ASSISTED-BRAKING DEVICE (ABD) POLICY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Since announcing our Assisted-Braking Device policy on January 25, 2023, we've had the opportunity to engage in conversations with many of our members- answering questions, providing tips, and offering demos on new belay devices.

Answers to their most common questions can be found below, including: the types of devices available, how much they cost, indoor vs outdoor applications, and the added safety features that all ABDs offer.

WHY ARE YOU MAKING THE CHANGE TO ABDS?

- **Minimize Risk -** Assisted Braking Devices (ABD) can provide a reliable backup to any belayer (they can help stop a climber's fall)
- **Redundancy -** ABDs can add redundancy to the belay system.
- **Human Error Reduction -** Brake assist was basically created to add a "belay backup" in case of distraction, new belayers, an emergency or misuse while belaying, with the added bonus of being able to hold the weight of the climber once activated.

We're not alone in making this change in our region - nearly all gyms in the Puget Sound are updating to ABDs.

HOW ARE THEY BETTER THAN ATCs/TUBE-STYLE DEVICES?

ABDs help minimize risk by providing an extra layer of security against belaying mistakes, by increasing the likelihood of arresting a climber's fall with the help of the assisted braking function. Tube-style devices don't have any built-in redundancy and can't mitigate risk in the same way, so making the switch is an easy way to add a level of peace of mind when climbing & belaying.

Also, the belay motions are nearly identical between a tube-style device and many of the ABDs offered today, so the fundamental skills are transferable if a climber seeks to use other ABDs or tube-style devices in the future.

WHAT QUALIFIES AS AN ASSISTED-BRAKING DEVICE?

The first ABD to hit the market 1993 was the Petzl GriGri, introduced the same year as the ATC. Since then many more options have been released, providing a wide range of devices that can fit the needs of different climber preferences as well as styles of climbing.

Approved devices for in-gym use include both passive geometric brake assist such as the Black Diamond Pilot, Edelrid MegaJul, Mammut Smart, and ClickUp, and active brake assist such as the Petzl GriGri, Trango Vergo, Camp Matik and Wild Country Revo.

This is not an exhaustive list of devices; please ask our staff if you have any questions on what is approved or not.

I'M COMFORTABLE USING AN ATC; SWITCHING TO A NEW DEVICE IS LESS SAFE.

For climbers transitioning from an ATC to an ABD for the first time, we recommend the Black Diamond Pilot since it operates similarly to the ATC but with an added brake assist feature. Therefore, the learning curve is much easier than if you were switching to an active brake assist device, such as the GriGri.

Our front desk has a selection of Black Diamond Pilots and Mammut Smart 2.0s available for use during the transition and our staff are happy to provide a demo and tips for use before trying one out for the first time.

ABDs ARE TOO EXPENSIVE.

As mentioned above, there are many devices to choose from and not all will break the bank. Here are the cost comparisons with our current 30% off sale* (only $10 more than an ATC):

- **Mammut Smart 2.0 sale: $31.97** reg: $44.95
- **Edelrid Jul 2 sale: $32.17** reg: $45.95
- **Black Diamond Pilot sale: $34.97** reg: $49.95
- **Edelrid Giga Jul sale: $41.97** reg: $59.95
- **Petzl GriGri sale: $76.97** reg: $109.95

** Sale ends March 31, 2023.*

WHAT ABOUT OUTDOOR CLIMBING AND RAPPELLING?

Devices specific to multi-pitch and rappelling (such as the ATC-Guide and the Reverso) will continue to be used in our climbing school courses and outdoor programs when they are the right tool for the task at hand. However, it is important to note that because these devices are not ABDs, other methods of backing up the belay are incorporated that ABDs do not require (which can make an ATC more complicated to use over an ABD).

WHY DOESN'T EDGEWORKS SUPPLY GRIGRIS ON TOP ROPES LIKE OTHER GYMS IN THE AREA?

No one device fits the needs of all belayers. Allowing belayers to choose the assisted-braking device they are most familiar with and comfortable using, creates a belayer that is better prepared to meet the needs of their climber; whether that be in an Edgeworks facility, outside at the crags, or anywhere else they may be climbing.

Furthermore, it's important for all climbers and belayers to understand that climbing is dangerous and carries risk that cannot be fully eliminated. It's the responsibility of every climber and belayer to minimize this risk. This is why we choose to emphasize education, system checks, and proper use of any belay device to help reduce this risk.