

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.

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Vertical Leader Training

Aims of the LCMLA Scheme

The Local Cave and Mine Leader Award (LCMLA) is managed by the British Caving Association (BCA). The scheme provides an award recognising the competence of those taking responsibility for others underground, for the benefit of employers, providers and others in positions of responsibility. Through a nationally administered syllabus reflecting current good practice, supported by a robust training and assessment framework, the scheme promotes consistent standards of leadership, judgement and technical competence, while placing equal importance on participant safety and the conservation of fragile underground environments.

The **Vertical Leader Training** course is aimed at those wishing to lead groups in vertical terrain within the Caves and/or Mines listed under their Cave and/ or Mine Leader award. The Vertical Leader is limited to more technical traverses and simple vertical pitches where the vertical element of the pitch is no more than 18m in length.

Pre-requisites

Before attending this course, candidates must have completed their Cave and/ or Mine Leader Training. A reasonable level of SRT competence is expected. A minimum of 12 vertical trips is recommended, though a Trainer/ Assessor may accept candidates with less experience at their discretion.

Course Overview

This course is primarily practical, delivered over a minimum of two days, combining both surface and underground sessions. At least six hours of the course will be spent underground. A maximum of four candidates may attend per Trainer/ Assessor.

Training is nationally recognised and may be attended in any region. Candidates should already feel confident exploring vertical caves and/ or mines and possess a reasonable level of SRT skills, although some SRT training will be provided as part of the course.

Training will focus on enhancing personal skills and will address specific techniques required for safely managing groups in vertical environments - whether by abseil, lower, ladder or technical traverses (a technical traverse is defined as being a traverse which typically requires candidates to weight a rope to progress, and/ or where an unprotected slip/ fall would have serious consequences). The course also covers key aspects of incident prevention and management.

The training course will cover the key areas of the assessment syllabus listed below, with a tailored focus on areas candidates typically have difficulty with or identify with the Trainer/ Assessor as requiring further input. QMC have prepared some resources that may support a candidate, [these are available on the BCA website](#).

The QMC has developed resources to support candidates in preparing for assessment - these are available via the BCA website. Trainer/ Assessors may also provide additional resources and guidance, but it's essential that candidates review

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the syllabus ahead of their course to identify areas for development and address these during training.

Resource Links

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

Updating a Cave/ Mine Leader Award via Vertical Leader Training

Cave and/or Mine Leaders may update their current qualifications by attending a Vertical Leader Training course, provided they meet and can demonstrate the required pre-requisites ahead of the course.

Candidates wishing to update their award through this pathway must complete an [experience summary](#) and submit it to the Trainer/ Assessor delivering the Vertical Leader Training at least two weeks before the course.

While candidates may attend Vertical Leader Training on multiple occasions for skill development, **this route can only be used once to update an existing Cave and/ or Mine Leader award.**

Syllabus

The assessment criteria for the Vertical Core Skills and Vertical Group Day are available below, the training course should cover the key areas of the assessment criteria although candidates will be required to further their understanding prior to assessment.

The SRT for Leader is an optional module that compliments the Vertical Leader award. It is aimed at those wishing to demonstrate their competence in Single Rope Technique (SRT) **for personal progression only.** [The full SRT for Leader syllabus can be downloaded here.](#)

Exemption From Attendance on a Training Course

Experienced vertical cave/ mine explorers who already have substantial experience of personal vertical caving/ mine exploration and leading and supervising groups on vertical cave and/ or mine trips may seek exemption from attendance on a training course. Exemption requests should be made via the QMCs Training Administrator via the QMS "Enquires".

There is no exemption for the assessment modules.

Your Next Step

The assessment process is split into two stages:

- **Vertical Core Skills Assessment;** which can be taken in any region however cannot be assessed by the Trainer/ Assessor who delivered the candidates training followed by a
- **Vertical Group Day Assessment;** which cannot be delivered by the Trainer/ Assessor who assessed the Vertical Core Skills Assessment and must be taken in one of the regions the candidate intends to lead groups in and must be completed within 12 months of the Vertical Core Skills assessment.

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Candidate's pathway to assessment may vary depending on their current qualification:

- **For those holding a valid Cave and/ or Mine Leader Award:**
These candidates may progress directly to a Vertical Core Skills Assessment, followed by a Vertical Group Day Assessment. The Vertical Group Day Assessment must be completed within 12 months of gaining the Vertical Core Skills Assessment.
- **For those who have only completed a Cave and/ or Mine Leader Core Skills Assessment:**
Candidates are required to complete a Vertical Core Skills Assessment. After this, they may choose to complete their Cave and/ or Mine Leader Group Day Assessment, followed by their Vertical Group Day Assessment, or they may combine both assessments into a single day. To be eligible for a combined assessment, candidates must exceed the minimum pre-requisite experience requirements. The decision to combine assessments is at the discretion of the Trainer/ Assessor. Please note: the Vertical Group Day Assessment **must be completed within 12 months of the initial Core Skills Assessment** and must be assessed by a different Trainer/ Assessor than the one who conducted either of the Core Skills Assessments.

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

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.

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Vertical Core Skills Assessment Assessor Checklist



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	
Abseil for group/ rigging for rescue	
Ladder for group/ rigging for rescue	
Rigging a technical traverse* for group	
Rigging double lifeline	
Rigging lifeline at pitch head	
Rigging for lower	

Lifeline/ Pitch Management	
Lifeline 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 Lifeline	
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	
Ladder problems, e.g. trapped leg	
Assist exhausted ladder climber	
Convert to lower (from lifeline and from haul)	
Convert to haul (from lifeline/ lower) including transition to safe ground	
Technical traverse problems and solutions	

**Technical traverse: A traverse which typically requires users to weight the rope to progress, and/ or where an unprotected slip or fall would have serious consequences.*

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Vertical Group Day Assessment Assessor Checklist

Pre-trip planning and organisation	
Suitable risk assessments and local knowledge of vertical elements within the caves and/ or mines of the candidate's list	
Pre trip administration - insurance/ medical details/ consent/ AALA requirements	
Trip plan/ destination, call out information and procedure	
Weather conditions/ water levels/ flood awareness	
Compliance with access procedures	
Appropriate trip planned for the group (min 3), tailored to the group's needs and aims	
Suitability of clothing & personal cave/ mine exploration equipment	
Technical equipment function/ PPE checks	
Suitability of group safety equipment/ emergency/ first aid kit	
Duty of care/ legal obligations/ responsibility to group and others	

Conservation & history	
Due diligence to cave conservation or both mine and surface artifacts, minerals and formations throughout the day	

Trip delivery and group management	
Appropriate leadership style sensitive to the group	
Care of group on route to and from the cave or mine	
Effective group management/ control & safety underground	
Use of assistant leader (if applicable) Suitability of group briefings	
Due consideration to others using the venue (if applicable)	
Appropriate pace	

Vertical aspects	
Appropriate use of leader's technical equipment	
Fitting and monitoring of group's technical equipment	
Protection of a group on at least three of the following four aspects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caving ladder climb for group • Lower for group • Abseil for group • Technical traverse for group 	
Self-protection/ own progression	