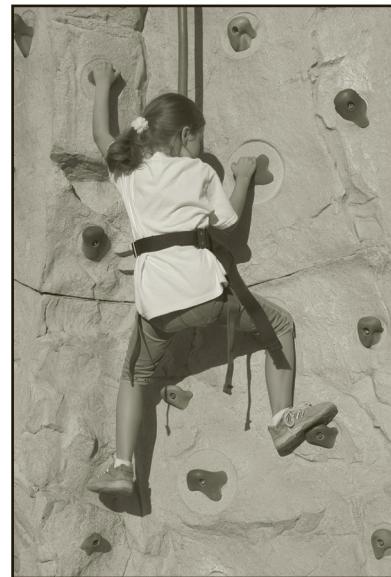


Read the article about indoor rock climbing. Then answer the questions that follow.

YOU ROCK!

by Elizabeth L. Ward

- 1 You're high up in the air, facing a rock cliff. One chalky hand grips a piece of the cliff; the other slips into a crack. You wear climbing shoes and brace both feet against the surface.
- 2 Too busy to look down at the ground, you call, "Slack!"
- 3 Your partner feeds you more rope and calls back, "Climb on!"
- 4 "Climbing!" you shout, and pull yourself up the final few inches to the top. Now it's time to look down and enjoy the goose bumps. You're a rock jock.
- 5 An indoor rock jock, that is. You've just climbed a wall of mock rocks at an indoor climbing gym. It's one of many where kids like you hang on and hang out after school and on weekends. Brenna, 11 years old, first climbed at Prairie Walls Climbing Gym in Rochester, Minnesota, when she was 10. "I have gained lots of courage and self-confidence through this sport," she says. Andrew, 10, also climbs at Prairie Walls. He started climbing when he was 8, and likes it because "I get to have some time with my dad and friends."



BOULDERING

Bouldering, or ropeless climbing, is done close to the ground, always within 15 feet. It's all about you and the rock, and overcoming a challenging route. Bouldering makes you strong and gives you confidence.

6 The rock walls at a climbing gym are made of material that looks like real rock cliffs. They are usually from 30 to 50 feet high and peppered with large and small bumps and cracks where fingers and toes can grasp and fit. Colored tape and dots show various routes. Some are more difficult than others. Andrew says, “I like to do the different routes because some are challenging, and some have harder areas with not very big holds.”

7 At most climbing gyms, you can rent equipment. A safety harness, shoes, and a chalk bag are standard. Show up in comfortable clothes that aren’t too baggy, and you’re set.

8 As for experience, don’t worry; none needed. Friendly, trained instructors are there to teach you the basics in safe surroundings. You’ll probably be surprised at how fast you learn the ropes. Andrew’s indoor rock climbing experience has helped him climb outdoors in the Black Hills,¹ too. “It helps me with my finger muscles, balance, and tying knots,” he says.

9 What if you feel like you’re not that athletic? No worries there, either. Brenna remembers, “When I was first starting out, I would look at some of the very advanced rock climbers and think, *Wow, I’m never going to be able to do that.* As I have matured in climbing, I have noticed that I can do a lot more than I think I can.”

10 Then there’s the height. Would you freak out? Maybe, but like any new thing you’ve tried before, it gets easier. Brenna thinks every new climber has to overcome the fear of falling. But she says, “You just need to trust your belayer.”²

11 So consider morphing into a wall-rat. Get a grip, go vertical, and climb those rockin’ walls!



Kids love scaling the walls of Prairie Walls Climbing Gym.

¹ Black Hills — a small mountain range in South Dakota

² belayer — a person who holds the safety rope for a climber