

ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Sierra Wilderness Seminars Inc.
dba SWS Mountain Guides / California Ski Guides / California Rock Guides Client
ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The mission of the Sierra Wilderness Seminars Inc. dba SWS Mountain Guides is to be the leading source of mountaineering skills and guided leadership that serve people and the environment in the Shasta/Trinity National Forest, Inyo National Forest, Humboldt/Toiyable National Forest, Stanislaus National Forest.

The health and well-being, of our clients and staff and the safe guiding & mountaineering education of our clients are top priorities. SWS Mountain Guides courses & climbs in a wilderness environment that are remote, dynamic, and physically and emotionally challenging. These environments along with the educational activities conducted and the living and traveling conditions encountered require each client to be fully committed to and capable of working hard, taking responsibility for himself, herself, or they and working effectively in the group to achieve the goals of the course or climb.

The Essential Eligibility Criteria are applicable for all SWS Mountain Guides / California Rock Guide and California Ski Guides clients. A qualified person is one who can meet the EEC for participation in the program activity either a guided climb or course.

ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION on SWS Mountain Guides climbs & courses:
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Section One: Lists the EEC applicable for all SWS Climbs, Courses, Clinics, Ski Tour, and Expeditions

1.A. Safety and Judgment Each participant must...

Be able to independently identify and recognize environmental hazards. These hazards may include, but are not limited to, falling objects/rocks, loose rock and unstable surfaces, rugged steep and uneven terrain, cliff edges, crevasses, moving water (fast or slow) such as rivers, creeks, surf, or tides, and potentially hazardous animals and insects. Recognize and understand the hazards and risks posed by other course members, which include, but are not limited to, fatigue, state of mind, and actions that may influence judgment and decision-making. Recall and understand hazards and risks previously explained by guides or instructors. Be able to effectively alert and warn others of potential or impending dangers such as falling rocks, aggressive animals, or other environmental hazards. Be able to effectively signal or notify course guides or instructors or other course members of personal distress, injury, or need for assistance.

Be able to do the preceding warnings and notifications up to a distance of 50 meters and in conditions with limited visibility such as in darkness or inclement weather or with loud background noise, such as high winds or while near roaring rivers.

Act reliably around above stated hazards to minimize risk even when not directly supervised.

Independently perceive, understand, and follow directions and instructions given by others to be able to successfully execute appropriate and perhaps unfamiliar, techniques to avoid hazards and /or manage risks.

These directions may be given before the hazard or risk is encountered or may need to be given during exposure to the hazard/risk and out of necessity and practicality are often given orally.

Be able to stay alert and to focus attention for up to several hours at a time while traveling in wilderness terrain, attending clinics or classes, or receiving instructions.

Be able to respond appropriately to stress or crisis such as when encountering large and/or potentially hazardous animals, severe weather, or a medical emergency.

If taking prescription medications, be able to maintain proper dosage by self-medicating without assistance from instructors or others (except possibly in emergency situations).

1.B. Leadership and Course or Expedition Behavior Each participant must...

Work effectively as a member of a team despite potentially stressful and difficult conditions. This may require problem solving on an interpersonal or group level as well as a willingness to accept differences. Contribute to a safe learning environment—no verbal or physical inappropriate behavior of others is tolerated for any reason. Be able to willingly and equally share responsibility with other clients on a course or climb. All clients are learning the skills and being challenged by the conditions and activities; there can be no expectation that any other client will be able to continually assume a greater share of the work or that an instructor can continually focus a greater share of his/her energy and time on one client unless that client has requested a custom or private course or climb. Effectively communicate ideas and concerns on an individual and group level. Have the cognitive ability to learn necessary skills given normal time limitations of a SWS Course or Climb.

1.C. Environmental Ethics Each participant must...

Learn and then practice Leave No Trace camping and travel techniques.

1.D. Outdoor Skills: Camping Each participant must...

Learn and competently perform the fundamental camping skills of finding a campsite, setting up a shelter, and cooking with a camp stove. Remain adequately hydrated, fed, and properly dressed so as to remain generally healthy and be able to avoid environmental injuries such as hypothermia, heat illness, sunburn or frostbite. Be able to perform, after being instructed, the above activities independently in cooperation with other clients on a course or climb without direct supervision. Be able to move about the campsite in order to attend clinics and instructional demonstrations, attend to toileting needs, and contribute to camping tasks as necessary. Live in a physically demanding, remote backcountry environment for the uninterrupted period of the course or climb length, which can range from one to 7 days or more. Conditions of this environment may vary from cold (below minus 20° F) to hot (above 90° F) depending on course location and season and may include, but is not limited to, rain, snow or hail, uninterrupted sun and/or wind, or the absence thereof. The remoteness is such that it may require at minimum 1 day's travel, but perhaps more than 2-3 days travel, to reach the nearest roadhead and advanced medical care.

Section 2: Lists the EEC specific to different course types or activities.

All students must satisfy the EEC listed in [section one](#) and the EEC in [section two](#) that are specific to the course or climb type they are considering.

2.A. Wilderness Hiking Course Each participant must...

At minimum, be able to travel over and negotiate through varied wilderness terrain with a backpack weighing up to or exceeding 40-60 pounds or 30%–40% of body weight. (Some mountaineering courses are designed with pack weights less than 50 pounds.)

Travel conditions may include, but are not limited to, rough, rugged, uneven steep and sloping terrain; human made and animal made trails; rocky terrain that may range from smooth bedrock to extensive areas of large rock boulders (boulder fields); needing to cross rivers and creeks without the aid of bridges up to three feet or more in depth; ascending, descending or traversing slopes covered in snow, rocks or vegetation; bushwhacking off trail through thick standing and/or downed vegetation. Any and all travel can occur during periods of inclement weather or nighttime hours.

Travel distances can range from less than one mile to more than ten miles in one day. On average, a summit climbing day of 10 miles can be expected on some climbs or courses.

Travel duration can range from less than one hour to more than 12 hours in one day and occur on successive days. Have average strength and endurance and basic balance and agility to travel through such terrain with a backpack. Have the ability to have a third point of contact for balance purposes, such as with hand(s) or to hold an ice axe/trekking pole, for travel through deep rivers, on snow slopes or ascending or descending slopes. Although groups will often be able to take hourly breaks or camp early if weather becomes hazardous, occasionally this is not possible. Examples include descending/ascending a 2000' boulder choked gully; descending a peak with a threatening thunderstorm; descending a mountain pass in similar conditions.

2.B. Mountaineering or Climbing Courses, requirements for Wilderness hiking & climbing apply to mountaineering courses with the addition of the following: Each participant must...

Effectively communicate independently in an oral dialogue over a distance of up to 50 meters when participating in multi-pitch rock climbing or alpine mountaineering or during glacier travel.

The potential necessary communication of climbing signals may include, hand signals, spoken signals or a rope tug system. Electronic aids are likely not reliable. More notably, communication includes both: Direction from the instructor/guide as to what the client should do, e.g. if the client falls 30 feet into a crevasse, direction regarding the procedures to be used needs to be communicated; on a multi-pitch climb if the rope becomes jammed and the instructor/ guide and client must communicate and work together to figure out what the problem is and how best to solve it. Response from the client to the instructor, e.g. if a client falls or has difficulty with a section of the climb and the instructor/guide has to determine, by asking questions, about the client's well-being and whether rescue procedures are necessary.

Provide a reliable belay to another climber during roped climbing. To do so a client must be able to reliably manipulate a climbing rope through a belay device such as an ATC, Grigri, other such device and understand the necessary climbing signals. The instructors/guides leading the course may deem a backup belay person is necessary. Independently tie the overhand and figure of eight series of knots.

Perform a self-arrest with an ice axe if traveling on snow or glaciers. Reliably and independently perform simple technical tasks such as tying into a rope, clipping into an anchor and getting into a harness without the direct supervision of an instructor.

3.C. Winter Ski or Snowboard Course Each participant must...

Move on skis or snowboard over flat to steep (35 degree) unpacked snow-covered terrain.

Be able to move a load of gear weighing at minimum 40-60 lbs. by means of backpack.

Be able to travel from camp to camp, which may take all day (8+ hours). Be able to shovel in order to perform camp chores and to participate in rescues where people, gear or shelters have been buried in the snow such as in an avalanche or drifted in during storm. Be able to perceive and differentiate signals from an avalanche transceiver (transceivers are currently manufactured to transmit visual or audio signals) and efficiently move over avalanche debris without skis.

Be able to withstand cold temperatures (0 degrees F or cold)