



The Single Pitch Award (SPA) Overview

Before you start:

Before registration, candidates must be able to answer yes to the following questions:

- Are you at least 18 years old?
- Are you a member of Mountaineering Ireland?
- Do you have a minimum of one year's rock climbing experience?
- Have you lead at least 15 routes (graded difficult standard or above) where the protection is leader placed? All routes must be outdoors

Registration and Logbook

Once you have satisfied the above, register with Mountaineering Ireland for the SPA Award. A logbook will be sent out to you. This logbook is a vital link between the candidate, Mountaineering Ireland, and the training provider and provides a clear record of candidates' climbing experience and activity, their fulfilment of the requirements of the scheme, and course attendance. The logbook must be kept up-to-date and be submitted when booking places on courses. The training/assessment course director will monitor the logbooks on behalf of Mountaineering Ireland. Once you have registered and received your log book, you can book a training course directly with one of our approved providers

Training

SPA training courses are held over a minimum of 2 days (20 hours) and comprise a mixture of indoor lectures/discussions and outdoor practical sessions. Topics covered on the SPA training syllabus will include: technical competence (such as equipment, anchors, belaying, abseiling, and personal climbing skills), party leadership, group management and supervision, emergency procedures, etiquette, access and conservation. The ratio for SPA training is a maximum of one instructor to 4 candidates.

Consolidation

Between training and assessment, candidates are required to complete and log an absolute minimum of 40 climbs, outdoors, on leader placement protection. Some of these must be at least Severe grade and they should be on as wide a range of venues as possible. They must also have assisted with the supervision of climbing for approximately 20 sessions at a variety of locations. Ten of these sessions must have been completed under the supervision of an SPA holder or higher award holder. Candidates are also expected to gain bouldering experience both as an individual and in a supervisory capacity prior to assessment. For any leader, first aid is an essential skill. Prior to undertaking SPA assessment, therefore, candidates must also hold a current, relevant first aid qualification

Mountaineering Ireland recommends that all but the most experienced candidates allow a minimum of 6 months between training and assessment.

Assessment

SPA assessment takes place over 2 days, and also includes evening sessions. Candidates will be tested in practical aspects of the syllabus by an approved assessor. The ratio is 1 instructor to 4 candidates for SPA assessment. Visit the course calendar to see when the next assessment is running and contact the provider directly to book on to the assessment.

Written tests of some form may also be given in advance of, or during, assessment. They will not determine the final result but will aid the assessors when considering the choice of tasks to be set in the course. Written papers are likely to focus on areas of the syllabus which include the crag environment and knowledge of the sport.

What next?

Once you have registered, contact one of our approved providers directly for more information, costs and to start your SPA training. SPA training is held around the country on a regular basis. Visit our course calendar to see when and where courses are running. Please note that courses are priced by the individual provider.