



AAC Publications

Blind Dates

Key Questions to Ask Before Tying in with a Stranger

Ideally, climbing partners should do many short routes together before attempting a long and serious climb, especially in the alpine environment. But that's not always possible. Sometimes climbers hook up for a big climb without tying in even once before. Such "blind dates" can go bad when the partners have different skills, knowledge, and especially attitudes toward risk and climbing style.

It might not be sexy, but before climbing with a stranger you should always discuss your previous experience, including the level of routes each person has climbed, the personal clothing and equipment you plan to carry (including bivy gear, food/water, and first-aid supplies), and your emergency medical skills. The following questions may be helpful:

- What level of climb is right for our team? (Consider the previous climbing history, physical condition, and skills of each climber.)
- What equipment do we need? Do we have adequate gear, including ropes, slings, and ascending gear, for an emergency retreat or self-rescue?
- What are the objective hazards and current conditions of the route?
- What's our turnaround time? (Afternoon lightning is a key consideration in many mountain areas.)
- How will we make the decision on whether to continue or turn back? For example, can we agree that if any partner feels it's not right to continue, the whole team will turn back?
- If the chosen route has to be changed due to conditions or crowding, do we have a contingency plan?
- What's the emergency plan in the event of a serious incident? Will we take a cell phone or other emergency device?

Some other considerations:

- Discuss each person's allergies, medications, and medical conditions.
- Share emergency contact information with one another.
- Don't include additional climbing partners at the last minute.
- Don't change plans at the last minute.
- Let a third party (friend, parent, spouse, park service, etc.) know where you'll be climbing and when

you plan to return.

Adapted from a document written by Jed Williamson and posted at the Grand Teton Climbers' Ranch.

Images



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