Basic Climbing Skillz/Living in Treez

with Shifty Tim + X biscuits X
xBISCUITSx and shifty tim created this zine for a conference (Smash the State, Crush the Cage) that our student group, Hampshire Animal Liberation Advocacy, is putting on. Because xBISCUITSx was an organizer she felt she ought to do a workshop, but had a hard time over the summer thinking about what she could teach. Then, one day, returning home from her job as a rock climbing counselor, it dawned on her...she can teach climbing (duh!).

Part of the reason xBISCUITSx also wanted to get this zine out there is because climbing is viewed as such an elite and specialized sort of thing. And there is good reason for that, in that a lot of the gear is expensive and it is largely rich, white people involved in it as a 'sport'. But climbing can be more than a hobby, it can be a useful skill—tree trimmer and removal people often have climbing skillz. If we view climbing as more than recreation we can see more possibilities for its use. I really enjoy climbing as a sport and a practical skill, and I would really like to see a diversification of participants. We need more radical, queer, non-white, non-democrat (for god's sake), funky, anarchist type climbers. Get climbing on your radarz!

When xBISCUITSx got back on campus this fall, a new member of our group, shifty tim, also had worked as a climbing counselor of sorts. So shifty tim and xBISCUITSx decided to combine their skills to create a super sweet workshop.

We do not encourage people with no climbing experience whatsoever to go out and start climbing things, and are way too much of safety nuts to encourage that. However, we do encourage people to find a friend who can climb and is trained to practice with. If you don't have a friend, see if there is a climbing club or climbing gym near where you live that can teach you the basics like belaying and safety. We are going to include those things in this zine, but would also feel better if you would be super safe and practice with people who know how to do it. Which is a little conflicting with the DIY idea of de-professionalization of skillz. We want people to realize the potential of climbing skillz, and to feel empowered by their ability to do things, but also don't want you to get hurt. We would have to say that this zine is not intended to TEACH climbing to people with no experience whatsoever. Rather, it is intended to be used for reference purposes by people who have had at least some experience and hopefully have knowledgeable friends.

This zine is intended to introduce people to the basics of climbing in ways that might be useful for hanging birthday banners for friends or rescuing cats from treez. The content will depend on the skill levels of the participants, but all are welcome. The "living in treez" part of the workshop is intended to introduce people to building treehouses without the use of hammers, nails, etc., to ensure that our tree friends remain unhurt while we have fun playing.

Things to be covered:

Harnesses (how to use, how to make, where to get)
Rope (what type to get for what adventure)
Anchors (so your life won't depend on a dead tree)
Ye Olde Prussik knot (the ticket to climbing rope, with rope, meaning you can climb anything)
Lashings: square, diagonal, sheer, and tripod lashings.
Knots: Eight Knot, Square Knot, Double Fisherman's Knot, Clove Hitch, Timber Hitch, Two Half Hitches, Constrictor Hitch, and knots

The workshop mostly involves teaching what is necessary to use Prussik knots safely and Lashing. So the purpose of this zine is to provide reference materials for the topics covered in the workshop. That way people who took the workshop can practice their knots etc. You can tell from the long list of things to be covered that only so much depth will be achieved in anyone area. The workshop and this zine are mostly to give you a taste of the possibilities and maybe inspire you to seek out more knowledge about climbing so that you can add climbing to the skills you have to fight for what you believe with.

Climbing Safety

There are some really basic safety issues that need to be addressed before you start climbing. xBISCUITSx recommend helmets when climbing, even if they might seem silly or annoying. If you are climbing in an area where there is the possibility of either things falling on you from above as you are climbing or belaying, or of you falling and swinging in such a way that you hit your head on a rock wall or rocky ground a helmet could mean the difference between life and death. (shifty tim on the other hand, finds helmets silly, giving climbers a false sense of safety. If you fall, you die, a helmet won't save you)
Communication
Communication is really important when climbing with a partner because you are in charge of each other’s lives. There is no such thing as talking too much to your partner. Verbalize when you are having trouble with a knot, verbalize when you are having trouble, verbalize when you are feeling insecure. Even experienced climbers forget things sometimes so it is much better to triple check a knot for instance than it is to climb on an unsafe knot.

Redundancy
In many situations we are taught not to be redundant. Well, climbing is not one of these. When it comes to safety it is a good idea to have backups for your backups. Generally, if you can avoid having your life dangle from one thread you should do so. When I (xBISCUIT5x) was practicing anchors and prussiking I would tie something and then reference my book, to make sure it looked right. If I wasn’t sure, I’d redo it. Ask your climbing buddy to double check all of your gear before you get going!

Things falling from the sky
If you are climbing, and maybe your foot kicks a rock, or you accidentally drop the happy birthday banner you were gonna hang (hopefully not that cat you might be rescuing) you need to let the people on the ground below you know that they are in danger. The way this is done in the climbing world is by yelling “ROCK!” It doesn’t matter if it is a rock, feather, stick, or flippin’ Leprechaun, for clarity’s sake you ALWAYS yell “ROOOOCK!” If you know that you are trying to be sneaky about what you are doing, like hanging a birthday banner and you don’t want to wake up the person who’s birthday it is with loud noises, then this is an issue that you and your crew need to discuss before you get anywhere near started with climbing. Any decision about whether or not you ought to yell needs to be agreed upon by EVERY member of your group. Think about these issues ahead of time.

Gear Safety
There is a lot of gear used for a lot of things. A universal rule for your gear is that you want to know what sort of stress it has been through. An old carabiner might have been dropped before it came into your possession, and it might just have a hairline fracture that causes it to break the moment you take a fall on it. Rope might be old and suffering from dry rot. Try to keep track of your equipment, inspect it, and retire it when it is getting worn. When buying gear, remember that there’s no such thing as “cheap climbing equipment”. Don’t buy the least expensive thing, as your life depends on your gear.

Harnesses
Harnesses are what a climber and a belayer wear in order to connect them to the rope. Harnesses generally consist of webbing (sometimes nicely padded) which has connected leg loops and waist loops. You can use store bought harnesses (often expensive, but very comfortable), or you can make one with webbing. Making your own is perhaps more economically accessible, but if you are going to be wearing it for any amount of time you really might want to get a nicer one- they dig into your thighs and waist if you put weight on them for any amount of time and just generally aren’t very comfortable.

You put a harness on like a pair of pants- stepping through the waist and then each leg through the leg loops. Try to make sure your harness is not twisted or tangled before you start putting it on. Most store bought harnesses have buckles on each leg loop and the waist loop. You need to tighten these loops as tight as they will go without cutting off your ability to breathe. You want the waist loop to be up over your hips, like the way Steve Urkel wears his pants. This way, you are tightening the waist loop to your waist, not your pelvis, and in the event of crazy upside down flippage (to be avoided at all costs) you won’t slide right out of your harness. The waist loop is the most important loop of your harness. You need it to be so tight that you can barely fit 2 or 3 fingers between it and your skin. Once you have tightened all the loops and buckles YOU NEED TO DOUBLE BACK. This means you have fed the webbing through the buckle in one direction, leaving it looking like an O, for OPEN, OH MY GOD YOU ARE GONNA DIE! and OOPS I’M GONNA DIE or a D for DEATH, DYING, DISMAL. You get the idea. If your buckles look like an O or a D, your harness is not properly on. Double it back, meaning take the tail of the webbing and bring it over the edge of the buckle closest to it, and feed it under the opposite edge of the buckle. This makes it look like a C for CLOSED and CONGRATULATIONS YOU ARE ALIVE! If your harness is not double backed, any weight placed on them could result in the webbing pulling out of the buckle and coming undone- not good. Some super fancy harnesses have an adjustable piece in the buckle, and these harnesses automatically lock, meaning they do not need to be double backed. Ask about the harness you are using, whether borrowed or bought.

If you are making your own harness out of webbing (I recommend this over rope) you need to be really good at the Water Knot. The Water Knot is the knot you will use to tie a piece of webbing into a loop. If you do not tie your water knot correctly, your whole harness will be useless.
Webbing is the material used in climbing that appears flat and is not rope. It is shiny and made out of synthetic material, and is often brightly colored. Webbing can be flat (like seatbelts in a car) or tubular (like tube socks). Tubular Webbing is stronger, and less likely to fray than flat webbing. When you buy a harness it is usually made of flat webbing. If you are using webbing to make a makeshift harness, either type will work. Personally, I would err on the side of tubular webbing, if for no other reason than you could use it down the line for something else more effectively. One thing to consider is the width of the webbing. Wider webbing is typically stronger, plus will be less likely to dig in as badly as thinner webbing would.

For the purposes of Prussik knots, you will probably want a carabiner to attach the loop of the Prussik to your harness, so that you are connected.

Rope
There are some important issues to consider when choosing a rope to climb on. Depending on what you are doing you are going to want a different type of rope- both for your comfort and your safety. Although more expensive, it is really worth it to know that the rope you are using is in good condition and meant for climbing. It would really suck, and not be productive for your movement if the rope you were using broke and left you hurt or worse. If you have questions about what rope is appropriate for what use, ask people at an outdoors store near you. In Virginia there is Blue Ridge Mountain Sports, in New Jersey there is Ramsey Outdoor and Campmor and in Massachusetts there is Eastern Mountain Sports. Someone in those stores should be able to talk you through the safety of different types of rope.

Static Rope
This type of rope does not stretch. This makes it the type of rope used for Rappelling and any type of climbing using friction knots like the Prussik knot. Static rope is usually cheaper than dynamic rope. It is usually duller in colors, using combinations of 2 colors, with one being white or beigeish. While perfectly effective for rappelling, static rope should not be used for climbing because it doesn’t stretch. If you take a big fall on a static rope, the energy being transferred from rope to your body can result in serious injury or death. A static rope with a smaller rope size, such as 7mm in diameter is ideal when prussiking, as the smaller rope will cause more friction with the larger, 10.5 or so millimeter size dynamic rope you are climbing with.

Dynamic Rope
This type of rope is usually brightly colored, with combinations of 2 or 3 vibrant colors. If you can afford it, this is a superior rope to lead climb on just because of the way it cushions your falls, and it is a requirement for lead climbing.

Carabiners
Carabiners are metal links used in climbing to connect rope to harnesses, rope to rope, rope to belay devices etc. Carabiners can be locking or non-locking. For our purposes we are concerned with the locking kind. Carabiners are of some variation of an oval shape, and they have ‘gate’ which swings open on a hinge. That is how you open the carabiner to link it through whatever. Once you have hooked it through what you need to, like a loop of rope and your harness, you need to lock the carabiner, or else it is not safe. Whenever you are doing a gear check before beginning any sort of climb you ought to double check that the carabiner is locked. The gate of the carabiner is it’s weakest point structurally, so any time you can avoid having the weight of the rope or webbing on the gate do so. Carabiners are another piece of gear that comes in a ton of varieties. Sometimes they are aluminum, sometimes they are steel, some shapes are supposedly better for some uses, some are stronger than others etc. Ask the personnel at a store that sells them, or read up on the individual types online.

[www.iweb-solutions.com/exploress/knots.html](http://www.iweb-solutions.com/exploress/knots.html)

(best DIY webbing harness description)

(haasty harness)
Prussik Rope
When you prussik, or use rope for other friction knots it might not be the same width of typical climbing rope. In fact, for prusiking it is necessary for their to be a difference between the width of the rope you are climbing and the ropes used to make the knot. You have to keep the ratio between them large, while still ensuring that the smaller diameter rope is strong enough for the purpose you are putting it to. Once again, we strongly recommend asking the people at the places where you are getting rope about how strong the rope is, and if it will be safe enough for your purposes.

Anchors
There are two types of anchors, ones at the bottom of a climb that belayers tie into, and ones at the tope of a climb or rappel that secure the rope. This zine is not meant to really teach you much about anchors- we would have to go super in depth for that. So know that what is covered here is the tip of the iceberg, and there is a lot more to learn.
Some actual climbing sites have metal eyelets anchored into rocks which you can tie into with webbing daisy chains or webbing loops. Other places will not have pre-fab anchors for the belayer- in this case you will have to construct your own. In this case you might tie a friction wrap with a double bowline around a suitable tree or rock.
Which brings us to what a suitable rock or tree to anchor onto might look like. If we are talking tree, it needs to be ALIVE. A dead or mostly dead tree could very possibly break if much weight or force is applied to it.
Tress should also be bigger around than the thigh of the largest thigh-ed person in the group. If a tree is half-hanging off of a cliff you should not use it as an anchor. If you can see that a lot of the root ball is exposed you should find a different anchor. In terms of rocks, we do not know as much, but you definitely want them to be of a size which you could not fathom moving with your own weight. More or less, is should be ‘Flippin’ Huge

Edges
If you are using a tree, rock, I-beam, whatever to tie your rope onto or

An unpadded rope can become damaged and unsafe when sawed over a rough edge.

A padded rope.
A properly set and dressed knot (a) looks neat and has all its parts pulled up snug. Leave a knot loose or sloppily tied (b), and it can come apart in a crisis.

Half of a Double Fisherman’s tied into the tail of a Figure Eight Follow-Through as a backup.

The first step in building a tree house or sleeping platform is to find a suitable tree or collection of trees growing in a group. Look for a tree that has branches which are strong and suitably spread apart so that a platform can be constructed. Gather together all the equipment you will require—tools, timber, pallets or plywood sheeting, ropes and safety equipment. The design of your tree house will be determined by the shape of the tree you select, as a result many designs are possible. Start off by making a simple sketch taking into account the branches available in particular the ‘branch elbows’ where the branch attaches itself to the main trunk. Use pulleys and ropes to lift logs up to the platform area. This should be done carefully so as to avoid any unnecessary accidents. The base of the platform can be constructed using spars to get a rustic feel or you can also use a number of pallets or a sheet of shuttering plywood. Be prepared to cut any sheeting to shape. Anyone working up the tree should be protected by means of a safety belt and fixed loops on to the main tree. You should also be careful when using tools on the platform so that those on the ground are not injured from items falling on their heads. Once the platform is constructed you can then consider building the rest of the structure.
Protection of trees
If you are fixing a rope or spar you should be careful not to damage the bark. This can be done by using some sacking or old canvas to protect the bark from friction. It may also be necessary to use sacking or padding on a structure if the rope will be subject to excessive friction, particularly in the case of a monkey bridge. This is particularly important when using synthetic ropes as they are prone to melt if in a friction situation or if two ropes are rubbing off each other.

Ye Olde Prussik Knot
The Prussik knot is a friction knot, a category of awesome knots that are very useful and fun. In some ways, the Prussik is outdated, because of more modern equipment like ascenders which allow you to do the same sorts of things with less effort. But what fun is that? Plus an ascender costs more than rope and webbing does-like they start at around 50 dollars and go up in price from there. You can get the ropes and webbing needed for Prussiking for less than 10 dollars. My personal affinity for prussik knots comes from my general luddite tendencies, and stories my dad told me about using prussik knots while spelunking. Prussik knots are empowering because when you use them it is amazing to be straight climbing rope with rope and being super bad ass pirate style. Being able to use prussik knots is a really cool feeling, fuck efficiency- it is all about the process.

What You Need:
Rope you are climbing: Kermantle nylon rope 9.8 to 11 mm in diameter, depending on what you are using your rope for you may want a longer or shorter variety- same issue with diameter- smaller diameter = lighter and probably weaker, larger diameter = stronger (usually) and heavier.
Rope to make knots with: 5 or 6 millimeter perlon cord tied in one foot loops (secured with double fishermans) (It can be helpful to make the loops larger than one foot for our purposes)
Carabiners:

The way that a Prussik knot works for climbing rope is that you secure a piece of cord around the rope with a prussik knot and then secure it also to your harness. You should secure it to your harness with a carabiner that locks. You hook the carabiner through the perlon cord and also through your belay loop on the front of your harness at waist height.

Then you secure another piece of cord to the rope in a prussik knot and to your harness. One of these will be your top knot, and one will be down by your feet. Prussik knots, as friction knots, stay in place when weight is placed on them. So when you lean back in your harness, placing weight on the knot, the gate of the knot is pinched, preventing the cord from moving up or down the rope. In order to move up or down the rope, you must relieve the weight from the cord. This is why you use two prussik knots. If you are ascending the rope, you alternate between standing up on the loop of webbing attached to the bottom cord in order to relieve weight from the top one and slide it up, and leaning back on the top cord in order to relieve weight from the bottom cord so you can move it up to a height where you can stand on it in a way that gets your body higher. You repeat this process of standing up and leaning back the whole way up the rope. To descend you reverse it. Once you are on the rope the process becomes more natural and logical. Even when you take your weight off of a knot you may have to loosen it a little with your fingers in order to get it loose enough to slide up or down the rope.

Wrapping the loops—depending on the material you are using to make your prussik knot you may want more or fewer loops. Try using 3 or 4 loops to start, and figure out what works for your situation.

Knots

Not just for boy scouts, knots are amazingly useful for activists of all shapes and sizes and purposes. There are a lot of different types of knots out there. This zine is only going to cover some of the more basic knots. I definitely encourage you to explore knots further. When considering a knot, you need to consider what purpose the knot is best suited for, how to do the knot properly, and what sort of safety knot ought to accompany the knot you choose.

Eight Knot

The Eight Knot is typically used in climbing to attach the climber to the rope they will be climbing on. Take a bite of the rope an arms length away from the end of the rope and twist it, so you have a loop where the bottoms of it cross. This is your alien head. I don’t know if you knew this about extraterrestrials, but we loathe them. So we’re gonna kill ‘em. We do this by taking the tail end of the rope and wrapping it around the little guy’s neck. We go around not quite a full rotation, because before we get there we straight stab her in the face. And we pull the tail end of rope through the head of the alien until we tighten the knot up. If you have done it correctly it should look like an 8. If you have sorta 3 loops instead of 2 you probably strangled the alien too much. If it looks like an overhand knot you strangled it too little.

When you are using an eight knot to climb on you take an eight knot as described above, and make it an double eight knot with follow through. Take the eight you made above, and pull the tail of it through the belay loop of your harness, up and in like it is gonna poke you in the belly. Then pull it so the 8 is only a couple inches away from your harness. Now comes the follow through part. You have to take the tail, and trace the part of the 8 knot that emerges from below your belly. You follow it like a race car going around a race track. When the part you are following goes under part of the knot you go under, when it goes over you go over. When you have traced it fully your tail should emerge at the top of the knot.
Water Knot or Ring Bend is really useful with webbing, and less so, rope. If you want to tie two pieces of webbing together to make a longer piece of webbing, or if you want to turn one piece into a circle the water knot is right for you. It is the only really good knot to use for this purpose with webbing, because webbing is so slippery. Take one end of the webbing and make an overhand knot about 5 inches from the end. Take the other end of the webbing and, starting at the tail side of the overhand knot, trace the overhand knot. You want to keep the webbing laying flat in the same way that the overhand knot is. You pull it through so that once you have fully traced the knot, you have about 4-5 inches of tail on either side of the water knot. Less than 3 inches and there is a slight risk of the ends pulling through the water knot.

Figure Eight Follow-Through with Overhand backup.

Safety Knot
- Use the overhand knot for backup safety

Or, use a Fisherman’s!

To do this knot, hold your non-dominant hand thumb up against the rope a couple inches above the knot. Take the tail and wrap it around your thumb and tie knot about 2 times, so the rope makes an 'X' - then pull the tail up and underneath through the 'X'.

Overhand Knot.
Lashings are super cool because they allow you to do things like build tree forts without causing harm to a tree in the way that nailing boards to it would. YAY!

2. Finish with Clove hitch
3. Double Fisherman’s Knot.
Girth Hitch is super simple and super helpful. Probably you do this all the time without realizing it is a real something. When you have a loop of rope or webbing, you wrap one end around or through something (like a tree or harness loop) and then through itself. Super simple.

Reference: These are some books that I used to refresh and double check what I was saying. They contain a lot of the information in this zine, and they expand on it a lot. I recommend them to anyone looking to explore the world of climbing and knots more.


The Single Bowline is simple, but can easily be tied incorrectly.
The Approaching Apocalypse Distro is an independent zine distributor working out of Amherst, Massachusetts and Richmond, Virginia. We (royally) publish and distribute DIY zines and other products (patches, buttons, etc.) that inspire and inform. The purpose of this project is to help disseminate ‘propaganda’, connect people around the world, and make the zine community more accessible to people everywhere. Information, art, music, ideas and stories were meant to be shared and the Approaching Apocalypse Distro will do what it can to share them by selling most items at reasonable prices or at cost (or less). Any ‘profits’ that are accidentally incurred will be donated to the Richmond, Virginia chapter of Food Not Bombs.

The name Approaching Apocalypse is not reflective of a gloom and doom attitude about a fiasco of biblical proportions, but rather of an understanding that the world is a mess, and will likely only get messier (hopefully not actually end-of-the-world type messy). Reading and learning and writing and creating and loving are all ways that we can ‘prepare’ for what is to come. Approaching Apocalypse is also about living out our beliefs as anarchists—finding ways to be a positive influence and remain true to our anarchist ideals. We can not (and don’t want to) count on the government, corporations or any other organization to take care of us. It is up to all of us to find ways to contribute to our communities. Autonomy and community will be the keys to making the world better, not worse. As Rising Tide North America puts it when discussing climate change and the mess the world is in, “Practical solutions exist; it’s time we start using them and making them more widely accessible. We must dismantle the systems of oppression that permeate our culture and ourselves, and work toward real solidarity across lines of race, class, gender and sexual orientation. When we begin to build a culture of mutual aid and community autonomy, we demonstrate that we don’t need the government, and certainly not giant corporations, to survive. We just need a livable planet.”

(www.risingtidenorthamerica.org). Lofty goals to work towards, but that is what makes us idealists.

When some of my friends at Hampshire and I (xBISCOITUX) had the (completely informal and mostly unrealized) Apocalypse club, or just ran around talking about the apocalypse, it was with an energizing feeling. It helped us gain the momentum needed to make hot pants out of a sweater (etc.). I am pysched about projects and friends and community- and yelling ‘for the apocalypse’ helps me even more excited. Like how excited I am about a zine distro.

The zines published by the Approaching Apocalypse distro have a focus on political and social justice issues (animal liberation, straight edge, vegan, social movements, environmental and sustainability issues, anarchism, etc.) as well as DIY how to subjects, punk, art, travel and personal zines. We welcome any submissions along these lines, and probably most other well-done zines. Contact us if you want to be distributed by Approaching Apocalypse, we are always looking for more titles.

Certain books may also be distributed by Approaching Apocalypse, if they seem relevant to the previous mentioned topics. Hopefully a vast array of awesome things, such as t-shirts, patches, buttons, tapes, and CDs will become available as Approaching Apocalypse grows. Vegan snacks are a future attendee of tabling events.

Approaching Apocalypse will operate mainly through the postal service, tabling at shows and conferences, and a website in the near future.

Contact: Mo Karn - xBISCOITUX

Approachingapocalypse@riseup.net

Mo Karn
Approaching Apocalypse
Box 864 Hampshire College
893 West St.
Amherst, MA 01002

www.myspace.com/approachingapocalypse
Le Petit Prince

Mon dessin ne représentait pas un chapeau. Il représentait un serpent boa qui digérait un éléphant.

J'ai alors dessiné l'intérieur du serpent boa, afin que les grandes personnes puissent comprendre. Elles ont toujours besoin d'explications.