



## AAC Publications

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### Essentials — Mussy Hooks: Be a Pro, Keep it Low

Alabama, Misty, Sand Rock

The anchor at the top of Misty at Sand Rock, Alabama. Karsten Delap, a guide who visited the area after a fatal accident in October (see previous pages), said, “When she...undid the [locking] carabiner...she was probably a little bit above [the hooks], with a little bit of slack.” Be a pro, keep it low. Photo: Karsten Delap

**Mussy hooks, also known as open anchor hardware or lower-offs, have been used for decades at various single-pitch climbing areas. This type of anchor point not only makes it easy for a climber to clip and lower, but also provides sustainability for high-traffic areas due to the hardware’s durability.**

Mussy hooks have non-locking gates and, for various reasons, are usually installed so the gates face the same direction. This creates the potential for “back-clipping” to happen if the climber or rope is somehow positioned above the hooks. This also makes mussy hooks less than ideal for numerous climbers to use in a top-rope setting, because a slack rope with twists could unclip from the hooks. This scenario is very unlikely, but not impossible.

For those using mussy hooks in a top-rope setting, the recommended practice is to establish an anchor with a masterpoint below the plane of the hooks. When the last climber goes to clean the hooks, they will reach up to clip the rope above the temporary anchor into the hooks, then have the belayer take. All the climber’s weight will then be on the hooks and should be tested in a manner that confirms this; this also should unweight the temporary anchor, making it easy to clean.

If the climber cannot unweight the rope from the temporary anchor, a PAS (personal anchor system) can be attached to the masterpoint of that anchor to hold the weight of the climber while they transfer the rope to the hooks. In either case, a key to safety is to position the temporary anchor low, so the climber cleaning the anchor must lift the rope up to clip the mussy hooks.

Whenever possible, the best practice when using mussy hooks is to ensure that your harness tie-in points, any temporary anchors, and the rope all stay below the mussy hooks until you’re ready to lower. So be a pro, keep it low.

It is strongly discouraged for inexperienced climbers to attempt to clean a route without proper and direct supervision. Many preventable accidents have occurred when inexperienced climbers clean a route for the first time. The safest and most effective way to learn this crucial skill is through the guidance of a certified instructor or guide in a controlled learning environment, where the progression of skills can be tailored to the individual climber’s needs.

## Images



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