

## Winter Skills: Coaching Crampon Techniques Part 2 By Stuart Johnston

### THE NEXT STEP

Efficient coaching of crampon techniques is difficult to do but if you've mastered the techniques of skill transfer, coaching skill behaviour and growth within the client is the fun part.

#### Put Crampons On Properly

Once you stop and decide to get the crampons out the bag its time to put your plan in to action.

Preparation:  
Think about what you want to achieve?  
**for example:**

- Choose a firm section of snow or area of flat rock.
- Identify left and right crampon (*buckles always on the outside of the boot*)
- Lay the crampons out separate with rings and buckles outside the crampon framework.
- Ensure to clear snow and ice from the crampon framework especially anti-balling plates
- Using our ice axe clean the boot tread of snow / ice
- using the ice axe for balance begin placing the toe of the boot in to the crampon toe bail then lower heel into the crampon
- Always ensure the client does not sit down whilst trying to perform this manouvre.

#### TIPS

- Use a thin pair of next to skin type gloves for straps and buckles, that way you achieve dexterity and partial warmth. Pop your thick warm gloves down your top to stay warm and secure from wind
- Demonstrate good body balance and position when stepping into the first and then second crampon, client ice axe should always be by their side, just in case they need it.
- Ensure any long crampon attachment straps are neatly secured to avoid unnecessary trip hazards
- Always practise crampon fitting wearing gloves



Coach is positioned in the same line as the clients

#### Managing Your Group

#### Increase Client Confidence

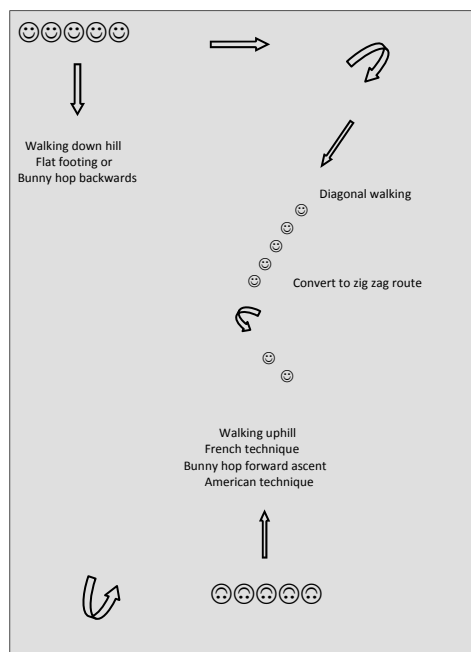
#### "Crampon movement route!"

The coach needs to think about safety... crampons are very sharp therefore to prevent accidents it is wise to insure you do not have clients practising above and below one another so, it's important to work out a route that achieves the following;

- Safe run out—remember nasty fall zones
- Enough space to keep all clients busy practising
- Low angle terrain
- Space for you the coach to safely operate

#### TIPS

- Explain to clients the context of each technique. Beware of festooning your clients with skills without situational context
- A well thought out practice route allows the coach to demonstrate technique, evaluate client performance and provide positive constructive feedback
- Include mixed terrain crampon training for example walking on dry and iced up rock
- Build client awareness of no go zone with feet placements
- Always encourage deliberate short steps
- Coach, in the same line as the clients
- Once demonstrated a technique continue practising along with clients it's a reminder of good practise
- Mood of clients! plan for subtle changes they might be cold or not having enough fun
- Design a series of confidence building crampon exercises!



#### Confidence Building Exercises

Before introducing crampon techniques it is worthwhile thinking about splitting your session in to proactive categories for example a confidence building session. I have highlighted an example confidence building exercise below with coaching points and points of context.

#### Bunny Hopping

Facing up hill, crouch over and place hands on ground, feet shoulder width apart. Clients leap both feet forward, placing front points and lobster spikes at the same time, hands move forward and continue to repeat.

#### Coaching points

- Clients practice looking at their own crampon placements
- Boot position easy to identify for example; if you can't see the front edge of the boot, the heel / ankle position is too high and will result in poor placement and front point failure when waited
- Helps to reinforce the use of the knee as a hinge mechanism
- Highlights the need for the right amount of force required for positive placement
- Reinforcement of good boot angles

#### Points of context

- Can practise descending
- High wind survival technique
- Warms people, feels like a fun game especially when you have a race...
- Client feels secure especially in high winds .
- Technique allows the spreading of body mass in low position for stability in high winds on steeper angles for ascent and descent.



Summarised key planning activity to Consider!

- Safe slope
- Working parts of the crampon
- Stepping in to crampons
- Prepare clothing
- Walking techniques
- Confidence building exercises
- Specific techniques in context
- Managing your practise area and route
- Resources you might need
- List of crampon games
- Terrain type
- Time
- Key coaching points

#### Common Problems & Solutions

A sample of common problems and Solutions. (P) = problem (S) = Solution

1. (P) Boot and crampon incompatibility  
1. (S) When fitting crampons it's worth having a small selection of different types of crampons especially those with plastic toe and heel bails, the fit all approach. Have at least one spare extra long link bar for size 11 upwards
- 2 (P) Excess strap material  
2 (S) An ideal length when finished is around 6 inches. For long crampon straps, cut away excess material but, be careful not to cut straps too short heat seal the strap ends
- 3 (P) Can't find a suitable safe run-out / practise area due to soft snow  
3 (S) Run a session on low angle / flat mixed terrain crampon training on rocks
- 4 (P) Cold hands when putting crampons on  
4 (S) Encourage clients to carry a spare next to skin pair of gloves. When it's time to put the crampons on stuff outer warm gloves inside jacket then put dry thin layered gloves on for temporary warmth and dexterity, when finished replace with warm gloves

### Knowledge Exchange Recommended Publications



Winter skills is MLTUK's official handbook for the Mountaineering Instructor MIC and the winter mountain leader WML schemes and is packed with information all climbers and walkers will find Indispensible. Advice is specifically aimed at instructors and leaders with instruction highlighted in box inserts.  
Written by:  
Andy Cunningham and Allen Fyffe



The Hillwalkers Guide To Mountaineering features gear and approaches that the active and ambitious hillwalker needs to be equipped with to tackle Britain's classic mountaineering challenges. A good range of boxed tips aimed at the learner and practitioner.  
Written by: Terry Adby and Stuart Johnston



The first in a short line of books that provide a complete guide to mountaineering for summer and winter walking and climbing activities. The book is aimed at instructors and recreationalists and is recommended by AMI Association of Mountaineering Instructors. Written by two of the most active mountaineers and instructors in the UK.  
Written By: Pete Hill & Stuart Johnston

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