



# AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Program



## Preface

Many people are introduced to the sport of rock climbing on single pitch cliffs across the country, a vast majority taking part in group climbing trips such as School, Church, Climbing Gym, Scout Groups or Summer Camp programs. Many will hire an Instructor from a guide service for their first climbing adventure or take a course from a nationally recognized organization. Through the Single Pitch Instructor Program the [American Mountain Guides Association](#) wishes to ensure a high standard of climbing instruction is provided in these programs and to attain a high level of safety and enjoyment for the participants while also protecting the finite resource of single pitch crags. High standards are achieved through experience, personal qualities, training and assessment.

## Program Overview

The AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Program is designed to enable instructors to '*proficiently facilitate and instruct the sport of rock climbing in a single pitch setting*'. The program is for current, active rock climbers that have a real desire to teach the rock climbing to novices in a single pitch setting. Candidates

should be passionate rock climbers that have their own equipment, regularly climb and have been rock climbing outdoors for at least 12 months. Candidates could be current University Professors that teach climbing, Climbing Instructors, Scout Leaders, Summer Camp Professionals or climbers that wish to achieve additional training, experience and certification to gain employment as a Climbing Instructor in the Outdoor Industry.

The SPI Course is not a 'climbing' course it is an instructor training course for current, proficient and active rock climbers and for climbing instructors who currently teach rock climbing that wish to gain the SPI Certification. The SPI is the first stage of the AMGA's Rock Discipline guide training and certification program and will significantly help candidates that wish to work towards the next stage in the program, the AMGA Rock Instructor Course. The course teaches many instructor specific topics such as professionalism, teaching techniques, risk management, group site organization, climbing site conservation/LNT and assistance/rescue skills.

The SPI Program is a three day (27 hour) training course and separate two day (16 hour) assessment. Certification lasts for three years as long as the candidate keeps current AMGA Membership and First Aid Certification. After three years current SPI's can re-take the SPI Assessment to re-gain the SPI certification.

## **SPI Terrain Guidelines**

The SPI will be able to proficiently facilitate and instruct the sport of rock climbing in a single pitch setting. Single Pitch Instructors supervise and teach climbing at any single pitch cliff, working at the base or from the top. They can work at sites where the anchors are accessed by non technical terrain and also by leading. For the purpose of the SPI Program a single pitch climb is one which:

- \* Is climbed without intermediate belays
- \* presents no difficulties on approach or retreat, such as route finding, scrambling or navigating

The SPI Program does not cover multipitch guiding. These skills are taught in the AMGA Rock Instructor Course. SPI's that guide clients in multipitch terrain would be guiding outside of their terrain guidelines.

## **SPI Course Candidate Pre-Requisites**

You meet the pre-requisites for the SPI course if you:

1. Have a genuine interest in rock climbing and instructing novices on single pitch crags.

2. Are at least 18 years old at the time of the course.
3. Have at least 12 months prior climbing experience.
4. Are an active climber with traditional lead climbing experience (leader placing pro).
5. Have trad lead climbed a minimum of 15 graded rock climbing routes (any grade).
6. Are capable of comfortably climbing 5.8 while on a top rope.

The above pre-requisites are absolute minimums and most candidates have way in excess of the above. Without having at least this amount experience you are unlikely to play a constructive part on the course or be able to make best use of the training. If you are unsure of your skill levels we suggest hiring an AMGA/IFMGA certified guide to evaluate and enhance your skills and experience prior to SPI Program enrollment.

## **SPI Certification Upkeep and Recertification**

SPI Certification is only valid with current AMGA Membership and valid current First Aid Certification. If you let your either of these lapse your SPI Certification is invalid until you rectify this by updating your AMGA Membership or First Aid Certification. It is your professional responsibility to ensure you have current AMGA Membership and First Aid Certification.

SPI Certification lasts for three years from the date of assessment. There are two options for renewal:

1. Certified Single Pitch Instructors can take the two day SPI Assessment to renew their certification.
2. Certified Single Pitch Instructors who successfully complete one of the following AMGA Courses: Rock Instructor Course, Advanced Rock Guides Course, Alpine Guides Course, or an Advanced Alpine Guides Course is granted SPI certification for three years from the course end date. After completing a course please contact the AMGA so they can update your records.

To keep SPI Certification current SPI's should seek out recertification before the expiry date of their certification. Candidates that let their certification lapse can take part in the SPI Assessment but they will not hold any certification between their SPI expiry date and successfully passing an SPI Assessment. From a professional standpoint this is not advisable.

## **SPI Program Hours and Ratios**

The SPI Course is:

1. A minimum of 27 hours, normally run as three consecutive nine hour days or day classes with evening sessions.
2. SPI Courses will not exceed a ratio of six students to one current SPI Program Provider.
3. The maximum number of students on any SPI Program will be twelve.

## **SPI Course Overview**

The following three day outline is the standard progression for the SPI Course. Your course may have a different daily schedule and it is acceptable for Program Providers to do this as long as the entire curriculum is covered in your course. Program Providers may add to the curriculum on your course but must not omit pieces. SPI Program providers must make it clear when they are teaching outside the curriculum and should not evaluate beyond the curriculum. The course is normally run over three consecutive nine hour days but as long as all the curriculum is covered over 27 hours the course could be run over separate weekends or even as a semester class.

### **Day 1**

- Session 1: Introductions
- Session 2: SPI and AMGA Program Overview
- Session 3: Equipment
- Session 4: Knots and Hitches
- Session 5: Belaying
- Session 6: The Climbing Site
- Session 7: Protection and Anchoring
- Session 8: Programming and Risk Management
- Session 9: Teaching

### **Day 2**

- Session 1: Professionalism
- Session 2: Top Managed Sites
- Session 3: Station Management and Site Organization
- Session 4: Lowering
- Session 5: Rappelling
- Session 6: Assistance Skills - Top Managed Sites

### **Day 3**

Session 1: Base Managed Sites  
Session 2: Working with Groups  
Session 3: Assistance Skills - Base Managed Sites  
Session 4: Bouldering

## **SPI Assessment Overview**

The SPI Assessment will take place at a single pitch climbing area where there are a selection of traditional leads in the 5.6 range and top roping routes in the 5.8 range. The Assessment will examine all aspects of institutional single pitch climbing that the Single Pitch Instructor may encounter. Day one will look at climbing movement and all aspects of technical systems from anchoring to assistance skills and general climbing competence. On day two the examiner may arrange for volunteers novice clients (non-paying for the candidates to instruct in a group setting. This is not required and is a great benefit to the assessment process.

### **Day 1**

Session 1: SPI Assessment Orientation  
Session 2: Lead Climbing and Top Rope Session  
Session 3: Technical Components  
Session 4: Debriefs

### **Day 2**

Session 1: Teaching Components  
Session 2: Group Management  
Session 3: Debriefs

*Need climbing instructor training but don't meet the AMGA SPI Course prerequisites or do not have enough time to take the 3 day course? We also offer one day and two day instruction courses and workshops*

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## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Can I take the Assessment right after the course?**

Yes you can. HOWEVER it is recommended that you decide this after you take the course and see how much there is to practice and go from there. Take your time practicing and absorbing the information making the education the priority, plus Uprising offers an assessment just about every month in the Joshua Tree Climbing season October thru May.

### **Why should I take the course?**

For education, the course is designed to provide you with more tools for your instruction “toolbox,” this means that your job can be performed more effectively creating positive client experiences. We're all in this together and having a forum to share instructional information is part of an industry standard.

You can never have enough knowledge and education especially in this ever-changing sport!

Insurance companies recognize AMGA certification as the minimum standard for climbing instructors and guides in the USA and they realize the lower risk in insuring AMGA trained and certified instructors. They have therefore started offering **big discounts** to AMGA certified instructors and guides.

Individual Members of the AMGA that gain the SPI certification can use the AMGA logo in advertising materials and get prodeals from over 40 climbing and outdoor equipment manufacturers (40%-50% off retail prices).

The SPI Course costs *include* one year Associate Membership of AMGA (normally \$60), the AMGA SPI Manual and all other course materials.

### **Where will the courses be held?**

Uprising Adventure Guides teach the SPI Courses and Assessments across in Joshua Tree National Park, and they can be arranged other places in the USA. Call or [email](#) us for details.

### **There are some items of equipment on the required list that I have not got, where can I get that gear?**

You can purchase gear in the town of Joshua Tree at Nomad Ventures store located on the SW corner of Park Blvd and Hwy 62. You're also welcome to borrow an anchor rope from the course director Markus Jolliff.

### **Do I need Wilderness First Aid/Responder to take the course?**

No, you do not need to hold first aid certification to take the SPI Course or Assessment. Although after passing the Assessment in order for your certification to be valid you will then need a First Aid certificate appropriate for your climbing site.

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