
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 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.

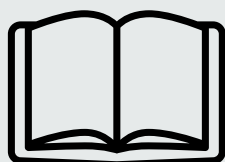
The SPI Assessment is organized into four distinct evaluation sessions: climbing movement, technical skills, teaching ability and group management skills. Day one examines candidates' climbing movement skills and proficiency with technical systems including anchoring and assistance skills. On day two, 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."