



**Activity:** Tree Climbing

**Assessed by:** Marina Robb & Katie Scanlan

**Date:** Feb 2021

**Next Assessment due:** Feb 2022

**Benefits of the Activity**

Development of

- Gross and fine motor skills – as children negotiate branches with their whole bodies and toes and fingers
- Tactile sense- as they feel the tree and tree bark beneath them
- Vestibular sense- as they practice balance and recovery of balance
- Proprioceptive sense- as they push and pull with their bodies and feel the tree around them
- Visual sense- as they look ahead to find a route
- Visio-spatial awareness
- Risk taking skills as they choose routes, test themselves on heights and negotiate a downward return journey.
- Being up in a tree gives a new perspective on the world
- Sense of achievement from completing a new challenge

Additionally the children

- Undertake the self chosen challenges
  - Build up skills by repeating activities
  - Discover how a stable environment changes in different seasonal or weather conditions
- Build up decision making skills

**To whom does this apply to: Young people/adults**

Hazard e.g sharp knife & Risk e.g cutting/wound	Likelihood	Hazard Severity	Risk factor	Control measures to reduce the risk	Residual risk
Falling	2	4	8	Trees for climbing to be agreed in advanced and checked using Visual Tree Assessment form. Area beneath tree to be clear of objects and upstanding shoots. Weak or broken branches to be trimmed neatly. Where necessary, a climbing "route" to be cleared by pruning. Climbing to be supervised by an adult as necessary. Children to be advised to climb no higher than an agreed point <b>(usually roughly adult</b>	4



				<b>height).</b> Conditions to be reviewed if wet.	
Being hit by a falling person	2	4	8	Supervising adult and waiting children not to stand directly beneath climbing tree	2
Becoming snagged or stuck	2	3	6	Children given clear instructions on safe climbing. Climbing to be supervised by an adult as necessary. Children to be advised to climb no higher than an agreed point ( <b>usually roughly adult height</b> ). Conditions to be reviewed if wet.	2
Splinters or thorns	3	2	6	Trees for climbing to be agreed in advanced and checked.	3
<b>Further Measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tree climbing areas to be checked before each session and quarterly VTA carried out on all climbing trees.</li> <li>- Suitable clothing to be worn. No dangling scarves or jewellery.</li> </ul>					

**Risk Assessment scoring-** Scores of 8 and above cease activity or reassess the control measures

Likelihood		Hazard severity		Risk Factor (likelihood x hazard severity)	
1	Very unlikely	1	Minor injury, scratches, bruises, burns etc.	1-3	Low
2	Unlikely	2	Moderate injury, cuts, grazing, burns etc.	4-7	Moderate
3	Likely	3	Serious- Person requires hospital treatment or time of school/work	8-12	High
4	Very likely	4	Significant, risk of death or loss of limbs/ eyesight etc.	13-16	Very High

**Tree knowledge:**

A tree assessment must be carried out from ground level prior to any climbing of trees on a site. See Visual Tree Assessment document.



Trees strive for uniform stress distribution over their surface. If this is disturbed by locally high stresses, then the tree will lay down thicker annual rings at this place. Conversely, if it is under-loaded, it will make less annual increments. The form of a tree is thus an indication of its structural condition, the so-called 'body language of trees'. For these reasons visual tree assessment (VTA) is an appropriate and widespread method of tree diagnosis. The use of VTA when considering installing a rope swing is discussed below:

- Look for cracks, splits, bulges and unusual swelling as these often indicate biomechanical tree defects. Frequently these are not particularly significant, although in some cases they leave the tree liable to limb failure.
- Look out for fungal fruiting bodies and decay. Knocking a tree with a hammer (sounding) can help reveal the extent of hollows or decay. Dead branches at the ends of limbs are a sign of decay or infection. Obviously limbs with extensive decay or cavities should not be used to support a rope swing.
- Look at the point where the branch forks from the main stem or larger limb. If there is a seam, crack or "ears" at this point this indicates that the annual rings are not welded and the limb is at risk of tearing out. Limbs with these weak fork unions should not be used to support rope swings.
- Trees that have always grown with a lean should have adapted their growth to compensate and so, in the absence of any structural defects, are likely to be as strong as upright trees. However, trees that appear to have had recent rootplate movement should not be climbed or used for a rope swing.
- Any dead or hanging branches above the swing and areas of activity should be removed or stabilised. Using the swing is likely to dislodge any loose material in the crown that has not been removed or made safe in advance.

The findings of the tree assessment should inform your decision of whether the tree is suitable for a rope swing or not. You should record that you have made a tree assessment and your conclusion as part of your risk/benefit assessment.

Common suitable trees include: Oak, sycamore, hornbeam

Avoid: Larch, pine, silver birch, willow