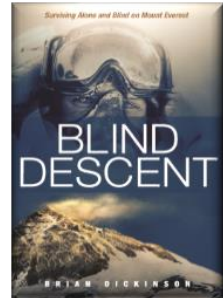


Climbing FAQs

Answers from Brian Dickinson, Author of *Blind Descent*



New adventurers often reach out to me asking for advice on what it takes to get into climbing. Asking the question is a great start, since curiosity and a sense of adventure are God-given traits that can be unleashed in the wild. Here are my answers to some of the most common questions I receive.

Where do I start?

There are many different levels of climbing, so set goals based on your short- and long-term plans for your adventures. To begin, I recommend small trails with obvious paths to ensure you stay out of danger. As you increase your climbing intensity, you'll want to get the proper training and experience. I'd also recommend finding a mentor.

How fit do I need to be?

It really depends on the individual and the level of climbing. The beautiful thing about climbing is the training, which often ends up being more rewarding than the actual finale climb. The camaraderie, motivation, and fitness built along the way are invaluable.

What type of equipment do I need?

Again, it all depends on the climb. For each scenario, you need to evaluate your body to ensure you have the proper equipment to protect you from the elements. Find a good pair of hiking boots that don't create hot spots or blisters. I also recommend a good layering system of clothing that you can quickly remove or add so you don't overheat or get too cold. As you increase your climbing levels, there's tons of technical equipment based on the environment (rock, glacier, team gear, etc.).

What if I'm afraid of heights?

There are different levels of fear, and they can either be a deterrent or an enabler. If you're deathly scared of heights, then you'll put yourself and others at risk, so stick to moderate trail hikes. If you have fear but are able to overcome it, then take it slow, build confidence, and always be open about and aware of your limitations. Most people fear heights to a certain extent; it's that fear that keeps us alive.

How do you prevent falling?

On higher, more technical routes, you'll want to go with an experienced group and use proper climbing equipment. Glaciated routes typically require teams to be roped together while using crampons and ice axes. Just having the right equipment won't prevent a fall, so proper training is required in ice axe arrest, glacial travel, and crevasse rescue. Things that are out of your control can happen quickly on the mountain, so the more training and experience you have the better. Trusting the team members attached to your rope is also

very important. You want to be confident that if you punch through a hidden snow bridge into a crevasse, your team will be able to stop your fall and retrieve you.

Are there common climbing techniques I should learn?

There are some common climbing techniques to build your core skill set and competency, but as you look at larger or more technical peaks, you'll really want to get some professional training. You can only learn so much from a book. The money you spend for a couple of weeks of mountaineering training from an accredited guiding service will be well worth the cost. No matter how much you think you know, you'll always gain more knowledge from someone who has more climbing experience and is dedicated to the field.

Are there psychological coping methods people learn from climbing?

Each person is wired mentally and spiritually different, so it's really up to the individual. Since modern life is busy, you may find yourself going crazy with nothing to do for days during an expedition's downtime. It's a strange phenomenon since most people dream of having nothing to do, but when you actually have that time in the form of being pinned down for a week at high camp, confined to your tent, you need to figure out a way to stay sane.

Rather than just saying you're going to get fit and explore the outdoors, actually do it! Too many people set resolutions each year but never follow through. My philosophy is to *do* rather than *say*. Create a lifestyle to get active and stay in shape. It'll change your body and mind!

Brian Dickinson



Order your copy of *Blind Descent*, Brian's survival story of being alone and blind at 29,000 Ft! Available where books are sold. Also available in eBook format.