

UBMBC Canyoning Program

Canyons are ravines with vertical walls carved by erosion over millions of years. Technical canyoning involves abseiling, jumping into pools, swimming, scrambling over rocks and bushwalking. The UBMBC canyoning program enables members to explore canyons and experience the unique beauty of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

1. Requirements of technical canyoning

Technical canyoning is physically and mentally demanding and may involve: carrying heavy gear whilst walking off-track in rugged terrain with steep climbs and descents; swimming and wading in deep, cold, creeks, pools, and fast-moving water; encounters with escarpments, exposed cliff-lines, open face waterfalls, narrow gorges, tunnels, passages and cave-like formations. The safety of the group requires continuous visual and auditory communication between team members.

Therefore, all participants in technical canyoning activities must have:

- A high level of physical fitness
- Good vision and hearing
- A head for heights and tight spaces
- Water safety skills
- Teamwork skills

2. Maintaining and improving your skills

As with all other areas of skilled performance, technical canyoning requires continual practice to improve one's skills, and to maintain those improvements. There are several pathways that the UBMBC recognises as evidence of continual improvement or maintenance.

- The club provides regular practice sessions for canyoners of all skill levels. All prospective canyoners must attend the initial practice session before they can participate in the club's technical canyon activities. The club also offers more advanced practice on, and opportunities to practice, particular skills (e.g. rescue practice).
- Every technical canyon activity provides opportunities to practise skills, and to learn from more experienced canyoners, either from guidance or by observing best practice.
- There are many online and physical resources which facilitate technical canyoning skill development.

3. Canyoning Skills

Technical canyoning is a complex activity requiring a wide range of skills which can be more easily understood if grouped into several skill sets. Understanding these skills is important, particularly for those new to technical canyoning, because they can be used to focus participants' improvement efforts on aspects of those skills that are appropriate for their level of skill development.

Members engaging in technical canyoning activities, in a manner appropriate to their level skill development, should:

- Adhere to the policies, procedures, and practices of the UBMBC (**Policies**).
- Work effectively as a member of a team (**Teamwork**).
- Move confidently and safely through a range of canyon environments (**Movement**).
- Select, and maintain, equipment appropriate for particular canyon environments (**Equipment**).
- Identify, assess, and respond to risks presented by particular canyon environments (**Risk identification**).
- Descend safely and efficiently in a range of canyon environments (**Descending**).
- Self-rescue in a range of potential emergency situations (**Self-rescue**).
- Rig and manage pitches in a range of canyon environments (**Rig and Manage**).
- Rescue others in a range of canyon environments (**Rescue others**).
- Effectively plan, conduct, manage, and safely lead team activities in a range of canyon environments (**Lead**).

4. Canyoner skill level

It is important for canyoner safety that activity leaders and canyoners be aware of canyoners' levels of technical canyoning skill. This enables activity leaders to choose a team with an appropriate mix of skills for a particular activity (e.g. allowing for monitoring of canyoners working towards higher skill levels) and for canyoners to choose activities that are appropriate for their existing level of skill.

The UBMBC assesses all canyoners against the technical canyoning performance standards and categorises each into one of eight levels of competence:

- Non-technical canyoner
- Prospective
- Working towards competent
- Competent
- Working towards advanced
- Advanced
- Working towards leader
- Leader

Non-technical canyoner

Non-technical canyoners must fulfil UBMBC requirements to enter the canyoning program and having done so, may enrol to attend the UBMBC ropes practice session. They are not permitted to engage in any other technical canyoning activity.

A Non-technical canyoner is one who:

Standard	Performance descriptor
Policies	Adheres to the policies, procedures, and practices of the UBMBC
Teamwork	Follows advice of the leader
Movement	Moves confidently and safely through a non-technical canyon environment

Prospective

A Non-technical canyoner who satisfactorily completes a Commercial Adventure Company Abseil Training Program will be classified as a prospective canyoner and is entitled to attend a UBMBC ropes practice day for grading

A prospective canyoner is one who:

Standard	Performance descriptor
Policies	Adheres to the policies, procedures, and practices of the UBMBC
Teamwork	Follows the advice of the leader, and the good practice of more experienced canyoners
Movement	Moves confidently and safely through canyon environments
Equipment	Selects and maintains equipment sufficient to safely move through, descend, and self-rescue in more canyon environments
Risk identification	Identifies, assesses, and responds to risks presented canyon environments

Working towards Competent

Working toward Competent canyoners can progress by practicing the requirements of the competent canyoner level. These canyoners will be permitted to engage in technical canyoning activities deemed appropriate for competent canyoners, provided the mix of canyoner skill level on those activities allow for monitoring by a grade 5 advanced canyoner. This provides an opportunity for the canyoner to develop higher level skills safely in a more technically challenging canyon environment.

Competent

After engaging with several technical canyoning activities, and under the guidance of several different leaders, canyoners may apply to have their skills assessed against the competent standards. Competent canyoners can engage in those technical canyoning activities designated as being appropriate for a grade 3 and for lesser levels. These canyoners may be permitted to engage in technical canyoning activities at the grade 4 level when approved by the leader, provided the mix of canyoner skill level on those activities allows for monitoring by a grade 5 advanced canyoner.

A competent canyoner is one who:

Standard	Performance descriptor
Policies	Adheres to the policies, procedures, and practices of the UBMBC
Teamwork	Follows the advice of the leader, supports safe practices of all members of the team, and models good practice to assist beginner canyoners to develop their canyoning skills
Movement	Moves confidently and safely through canyon environments
Equipment	Selects and maintains equipment appropriate to safely move through, descend, and self-rescue in canyon environments
Risk identification	Identifies, assess, and responds to risks presented by canyon environments
Descending	Descends safely and efficiently in canyon environments
Self-rescue	Self-rescues in canyon environments

Working towards Advanced

Grade 3 Competent Canyoners may apply to be graded as Level 4 Working toward Advanced where they further develop their skills by working towards meeting the requirements of the advanced canyoner level. These canyoners are permitted to engage in technical canyoning activities at a grade 4 level. Grade 4 canyoners may be permitted to engage in technical canyoning activities at the grade 5 level when approved by the leader, provided the mix of canyoner skill level on those activities allows for monitoring by a grade 5 advanced canyoner. When the leader deems it appropriate, canyoners working towards the advanced level will be permitted, under monitoring by an advanced canyoner, to rig and manage pitches. These arrangements provide an opportunity for the canyoner to develop higher level skills safely in a more technically challenging canyon environment.

Advanced

After engaging with several technical canyoning activities under the guidance of several different leaders, canyoners may apply to have their skills assessed against the advanced standards. Advanced canyoners can engage in all technical canyoning activities .

An advanced canyoner is one who:

Standard	Performance descriptor
Policies	Adheres to the policies, procedures, and practices of the UBMBC
Teamwork	Follows the advice of the leader, supports safe practices of all members of the team, and models good practice to assist beginner and competent canyoners to develop their canyoning skills
Movement	Moves confidently and safely through the canyon environments
Equipment	Selects and maintains equipment appropriate to safely move through, rig, descend, and self-rescue in the canyon environments
Risk identification	Identifies, assesses and responds to risks presented by the canyon environments
Descending	Descends safely and efficiently in the most difficult canyon environments
Self-rescue	Self-rescues in the canyon environments
Rig and manage	Rigs and manages pitches in the canyon environments
Rescue others	Under guidance of the canyon leader, takes an active role in rescuing others in a range of canyon environments

Working towards Leader

Some advanced canyoners may choose to step-up and work towards leader status. The process involved is described elsewhere but essentially, they will, under the monitoring of several different leaders, co-lead and contribute to the planning and management of team activities in a range of canyon environments.

Leader

The technical canyon leader has achieved advanced canyoner status and will be continually assessed against those standards.

In addition they:

Standard	Performance descriptor
Teamwork	Support safe practices of all members of the team, provide advice, models good practice to assist all members of the team to develop their canyoning skills, and mentor advanced canyoners who are working towards leader level
Equipment	Selects and maintains equipment appropriate to safely rescue others in a range of canyon environments
Lead	Effectively plan, conduct, manage, and safely lead team activities in a range of canyon environments

5. Participation in canyoning activities

Participation in UBMBC technical canyoning activities is based on three principles that are designed to maximise both the safety and opportunities for skill development, of all team members:

- Non-technical canyoners are not permitted to participate in any technical canyon activity.
- All canyoners can participate in canyons rated at, or below, their existing skill level.
- Canyoners who are working towards a higher skill level can participate in activities rated at one level above their skill level, provided the leader agrees and is able to ensure that the composition of the team allows for monitoring by an advanced grade 5 canyoner. This provides opportunities for canyoners to safely develop and demonstrate higher level skills.

The canyon activity rating process is as follows:

Activity level	Canyoner skill level	Permitted activity levels for each canyoner skill level
0	Non-technical canyoner	No technical canyons
1	Prospective	1
2	Working towards competent	2 and, with monitoring, 3
3	Competent	3 and, with monitoring, 4
4	Working towards advanced	4 and, with monitoring, 5
5	Advanced	5