

British Caving Association

How to book onto a course

Register with scheme

All candidates wishing to book onto a training or assessment course must be registered with the LCMLA & CIC award scheme through the Qualification Management System (QMS). Candidates need only register once, for which there is a one-off fee for both the Local Cave and Mine Leader Award and Cave Instructor Certificate schemes. To register;

- Click here: <https://britishcaving.justgo.com/> and sign up
- Click on "Membership" and purchase **LCMLA/ CIC Scheme Membership**
- BCA Membership is optional (annual fee)
- Videos supporting the use of the QMS are available here: <https://tinyurl.com/QMSSupport>

Register for a course

Courses are delivered by approved BCA Trainer/Assessors in line with the award-scheme syllabus. All courses must be registered on the QMS. Courses may be **open**, advertised publicly on the QMS with booking via the Events & Courses area, or **closed**, arranged privately with candidates registering directly with the Trainer/Assessor.

Candidates may only book if they meet the stated prerequisites.

Book onto an open course through the Qualification Management System

- Log onto the QMS: <https://britishcaving.justgo.com/>
- Find a course
 - Click on Events & Courses
 - Select course type then region
 - Find and select a course
 - Click "Add to cart" (note in most cases candidates are unable to book onto a course if they do not meet the pre-requisites)
 - **Follow the payment method, even though the payment will be zero, and complete the order**

Book onto a closed course direct with a Trainer/ Assessor

If booking directly with a Trainer/ Assessor, or for courses not advertised on the system, candidates will need to provide the following details (in the same format registered with the QMS) to the Trainer/ Assessor so that they can manually add candidates to the course:

- First Name
- Last Name
- Membership Number (note this starts with ME)
- Date of Birth

In both cases, once booked onto a course the Trainer/ Assessor will contact candidates with joining instructions, booking conditions and invoicing details.

Please be aware that Trainer/ Assessors may remove candidates from a course if the Trainer/ Assessors bookings terms and conditions are not met.

British Caving Association

Vertical Leader: Core Skills Assessment

The **Vertical Leader Core Skills Assessment** is a one-day, practical evaluation of a candidate's personal skills, equipment, and competence in the rigging and management of simple vertical pitches (maximum of 18m in vertical length) and technical traverses, including problem prevention and solving.

Candidates must have attended a Vertical Leader Training Course (or in exceptional circumstances have been granted exemption from training) prior to attending this course.

Before proceeding to assessment, candidates must identify the caves and/or mines in which they plan to lead groups. They should have a thorough understanding of the pitches within those venues and be familiar with their characteristics across a range of weather conditions.

Candidates will also need to have logged the minimum pre-requisite personal exploration experience outlined below. Note this pre-requisite experience can include trips prior to the candidates training course.

As a guide, the minimum experience expected is:

- At least one-year's cave and/ or mine exploration with at least 30 trips in at least 10 different systems across at least 2 different regions, **including 5 quality trips**.
- A proportion of these should be as a leader under supervision.
- Some trips may be above and beyond the remit of the award

A **quality trip** should satisfy at least 4 of the following criteria

- Exploration of a new route or cave and/ or mine (new to the candidate that is),
- Incorporates at least 4 to 5 hours of underground exploration.
- An experience that develops an individual's cave and/ or mine exploration knowledge, skills and awareness.
- Incorporates cave and/ or mine exploration skills above the level of the remit of the award.
- Of the candidates own making i.e. the candidate is to lead the trip, or it is one done with peers and not led by an external source.
- Involves the application of vertical skills, digging or exploration.
- Exploration of a cave and/ or mine system with a streamway that responds to rainfall.

Candidates are to nominate 5 logged trips as quality days and justify this selection to the Trainer/ Assessor using the above criteria.

Course Overview

- Assessment ratio: 1 Trainer/ Assessor to 2 candidates (or 1:1 if required).
- Those electing to combine the Vertical Core Skills SRT for Leader and/ or Tyrolean for Groups assessment must be assessed 1:1.
- The Trainer/ Assessor delivering the assessment must not be the same person who delivered the training for this module.

British Caving Association

- Assessments are typically conducted in any region and involve at least 4 hours underground.

The assessment is split into two parts:

Part 1: Theoretical Assessment

- Completed in the candidate's own time via a written question paper based on the syllabus.
- Alternatively, candidates may opt for an oral assessment, though this will increase the assessment duration.

Part 2: Practical Assessment

- Conducted underground at a suitable location selected by the Trainer/ Assessor.
- Candidates must be appropriately equipped for the venue; equipment suitability is part of the assessment.
- Practical assessments will cover the relevant syllabus areas.
- Scenario-based questioning may be used, particularly for emergency situations, but will not be the primary method for assessing leadership skills. Assessors must clearly communicate when scenario-based questioning is in use.

The Trainer/ Assessor has the right to terminate the assessment if the candidate is not up to the required standard in fundamental areas of the syllabus relating to safety or conservation.

Assessment Outcomes

There are three possible outcomes:

- **Pass** - The candidate has demonstrated competence in all areas of the syllabus and will be awarded the credential.
- **Defer** - The candidate has not demonstrated full understanding in at least one area (typically theoretical) and must undergo a reassessment of that area. This may be completed with the same Trainer/ Assessor or as a full reassessment with another.
- **Fail** - The candidate has not demonstrated competence in multiple areas or has not met the required standards for safety or conservation. A full reassessment will be required, either with the same or a different Trainer/ Assessor.

Post-Assessment Process

Following a pass candidates may proceed to their Vertical Group Day assessment which **must be completed within 12 months**.

In the event of a deferral or fail, the Trainer/ Assessor will provide an action plan. This action plan will be uploaded to the candidate's profile on the QMS as a "Deferral" or "Fail" credential, visible only to the candidate (and the QMCs administrator).

Partial reassessments (i.e. in the event of a deferral) must take place within 12 months of the original assessment date.

British Caving Association

Resource Links

- [Vertical Leader Award Flowchart](#)
- [Vertical Leader: Ropework](#)
- [SRT for Leader](#)

Syllabus

The full checklist used by Trainer/ Assessors which forms the syllabus for this award is provided below. Candidates should ensure they are familiar with all aspects of the checklist prior to booking an assessment.

Candidates should approach a Trainer/Assessor independently to book an assessment. A list of Trainer/ Assessors and their contact details can be [found by clicking here](#).

First Aid Requirements

In order for an award to be considered valid, candidates must hold a current and appropriate First Aid qualification.

To meet the required standard, a First Aid course should:

- Have a **minimum duration of two days (typically 16 hours)** instruction
- **Include a formal assessment** component
- Be **relevant to working in outdoor and adventurous** environments

While the BCA/QMC does not endorse specific First Aid courses or providers, candidates are encouraged to consult the [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) website for guidance in selecting a course that meets the necessary standards and is appropriate for outdoor and adventurous settings.

British Caving Association

Vertical Core Skills Assessment Assessor Checklist

Candidates

Name:

Assessment

Date:

ME

Number:

Assessment

Venue:

Vertical equipment	
Leader's personal equipment – suitability/ care	
Leader's rescue equipment (inc. knife) - suitability/ care	
Choice and suitability of equipment for group members' use – harness/ cowstails/ descender etc	
Ropes – types/ construction/ longevity/ usage/ storage/ care etc	
Karabiner/ maillons – types/ usage/ limitations etc	
Knowledge of PPE regulations and equipment standards e.g. 6 monthly inspections by competent person	
Anchors; natural/ artificial etc. Types/ usage/ limitations	
Ladders; spreaders /tethers – types/ construction/ linkage/ limitations/ coiling/ storage etc	
Other technical equipment; descenders/ ascenders/ pulleys/ belay devices etc – types/ usage/ limitations	

Knots	
Demonstrate appropriate range of knots including knowledge of suitability/ limitations	

Rigging	
Equipment preparation/ packing	
Leader's personal safety	
Pitch rigging; rope/ slings - alignment and forces - sharing loads	
Pitch head - approach/ ease of access/ position of leader etc	
Rigging a technical traverse* for group	
Abseil for group/ rigging for rescue	

Rigging (continued...)	
Ladder for group/ rigging for rescue	
Rigging double lifeline	
Rigging lifeline at pitch head	
Rigging for lower	

A **technical traverse is a traverse that typically requires users to weight the rope in order to progress, and/ or where an unprotected slip or fall would have serious consequences.*

Lifelining/ Pitch Management	
Lifelining methods and devices - use and limitations	
Safety and supervision of group members – waiting/ accessing/ leaving pitch/ communication	
Position of Leader	
Efficiency/ fluidity of lifeline technique	
Managing technical traverse for group	
Managing abseil for group	
Managing ladder for group	
Managing lower for group	
Double Lifelining	
Use of competent second to lifeline (inc. lower) leader using double lifeline. Competence check/ expectations/ communications/ limitations	

Leader's progression & descent	
Personal safety in descent	
Ability to ascend pitch (e.g. RAD)	
Retrievable abseil; personal safety/ limitations/ appropriate venues	

Problem Solving Techniques	
Lock off lifeline rope	
Abseil problems, e.g. trapped hair	

