**Chillagoe Caving Club**

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# SRT (Single Rope Technique) Guide. V6.0 May 2017

# Preamble

CCC has welcomed many new members in recent years and many are keen to participate in vertical caving using SRT. This guide is for both new people to SRT and experienced trip leaders. It will help new cavers to know how far they want to take SRT and for Trip leaders to be able to design SRT trips suitable for the skill level of cavers.

Club SRT Equipment is available through a Current SRT Trip Leader for hire. The equipment is made available to Novice/introductory members who should aim to purchase their own gear ASAP if they intend to become full members. Having your own gear means not so much adjusting and one can practice at home.

The only pass/fail mark that is relevant is safety, we cannot compromise on this. It is better for a Trip leader to prevent a caver going down a rope than to let them go down if they are not at a skill level relevant. Rope rescue is extremely difficult.

Just like SRT itself this document will be a work in progress. The current SRT trip leaders and newer cavers will help to refine it for future participants.

SRT is a popular aspect of caving. This guide is intended to give all cavers wishing to explore SRT a known level of competency. The goal of caving as with any sport is enjoyment. If you decide you will only ever enjoy a particular level of SRT then that is great, that is what levels are for. It is done with all extreme sports. Our age, physically ability and just plain common sense help us set our own level where we enjoy what we are doing. It is acceptable to push your boundary’s and you may just find you can do more than you think. But if you just jump right over your boundary’s it can end in tears. When you are totally comfortable with one level then you can look at moving up.

SRT is a proactive sport rather than a reactive sport. By reactive I mean sports like white Water Kayaking or Skydiving where you prepare for then commit to the moment and then react to external forces for the duration. By proactive I mean it can be done methodically and at a controlled pace. Rigging and gear can be checked and double checked and you can generally stop any time to sort things out. Gear and rigging is strong and tested. This makes it very safe.

The biggest variable and the potentially dangerous part of SRT is the person. It is our choice of suitable equipment, level of fitness, skill level and our mental ability to handle a given situation, which can lead to a dangerous event. Once on SRT it is extremely hard for someone to assist you. At Chillagoe the biggest factor is heat. If you cave in southern Australia or New Zealand where cold will be your biggest factor. There will be times when things just aren’t going right. Your gear may get jammed, you may have to change some rigging, or add some rope protection. You can find yourself sitting in that harness for an extended period, and the fun has turned into a chore. You are hot or cold, tired and hungry but you just need to deal with it. A caver must know their skill level and keep their training up to that skill level, so hard challenging events will be rewarding.

**Communications**. I found a wide range of standard practice for this so have decided to put it this way. Confirm your communications with the group. Keep communication for SRT simple. SRT generally uses **“On Rope”** when you are using the rope, **”Off Rope”** when you are finished and clear. For belaying the person who is getting belayed needs to ensure they communicate that they are attached to the rope and that the person who is belaying them is ready to do so. One critical universal communication is the single word **”Below”** this means something is falling. If you hear this do not look up, take cover. It may be a small rock or a large boulder.

All cavers can benefit from the training modules here <https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/SISSS00029> Those wishing to attain level 4 and 5 competency will read and study all the module info and continually practice and work on improving their gear set up and skill set.

**Note:** A safety will be in place until a descender has been loaded and caver is comfortable it is rigged correctly.

Level 1 Cave: Single pitch, easy get on and off where instructor can help to ensure caver has gear on correctly and ensures safety. For descent must be bottom belayed. Ascend to a maximum of 10 meters.

**Level 1 Caver:** A competent **Level 1** caver can happily descend and ascend with assistance at the top and bottom of the pitch. They find it enjoying to do not frightening to do.

**Level 1 Skills list.**

**Level 1** is purely and introductory level. It is to give cavers an experience in SRT. To move from level one the caver must be comfortable and happy on rope and wanting to learn more.

**Under supervision**

* Be able to fit harness
* Understand the mechanics of the components
* Get on and off rope or ladder
* Descend and ascend rope or ladder
* Use correct communication.

Level 2 Cave: Has simple re-belays and re-directs. Verbal aid is available from others. Passage may be daylight.

**Level 2 caver:** Has practiced in a training situation re-belays, re-directs and up/down change over and applied these in a controlled cave situation. They are happy to stop at any time on rope and change over or tie off and do a rope swing.

**Level 2 Skills List**

If you pass the level two skills test you are showing that you have a good overall grasp of SRT and you will be able to explore more caves on SRT, when with SRT trip leaders.

Carry out the following tasks under observation but without correction. The cave “Keefs Back Door” is suitable for this assessment.

* Put rig on.
* Attach for descent following safety guidelines. Safety lines must be used where needed and until descender is loaded and deemed to be rigged correctly.
* Caver indicates they are “On Rope” and ready to descend.
* During descent caver stops on command from observer and locks off descender.
* Performs small rope swing or lunge to indicate they are happy on rope.
* Resumes descent to floor, does not stand on rope.
* Disconnect from rope and moves to safe area, then indicates “Off Rope”
* Attach for ascent
* Ascend 10 meters with a smooth action while controlling rope slack
* Disconnect at top following safety guidelines. Safety must be attached until clear of vertical area.
* Carry out a simple re-belay pass
* Carry out a simple re-direct pass.

Level 3 Cave: A known with cave multi pitch re-belays re-directs, the caver has limited verbal assistance available from other cavers.

**Level 3 caver:** Has shown they can put their rig together, eg rig is dismantled and handed to caver in bits, caver can confidently put rig together. Can change over up/down and negotiate re-belays and re-directs in dark with no assistance. This should be performed late in the day when caver is tired.

**Level 3 Skills list**

If you pass a **Level 3** skills test it is showing that you have a passion for SRT. You will have studied and practiced the skills. You will be able to explore even more complex caves on SRT when with a SRT trip leader. You will have your own gear and have it set up for you and your own pack that has your days water, food and spares in it. This is a great level to be at for Chillagoe.

Carry out the following tasks under observation but without correction. The skills test must be done late in the day and after a day’s caving, in a totally dark cave, with only the cavers own torch on. The caver must show they can do this comfortably and not complete it under duress.

* Caver is handed their dismantled rig in a bag, caver puts rig together ready to use
* Knowing and being familiar with common knots.
* Attach for and ascend
* Negotiate a free hang re-belays
* Re-direct
* Change over to descender
* Pass back through re-belays and re-direct
* Before touching down change to ascending and pass up through re-belays and re-direct again
* Change back to descender and return to ground.
* Knot crossing

Level 4 Cave**:** Unknown Caves with difficult multi pitches, re-belays and re-directs, the caver limited assistance available from other cavers.

**Level 4 caver**: If you pass **Level 4** it shows you have spent many hours both on rope in caves and practicing. You will have decided that SRT is for you and taken it upon yourself to upskill. You will be learning from your peers in hands on situations and will be judged by many peers on your caving SRT ability over many trips and situations. While SRT is fairly basic it is still evolving and you will keep up with and be part of that evolution. You will be able to rig caves naturally and by bolting.

**Level 4 Skills list**

**Under supervision**

* Knowing and being familiar with a wide range of knots
* Rigging and de-rigging SRT and ladder pitches efficiently and safely
* Rigging and using a belay
* Rig an entry drop with emphasis on safety and ease of getting on and off rope
* Rigging a re-direct, re-belay and free-hanging re-belay
* Rigging a pull through trip

# Level 5 Cave: A complex cave where there are multiple pitches of varying lengths and complexities where communication may be difficult.

**Level 5 caver.**

SRT Trip Leader

Level 5 is a leader, trainer. You will have shown to your peers that you can organise and lead trips and train others in SRT.

**Level 5 Skills List**

**Unassisted**

* Must be self-sufficient and able to handle any situation. This level is achieved over many SRT trips where caver has shown they have the skills knowledge and attitude to handle any situation without assistance. Caver should be familiar with rigging and rope protection techniques.
* Show leadership skills and safety monitoring of others in the party
* Solve complex rigging and gear issues.
* Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of natural rigging and bolting techniques.
* Must be able to rig and de-rig caves safely and efficiently.
* Be able to assess lesser experienced cavers at their particular level.
* Evaluate a vertical caving emergency and indicate a range of strategies for dealing with it, develop a plan of action. Indicate a range of rescue techniques

# Level 6:

**Trainer/Assessor Horizontal and Ladder**

A highly experienced caver in leading horizontal and basic laddering and belay techniques, assessed and recommended by two Trainer/Assessors and approved by the Management Committee for the purpose of assessing skill levels of cavers applying for Trip Leader Levels 1 and 2.

**Assessor SRT**

A highly experienced SRT skilled caver assessed and recommended by two Trainer/Assessors and approved by the Management Committee for the purpose of assessing skill levels of cavers applying for Trip Leader Level 3 and 4.