Mammut “Selun FL Sun Hoody” “Runbold Light Pants” “Madris ML Jacket”*

Footwear

Footwear is one of the most important pieces of equipment for the instructor and is directly related to instructor security. Approach shoes with sticky rubber are encouraged for increasing instructor security, especially at the top of the cliff. In areas of high rain, mud, grass, or leave, shoes with suitable tread may be substituted. Appropriate climbing shoes that allow the instructor to climb up to 5.8 while wearing for extended periods of time are necessary.

- *Examples: Mammut “Alasca Knit III low”*

Backpack

A pack of sufficient size is important for the climbing instructor. One that can fit all personal and group gear comfortably inside of the pack, such that ideally nothing needs to be strapped to the outside. Depending on the day, a 35-55L pack will accomplish this. The climbing instructor relies on a larger pack as they may carry additional equipment such as static set-up ropes, duplicate gear for larger groups, and teaching equipment.

- *Examples: Mammut “Neon 55” or “Trion Nordwand 38”*

Required Technical Equipment

- Climbing Helmet, UIAA approved, such as the Mammut "Crag Sender"
- Climbing Harness, UIAA approved with belay loop, such as the Mammut "Ophir"
- Climbing shoes or approach shoes in which the candidate can climb up to 5.8 top rope
- Standard "lead climbing rack" such as, cams, stoppers/nuts, etc. (hexes and tri-cams if desired) with which the candidate can lead up to 5.6, including stopper/nut removal tool
- 8-12 quickdraws or 24" (60cm) sewn slings/runners with carabiners (emphasis on sling draws)
- 1-2 48" (120cm) sewn sling/runner (helpful to have one nylon)
- 4 or more locking "HMS/Pearbiners", such as the Mammut "Classic HMS" or "Crag HMS"
- 4-5 additional locking carabiners, such as the Mammut "Sender Screwgate"
- Tube-type belay/rappel device, such as the Mammut "Crag Light", or BD "ATC"
- Mechanical assisted braking device, such as the Petzl "GriGri" or Trango "Vergo"
- 1-2 Prusik loops (1m of 6mm Nylon Accessory Cord), such as Sterling "Hollowblock2"
- 1-2 Cordelettes (5m of 7mm Nylon Accessory Cord)
- 1 optional 180cm "triple" or 240cm "quad" sling for anchoring. Mammut "Contact Sling"
- One 60m "single" dynamic rope (9.5-10.2mm) suitable for leading and top roping, such as the Mammut "9.5 Crag We Care"
- One 30-50m static or "semi static" (gym line) rope (9-10.5mm), for setting up anchors and fixed lines, such as the Mammut "10.0 Performance Static"

All gear will be inspected on the first morning of the course and is expected to be in good condition. Mark all of your gear!

Questions?

Refer to the online [SPI Equipment Overview](#) module for more details. Additionally, contact the Program Provider instructing the program with questions specific to venue.

Pro Tips:

- Lighten your pack and keep it simple! The SPI curriculum focuses on teaching basic foundational skills like friction hitches. As Elaina Arenz, SPI Provider Trainer recommends: *"Keep your kit simple, when packing equipment. No need for mechanical progress captures like Tiblocs, Micro Traxions, or similar tools."*
- Don't own a static set-up rope? Check with your Program Provider before you buy. There may be the opportunity to borrow or share one during the SPI Course. Also, certain climbing venues around the country may require a longer or shorter rope. 45-60m length is not uncommon. Consult your Program Provider prior to purchasing.
- Use nail polish to mark your hard goods (carabiners / cams / etc). Tape generally tends to last only one season and creates unnecessary micro trash at the crag.
- Separate your racks - don't put every piece of equipment listed above onto one sling, as it will be impractical to carry. Split trad gear, draws, lockers and cords onto different racks and be adaptable during the program.

Single Pitch Instructor Course

Evaluation Overview

On all AMGA programs, students are assessed and evaluated relative to the stated prerequisites listed on the AMGA website and proficiencies found in this handbook. Students can expect feedback from their instructors throughout the course and a more thorough debrief on the final day of the program. The instructor will provide a written evaluation after the course is completed.

SPI Course Evaluation Focus Areas

BASIC SKILLS

- Belaying, knots, hitches, protection, anchors, rope management, and movement

BASE-MANAGED SKILLS

- Rappel with edge transition, weighted and unweighted take-over of belays, counter-ascend to a stuck climber, and counter-balanced lower with a climber

TOP-MANAGED SKILLS

- 3:1 raise, 3:1 assisted raise, releasable rappel set-up, fixing problems on rappel, and lowering clients

PROFESSIONALISM

- Preparedness, gear in working order, group participation, homework completed, instructor's notebook

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUE

- Appropriate lesson planning, presentation, site selection, communication, & knowledge

SPI Course Competency Scale

During the SPI Course, students are evaluated on the focus areas using these four categories. Multiple deficient scores may result in a no-pass course result.

PROFICIENT: Performs skills unassisted and can apply systems as needed. Demonstrates capability to operate within SOP.

COMPETENT: Generally performs skills and can replicate systems with little assistance. May require occasional coaching with application of skills and/or execution of complex skills. Demonstrates capability to operate within SOP.

DEVELOPING: Inconsistent performance of skills and requires some assistance when replicating systems. Requires coaching with application of skills and/or execution of complex skills. Demonstrates capability to operate within SOP.

DEFICIENT: Cannot perform skills and/or replicate systems without hands-on oversight. Generally needs extensive coaching with application of skills and/or the execution of complex skills and systems. Does not demonstrate ability to operate within SOP.

Assessment Categories:

There are five scoring and assessment categories on AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Assessments. On Single Pitch Instructor Courses, students are not evaluated on these categories but the categories are shared here to help prepare students for future training programs and to develop as professionals. Refer to pages 31-32 for more information related to the SPI Assessment evaluation and defined proficiencies for each category.

Risk Management

Both hazard recognition and client/ instructor security are fundamental skills for managing risk in the climbing environment. These foundational skills require intentional development to mitigate hazards in single pitch terrain. In addition, social and emotional risk management is an important part of instructing. A shift in mindset from recreational climber to being the person responsible for students or clients is a critical part of becoming a professional.

Technical Systems

The candidate must understand, correctly use, and apply:

- Protection, anchor, and belay techniques
- Rappelling and lowering techniques
- Appropriate rope management techniques for both top and bottom-managed sites
- Assistance and 'rescue' systems

Movement

Climbing ability and movement skill are critical to instructor security and efficient operation in the single pitch environment. It is important to be able to climb fluidly, model good movement, and to inspire clients. Terrain assessment is needed to appropriately mitigate hazards. Route selection, route finding and navigation to and from the base or top site are needed.

Professionalism

Preparedness and planning are crucial to managing risk and providing the students or clients with a high quality experience. Incorporating LNT principles into every day is an important responsibility of the instructor. Demonstrating good stewardship and educating students or clients about the environment are all responsibilities of the instructor and increase the level of professionalism we strive to achieve. Being respectful and considerate of other users and modeling good communication with all parties encountered, is expected of a professional instructor.

Instructional Technique

- Lesson Planning - The candidate must use and implement appropriate lesson plans and teaching progressions
- Pedagogy - The candidate must understand and use a variety of teaching methods adaptable to various learning styles
- Communication - Does so clearly with a positive attitude
- Coaching and Tips - The candidate must provide appropriate coaching and tips to assist in creating a comfortable and rewarding experience for the student(s) or client(s)

SPI Course Overview

The following three-day outline is the standard progression for an SPI course. Program Providers may present a different daily schedule but the entire curriculum will be covered in the course. Program Providers may add to the curriculum on the course at their discretion, but they will not omit items from the established SPI curriculum. SPI Program providers must make it clear when they are teaching outside the established curriculum and should not evaluate beyond that curriculum. The course is normally run over three consecutive nine hour days but as long as the curriculum is covered over 27 hours the course may be run over separate weekends or even as a semester class.

Day 1:

Session 1: SPI and AMGA Program Overview
Session 2: Professionalism
Session 3: Equipment
Session 4: Knots and Hitches
Session 5: Belaying
Session 6: Protection and Anchoring
Session 7: Teaching
End-of-Day Debriefs

Day 2:

Session 8: The Climbing Site
Session 9: Site Organization and Group Management
Session 10: Base-Managed Sites
Session 11: Assistance Skills: Base-Managed Sites
Session 12: Programming and Risk Management
End-of-Day Debriefs

Day 3:

Session 13: Instructor Demo Lead Climb
Session 14: Top-Managed Sites
Session 15: Lowering
Session 16: Assistance Skills: Top-Managed Sites
Session 17: Rappelling
Session 18: Climbing Movement
Session 19: Review Sessions
Final Individual and Group Debriefs

SPI Course Day 1:

Summary:

Session 1: SPI and AMGA Program Overview

Session 2: Professionalism

Session 3: Equipment

Session 4: Knots and Hitches

Session 5: Belaying

Session 6: Protection and Anchoring

Session 7: Teaching

End-of-Day Debriefs

Introductions

This time is used to introduce the instructors and participants, delineate the course objectives, help participants get to know each other, express goals and expectations, etc.

Session 1: SPI and AMGA Program Overview

Goals: The participant will be able to articulate an understanding of the SPI Program, AMGA organization, programs, certification levels, history and mission.

Location: Classroom setting or crag

Equipment: Discussion format. No equipment is required.

Overview: An overview of the AMGA and an introduction to instruction,

- History, mission, programs and certification levels of the AMGA
- Recreational climbing and how it differs from professional instruction
- SPI Program overview, course and assessment and scope and boundaries of the program
- The Single Pitch Instructors terrain guidelines
- Appropriate representation of AMGA training and certification level to clients and the public and the AMGA Brand Use Policy
- **Textbook Reference: viii-xiii**

Session 2: Professionalism

Goals: Candidates will be able to describe the traits of a professional instructor and embody those traits as an instructor.

Location: Classroom or crag.

Equipment: Discussion format. No equipment is required.

Overview: This session entails a discussion of what is involved in being a professional climbing instructor.

- Appearance: Clean clothes, neat, gear in good condition and organized.
- Time keeping and time management skills; organization and leadership skills; technical skills and climbing ability; and instructional skills.
- Professional demeanor, appropriate language and positive attitude.
- Additional training and certification (first aid, rescue, LNT, etc.).
- Instructor notebook and keeping instructor notes.
- Cultural Competency: A professional instructor should demonstrate willingness and ability to work effectively with participants from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. A professional instructor should also demonstrate skillful leadership in communication and human resource management, engendering safe learning environments for all participants regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or age.
- **Textbook Reference: Professionalism Pages 3-5**

Session 3: Equipment

Goals: Participants will have comprehensive knowledge of equipment and materials used in single pitch climbing instruction, and will be familiar with its use, care, applications, and storage.

Location: Classroom setting or crag

Equipment: All types of climbing equipment that will be used in the SPI program

Overview: A hands-on review of climbing equipment and materials

- The instructor's personal equipment: Review of required equipment list, the instructor's pack (first aid kit, communication device, etc.).
- Rope: dynamic, semi-static and static rope and their proper applications.
- Webbing and cordage: materials, application and care.
- Carabiners.
- Protection: gear appropriate for anchor building and leading in single pitch settings.
- Program equipment: client harnesses, helmets and belay/rappel devices - types and fitting; improvised chest harness.
- **Textbook Reference: Equipment pages 28-61, 112-143**

Session 4: Knots and Hitches

Goals: Candidates will demonstrate proficiency in tying and understanding of the application of the knots and hitches listed below.

Location: Classroom setting or crag

Equipment: Climbing ropes, cordelettes and slings.

Overview: A hands-on review of climbing knots and hitches which should include the following:

- Figure 8 family
- Overhand family
- Double overhand on a bight (BHK)
- Ring bend
- Clove hitch
- Girth hitch
- Bowlines
- Münter hitch
- Münter mule
- Friction hitches (autoblock, Prusik, Klemhiest)
- Double fisherman's bend
- Flat Overhand (Patagonia Knot)
- **Textbook Reference: Knots and Hitches pages 62-101**

Session 5: Belaying

Goals: Candidates will demonstrate a thorough understanding of belay devices, techniques and communication. Candidates must also exhibit the ability to teach belaying clearly.

Location: Classroom setting or crag

Equipment: Various belay devices and climbing ropes

Overview: A hands-on review of belaying which must include the following types and techniques:

- At the top of the cliff from the anchor:
 - Belaying via Munter Hitch including practice blocking with a Munter Mule hitch
 - Belaying with an assisted braking device – Petzl GriGri, Trango Cinch
- At the base of the cliff from the harness belay loop:
 - Belaying with various manual braking belay devices
 - Belaying with an assisted braking device – Petzl GriGri, Trango Cinch
- Belaying the leader
- Communication
- Ground anchors
- **Textbook Reference: Belaying pages 192-203**

Session 6: Protection and Anchoring

- Goals:** Candidates will demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of anchoring principles and risk management strategies for single pitch crags.
- Location:** Single-pitch climbing site with plenty of anchoring possibilities, either at the base or at the top of the cliff
- Equipment:** Instructor's rack
- Overview:** A review of anchoring principles and practice with instruction at a single-pitch crag. Candidates will demonstrate proficiency at building anchor systems that are efficient in use of both gear and time. As stated in the prerequisites, an SPI course is not an anchor class, and candidates should already be well-versed in anchor building skills and gear placement.
- Rock and natural anchor component evaluation
 - Artificial gear: SLCD, stopper, hex and tri cam placement and evaluation
 - Bolt and piton evaluation
 - Creating a master point in an anchor
 - Optimal anchor location relative to the anticipated direction of load
 - Anchors for top-managed sites (creating extensions) + base-managed sites
 - **Textbook Reference: Protection and Anchoring pages 102-181**

Session 7: Teaching Skills

- Goals:** Candidates will demonstrate an understanding of different learning styles and proficiency in both instructing in a group setting and coaching on an individual basis.
- Location:** Classroom or at the crag.
- Equipment:** Teaching tools/aids.
- Overview:** This session will address lesson planning, basic learning styles and teaching methods for various climbing and movement topics.
- Overview of the three main ways people prefer to learn:
 - Visual – student who learn best by watching the skill or activity
 - Auditory – students who learn best by hearing or reflecting on the skill or activity
 - Kinesthetic – students who learn best by participating/doing the skill or activity
 - Lesson planning
 - The use of visual aids: video, PowerPoint presentations, text, photo or diagram handouts, white boards, objects/examples to hand out and examine.
 - Effective communication skills and body language
 - Program and lesson sequencing; creating a logical order
 - **Textbook Reference: Teaching pages 17-27**

End-of-Day Debrief

Notes

SPI Course Day 2:

Summary:

Session 8: Selecting the Climbing Site
Session 9: Site Organization and Group Management
Session 10: Base-Managed Sites
Session 11: Assistance Skills: Base-Managed Sites
Session 12: Programming and Risk Management
End-of-Day Debriefs

Session 8: Selecting the Climbing Site

Goals: Candidates will be able to research climbing areas and interpret guidebooks, topos and climbing web sites in order to select appropriate sites for institutional climbing. Candidates will be familiar with the various land management structures in the US and their varying permitting requirements.

Location: Single-pitch site.

Equipment: Guide books, topos, web print-outs for the area used.

Overview: A discussion of the single-pitch crag environment as it relates to commercial use, including an overview of land management and permitting systems (USFS, NPS, BLM, state parks, private owners, etc.), and criteria for selecting the best climbing area and routes for specifically-skilled clients.

- Land managers and commercial use permit systems
- Local and national climbing and commercial use ethics and etiquette
- Site selection and considerations for commercial and group users
- Selecting appropriate climbs for clients (physical ability, clients' goals, etc.)
- Reading route topos and interpreting route descriptions
- Understanding climbing ratings, grades and terrain classifications
 - Yosemite Decimal System (5.0-5.15, including letter grades)
 - Terrain classification (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th class terrain)
 - Commitment grade (I-VI) (III-VI not required for single-pitch climbing, but good additional knowledge)
- **Textbook Reference: The Climbing Site. Pages 7-8, 187-192**

Session 9: Site Organization and Group Management

Goals: Candidates will demonstrate proficiency in site organization and group management in both top and bottom managed situations. Candidates will demonstrate an understanding of both the environmental and social issues involved in commercial guiding in single pitch settings.

...Session 9 continued

Location: Single-pitch crag.

Equipment: Discussion format. No equipment needed.

Overview: This session will look in detail at group management considerations and the organization of a single-pitch climbing site.

- Group orientations
 - Goals for the day
 - Client roles, behavior expectations and boundaries
 - Explanation of hazards and risks
 - Fitting and checking equipment (harnesses, helmets, shoes, etc.)
- Equipment organization – individual and group
- Leave No Trace practices and impact reduction strategies for groups
- Group staging area out of the way of other users
- Maximizing client participation; climber, belayer, backup belayer
- Crag etiquette – minimizing conflict with other users
 - Minimum number of set-ups to accomplish group goals
 - Avoid blocking initial pitches of a multi-pitch climbs
 - Avoid use of popular, high-traffic routes
 - Noise control
- **Textbook Reference: Site Organization and Group Management pages 4-5, 183-186**

Session 10: Base-Managed Sites

Goals: Candidates will demonstrate an understanding of the rationale for working at the bottom of single pitch crags and proficiency in the skills required to operate in this setting.

Location: Base of a single-pitch crag.

Equipment: Ropes, anchoring equipment.

Overview: Considerations in opting to manage from the base and techniques and strategies for executing these systems.

- Rationale for choosing base-managed sites:
 - Easy to see and coach climbers and supervise belayers
 - Easier to communicate with and manage large groups at the base
 - Higher client-to-instructor ratios (i.e. 6:1) are possible
 - Faster “change-overs” so more climbing is accomplished
- Concerns for Base-Managed Sites:
 - Possibility of any object falling from above, striking belayer or clients
 - More rope in the system compared to a top belay system (more rope elongation)
 - Climbs over half the rope length require tying two ropes together to belay from the bottom
 - Cannot monitor the anchor systems as well

...Session 10 continued

- Overview Continued:**
- Base-Site Management
 - Keeping things neat
 - Rope organization
 - Closing the system - Always
 - Ground Anchors
 - When to use
 - ABC, (Anchor-Belayer-Climber), always inline
 - Using natural features for ground anchors
 - No features available – using other clients as ground anchors
 - Back-up belayers
 - Use of 'catastrophe knots'
 - **Textbook Reference: Base-Managed Sites 190-192**

Session 11: Assistance Skills – Base-Managed Sites

- Goals:** Candidates will be able to perform a variety of assistance skills that may be required when working at the base of a single pitch crag.
- Location:** Single-pitch crag.
- Equipment:** Top rope set-up.
- Overview:** A detailed look at and practice of weighted and un-weighted belay take-overs, climber pick-offs and counter-balance assists.
- Belay take-overs:
 - Weighted
 - Un-weighted
 - Counter ascension to assist stuck climber
 - Counter-balance lower with stuck climber
 - **Textbook References: Assistance Skills: Base-Managed Sites pages 221-226**

Session 12: Programming and Risk Management

- Goals:** Candidates will demonstrate an understanding of programming and risk management issues involved in single pitch instruction.
- Location:** Classroom or crag.
- Equipment:** Discussion format. No equipment needed.
- Overview:** A look at client orientations, comfort and security, instructor responsibilities, legal considerations and liability insurance. This session will also cover equipment storage and record keeping as well as program objectives and boundaries.

Continued on next page

...Session 12 continued

- Overview**
- Continued:**
- Overview of the four main types of risks that could be encountered in a climbing environment, and how to reduce and manage those risks:
 - Psychological – fear of falling, fear of heights
 - Sociological – peer pressure, fear of ridicule from other clients
 - Financial – poor course, waste of money, lost/broken personal equipment
 - Physical – client injuries, fatalities
 - Client orientations, security and comfort
 - Equipment inspection, record keeping and storage
 - Legal issues in commercial instruction, waivers, informed risk, medical screening of clients
 - Identifying program goals and boundaries
 - Creating an Emergency Response Plan
 - Daily and weekly instructor meetings
 - **Textbook Reference: Programming and Risk Management pages 7-16**

End-of-Day Debriefs

Notes

SPI Course Day 3:

Summary:

Session 13: Instructor Demo Lead Climb
Session 14: Top-Managed Sites
Session 15: Lowering
Session 16: Assistance Skills: Top-Managed Sites
Session 17: Rappelling
Session 18: Climbing Movement
Session 19: Review Sessions
Final Individual and Group Debriefs

Session 13: Instructor Demo Lead Climb

Goals: Course instructor completion of a single-pitch trad lead climb demonstrating sound leading practices and considerations for student belaying of lead climbs. (Note: while the SPI is not a lead climbing course and the demo should only focus on lead climbing considerations for an instructor, it is acceptable to have students lead climbs if time permits and risk management considerations are addressed).

Location: Single-pitch crag

Equipment: Ropes, lead rack, etc.

Overview: The SPI course instructor (not candidate) will demonstrate a lead climb that focuses on considerations for students belaying leading instructors. This is a short lead that will be a catalyst for the following points of discussion:

- Selection of an appropriate climb to lead in order to set-up anchors
- Considerations for belayer position use of a ground anchor
- Teaching of lead belay technique
- Appropriate belay device for lead belaying
- Use of back up belayer
- Modeling of sound leading practices (plenty of solid protection, no soloing)
- Closing the climbing system
- Belayer/climber communication

Textbook Reference: Instructor Demo Lead Climb pages 234-239

Session 14: Top-Managed Sites

- Goals:** Candidates will comprehend the rationale for choosing to operate from the tops of crags and display proficiency in the skills needed to execute these systems
- Location:** Top of a single-pitch crag
- Equipment:** Ropes, anchoring equipment, etc.
- Overview:** A detailed look at working from the top in single-pitch settings and the reasons for choosing this system as opposed to working from the base.
- Reasons for Top-Managed Sites:
 - No chance of falling objects striking belayers from above
 - 50% less rope in the system, less elongation
 - Some climbers prefer climbing toward instructors rather than away from them
 - Climbs over half the rope length are most easily belayed from the top
 - Difficult or dangerous access to the base of the cliff (sea cliff, steep ground, etc.)
 - Ability to monitor the anchor system
 - Concerns for Top-Managed Sites:
 - Difficult (or sometimes impossible) to see climber from above on many crags
 - The climber's rope will always go over the edge when belaying from above
 - Possible impact on fragile cliff top ecosystem
 - Cliff edge dangerous to manage
 - Instructor and client risk management at the top of the crag
 - Tying directly in to the master point (with a clove hitch)
 - Instructor tether lines
 - Possible use of fixed lines for movement of clients in exposed areas
 - Belaying from the anchor master point
 - With an assisted breaking device (GriGri/Cinch:) when, why, considerations
 - With a Munter hitch: when, why, considerations
 - Station Management
 - Keeping things neat, thinking ahead to avoid organizational and systemic issues
 - Maintenance of "work space" between cliff edge and master point
 - Rope organization, stacking
 - Incorporating a student belayer: clove hitch the student belayer to master point, belay as instructor from master point with an assisted braking device (GriGri/Cinch,) Munter hitch.
 - **Textbook Reference: Top-Managed Sites pages 201-203**

Session 15: Lowering

- Goals:** Candidates will demonstrate proficiency at lowering clients and the use of appropriate back-ups.
- Location:** Single-pitch crag.
- Equipment:** Top belay set-up.
- Overview:** A detailed look at lowering considerations, techniques, back-ups and reasons for lowering clients.
- Reasons and considerations for lowering clients
 - Lowering methods
 - Assisted Breaking Device with re-direct
 - Munter hitch
 - Friction hitch back-ups
 - Closing the climbing system
 - Visual contact with the client
 - **Textbook Reference: Lowering pages 204-207**

Session 16: Assistance Skills: Top-Managed Sites

- Goals:** Candidates must possess the skills to assist climbers from the top of a crag in a single-pitch setting.
- Location:** Single-pitch crag.
- Equipment:** Top belay set-up.
- Overview:** This session will look at raising and assistance techniques from the top of the crag. In the single-pitch setting, there is no need for in-depth raising systems training since all problems have a “gravity feed” solution. In the rare instance when an instructor is working at a sea cliff environment or single-pitch crag where the access to the base is problematic, a prudent Instructor would belay with an assisted braking device to affect a simple raise if required.
- 3:1 raise with Assisted Braking Device
 - 3:1 assisted raise with Assisted Braking Device
- Textbook Reference: Assistance Skills: Top-Managed Sites pages 227-230**

Session 17: Rappelling

- Goals:** Candidates will be able to set up and manage institutional rappels, employ appropriate back-ups and execute assistance/rescue techniques
- Location:** Single-pitch crag.
- Equipment:** Top rope set-up.
- Overview:** This session addresses rappelling methods, considerations and back-ups used in student rappels.

Continued on next page

...Session 17 continued

- Overview**
- Continued:**
- Reasons and considerations for rappelling:
 - Student experience, skill instruction, crag access/egress
 - Rappel set-ups:
 - High master points, set back from the edge
 - Releasable rappels
 - Single and double line rappels
 - Rappel back-ups:
 - Fireman's belay (discussed, not taught at SPI level.)
 - Independent belay
 - Problem avoidance:
 - Tying back long hair, loose clothing/jewelry
 - Coaching
 - Starting novice rappellers on low-angle terrain, moving to steeper/vertical terrain later
 - Visual contact with the client
 - Rappel assistance:
 - Practice releasable rappel load transfers for rappellers with something stuck in their rappel devices

Textbook Reference: Rappelling pages 208-220

Session 18: Climbing Movement

Goals: Candidates will understand the principles of climbing movement and be proficient in teaching climbing movement skills in a group setting and coaching individual clients.

Location: Base of crag, boulders or artificial wall.

Equipment: Top rope set-up.

Overview: This session addresses teaching climbing movement skills on single-pitch crags and facilitating well managed and effective bouldering sessions for novice climbers.

- Basics of vertical movement and balance
- Common climbing skills
 - Hand holds and how to utilize them: edges, slopers, buckets, pockets
 - Foot positioning: smears, edging
 - Techniques: laybacks, stemming, chimneying, crack climbing, mantling
- Movement exercises: balance, body position, etc.
- Movement and Climbing games; Coaching skills
- Facilitating Bouldering
 - Risk Management (programmatic/insurance issues of "un-roped" climbing)
 - Correct use of bouldering pads, spotters

Textbook Reference: Climbing Movement pages 26-27

Session 19: Review Session

- Goals:** Provide an opportunity for candidates to review all course material and voice questions related to the SPI Assessment.
- Location:** Single-pitch crag.
- Equipment:** Top rope set-up.
- Overview:** Review time.

End of Course Group and Individual Debriefs

- Goals:** Course instructors and candidates will complete a debrief of the course and individual participants. Instructors will review candidates' performance and identify areas for future development in preparation of completing an SPI assessment. Participants will offer suggestions for improvement of presentation of courses.
- Location:** Single-pitch crag or classroom.

Notes

SPI Assessment Overview

The SPI Assessment/Exam is two days in length (minimum of 16 hours assessment time) and takes place at a single-pitch climbing area where there is a selection of traditional lead routes of at least 5.6 difficulty and top rope routes of at least 5.8 difficulty. SPI assessments examine all aspects of institutional single-pitch climbing.

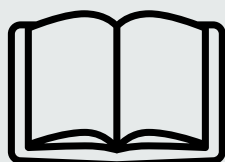
The SPI Assessment is organized into four distinct evaluation sessions: climbing movement, technical skills, teaching ability and group management skills. Day one examines candidates' climbing movement skills and proficiency with technical systems including anchoring and assistance skills. On day two, the examiners may arrange for the participation of volunteer novice clients (non-paying) in order for the candidates to be able to instruct in a group setting. This is not required, but is a great benefit to the assessment process as the examiner can see candidates interact with real novice climbers and the examinees do not have to "pretend" to teach novice climbers who are actually other examinees on the assessment.

SPI examiners are responsible for creating a stress free environment that brings out the best in candidates. Candidates must demonstrate that their technical and instructional skills meet the standards of AMGA Single Pitch Instructor certification.

As of 2024, the AMGA has updated the assessment categories to refine the original 9 categories to a simpler and relevant 5 categories. Elements of the previous assessment categories have been absorbed into the categories that remain. Additionally there has been the development of a proficiencies list to better define the assessment categories in greater detail. Although the assessment categories are not an exact replica of the higher level AMGA mountain guide programs, they are similar in nature with subtle differences specific to single pitch instruction. For clarity the terms SPI Assessment and SPI Exam are interchangeable.

Single Pitch Instructor Assessment Categories

Risk Management
Technical Systems
Movement
Professionalism
Instructional Technique



[View the SPI Program Proficiencies Here](#)



SPI Assessment Evaluation Scoring Scale

Candidates' skills will be evaluated and graded on both days of the Assessment. Examiners will score each candidate at the end of each day, then revisit the scoring at the end of the exam to account for trends, consistency, and any contributing factors that may have affected any of the candidates. An assessment is based on the ability of candidates to provide a well-managed and rewarding experience for their clients. Failing to pass an assessment is typically an issue of risk management. Candidates are graded on their performance in 5 designated skill areas. These skills are divided into subcategories that better define those main skill areas. A summary scorecard will be generated from daily scores to determine whether to pass or fail a candidate. Personal interviews are held at the end of the exam where a verbal assessment will be given by the examiner(s). This is meant to help the candidates assess their own performance. The goal is to notify students of the outcome at the personal debrief. However it is sometimes needed for the examiner(s) to check with the AMGA Climbing Instructor Program Manager prior to doing so. In these cases a phone call may be scheduled to notify the student of the result.

As of 2024, the previous "pass / no-pass / marginal" mark system has been eliminated and replaced with a 1-10 scoring scale:

Examiners will score each candidate at the end of each day, then revisit the scoring at the end of the exam to account for trends, consistency, and any contributing factors that may have affected any of the candidates. Scores will be backed up with specific examples in the comments section for each day.

- Candidates must receive a final average of at least 70% in risk management, and 60% in each of the remaining assessment categories and at least 62% overall score to pass an SPI Exam.
- Passing scores will commonly be in the 7-8 range, with 8 being a good performance considered to be "at the standard".
- 9 is a strong performance. 10 is rare--an outstanding performance that would be expected of an experienced and highly skilled instructor.
- 9-10 is accepted as "above the standard" which gives exam candidates room to grow and improve post exam.
- 5-6 are sub-standard performances, but may be made up for with improvement later in the exam.
- 1-4 are more difficult to recover from without an outstanding performance through the rest of the exam.



[View the SPI Exam Evaluation Template Here](#)



[View the SPI Exam Scoring Scale Here](#)



Advice from Jason Martin, SPI Provider Trainer:

"I think one misperception with the grading system is that we're used to the idea that you can get up to 100%. That may be the case in school. But maybe a better way to think of this here is that we want our students to reach a mean, not to reach a score."

SPI Assessment Day 1:

Summary:

Session 1: SPI Assessment Orientation
Session 2: Lead Climbing and Top Rope Session
Session 3: Technical Components
End-of-Day Debriefs

Session 1: SPI Assessment Orientation

- Goals:** Introduction of candidates and examiners, detailing candidates' climbing and instructing experience since completion of an SPI Course, expectations and the assessment process.
- Location:** Single-pitch crag or classroom.
- Equipment:** Classroom setting-none required.
- Overview:** Introductions detailing the training and experience of the candidates, examiners plan for the course, expectations, the marking system and criteria for evaluation.

Session 2: Lead Climbing and Top Rope Session

- Goals:** Candidates will demonstrate their climbing movement skills by comfortably top roping 5.8 and leading 5.6 traditional climbs
- Location:** Single-pitch crag
- Equipment:** Top roping and traditional leading equipment
- Overview:** Two-four hours of relaxed climbing time where candidates will top rope various single-pitch climbs up to a 5.8 grade and trad lead climb to a 5.6 grade. Examiners will observe candidates interact with other climbers, select appropriate climbs, build anchors and belay from the top and base of the crag. Examiners will assess candidates' climbing ability, anchors building, rope work, station management, communication and general climbing proficiency in a single-pitch setting.

Session 3: Technical Components

- Goals:** Candidates will demonstrate proficiency in executing technical systems used in single pitch climbing.
- Location:** Single-pitch crag
- Equipment:** Top roping and traditional leading equipment
- Overview:** Candidates should display competence in the following technical skills;
- Base-managed Site:
 - Rappelling over an edge to the base of a crag
 - Weighted and un-weighted take-over of belays
 - Counter-ascend to a stuck climber
 - Counter-balanced lower with a climber
 - Top-Managed Site:
 - 3:1 Raise using Assisted Braking Device
 - 3:1 Assisted raise using Assisted Braking Device
 - Releasable rappel set-up, fixing problems on rappel such as stuck rappel device
 - Lowering clients

End-of-Day Debrief

Notes

SPI Assessment Day 2:

Summary:

Session 4: Group Management

Session 5: Teaching Components

End-of-Assessment Group and Individual Debriefs

Session 4: Group Management

Goals: Candidates will demonstrate their group management skills.

Location: Single-pitch crag.

Equipment: Top roping equipment.

Overview: Candidates will fulfill various roles in facilitating a day of single pitch climbing for a group of volunteer clients. Examiners will evaluate candidates on their performance in the following tasks:

- Morning client orientations, briefings
- Paperwork, waivers
- Equipment selection, fitting, explanations
- Client security, comfort and communication
- Group management
- Overseeing multiple climbers in a base-managed site
- Running a rappel site

Session 5: Teaching Components

Goals: Candidates will demonstrate their instructional and coaching skills.

Location: Single pitch crag.

Equipment: Candidate's choice.

Overview: Candidates will present a variety of lessons on climbing topics. The lessons will be assigned either via email before the assessment or on the morning of day one of the assessment. Candidates will prepare a lesson plan and present a hard copy of the lesson for review by the examiner.

Continued on next page

...Session 5 continued

Overview Possible teaching topics include:

- Continued:**
- Interpreting guide books, topos and climbing grades
 - Belaying
 - Equipment types, care and storage
 - Helmets and harness: types, selection and fitting
 - Rope dynamics and care
 - Knots and friction hitches
 - Rappelling
 - Climbing movement
 - Leave No trace
 - Bouldering
 - Communication in climbing

End-of-Assessment Group and Individual Debriefs

Notes

Notes



Welcome to the AMGA Community

You are now part of a community of thousands of AMGA members nationwide!

Member benefits include:

- Access to workshops and clinics at AMGA events
- Pro-Purchase discounts from our corporate partners
- Ability to apply for Mountain Guide Program and Affinity Program Scholarships
- Monthly AMGA E-newsletters and access to the AMGA Professional Members Forum

Log into your <https://amga.com/my-amga/> account today for this and much more!



American Mountain Guides Association

2805 Wilderness Pl Suite 100

Boulder, CO 80301

(303) 271-0984

<https://amga.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/AMGAUSA/>



[@amga1979](https://www.instagram.com/amga1979)

