

A steep learning curve

Journalist Dan Greenbaum abandons his laptop and learns how to climb

Living in an area of the country where there's little more than a slight incline to stroll up on the way to the shops, the highest climb I'd ever done was up the stairs to bed. As a writer on an adventure sports magazine, I'd always fought shy of doing the adventurous stuff myself, preferring instead to observe the experts from a safe distance and relay their experiences to readers in the form of prose. So, when I was challenged to take part in a mountain climb in aid of raising money for charity – and to write about it afterwards – I was unwilling to say the least.

Despite their awe-inspiring strength and agility, even experienced climbers fail to make climbing look simple. I knew a mammoth task lay before me if I was to get into even half-decent physical shape before the four thousand-metre climb, which would involve sheer rock faces and steep, snow-covered terrain. I set about consuming not only energy-boosting food to help me get through my intense training regime, but also devouring every climbing magazine I could get my hands on.

I was lucky enough to have a brilliant climbing coach called Keith, who put me through my paces after the daily grind at the keyboard was over. My mentor imparted keen knowledge about everything from the importance of building specific muscle groups to how to combat fatigue through nutrition. I listened, speechless, while he went into great detail about everything to do with the sport. It quickly became apparent that the mechanics of climbing were more complex than I could have imagined. And there wasn't only the strength and endurance-building to contend with, but the gear, too. I had to get to grips with an array of equipment and techniques I'd never even heard of: 'crampons', 'glissade' and 'self-arrest', all of which I learned would come in handy on the snow-capped peak I'd be ascending in a few months' time.

line 21 Aware of the challenge that lay ahead, Keith made a detailed action plan and I forced myself to stick to it diligently, doing a daily workout at the gym, eating carbohydrates, and going on long hikes with a heavy backpack. I perfected my technique on the climbing wall and even squeezed in a weekend away to the Scottish mountains to get in some vital experience of trekking through snow and ice. My self-belief increased alongside my muscle power and I became not only confident about finishing the climb, but determined to do it with flying colours.

All too soon I was on a plane to my destination – Switzerland. Early one clear spring morning I peered out of a hostel window and up at the mountain I would attempt to ascend that day. My hard-won confidence took a nose dive as the enormity of what I'd let myself in for struck me as suddenly as an avalanche: I sank down on my bed and for a brief moment considered fleeing. And then I remembered all the hard work I'd done to get here and how disappointed Keith would be if I ducked out at the last minute – not to mention letting down the charity and the sense of failure I'd experience myself. With a deep breath I tied my boot laces, gathered my gear and headed out into the sunshine to meet the rest of the group.

And as I sit here now, tapping away on my laptop, with the ordeal safely behind me, I'm amazed at the detail in which I can recall every second of the climb; the burning muscles, the sheer exhaustion, the minor setbacks along the way. Could I have been better prepared? Possibly. Would I be back for another go? Thankfully not. The exhilaration of standing on top of the world is a never-to-be-repeated experience, but one I will cherish forever nonetheless.

- 31 In the first paragraph, the writer reveals his
- A difficulty in accurately recounting the stories of expert sportspeople.
 - B disappointment in the exercise opportunities available in his town.
 - C lack of interest in listening to professional climbers' personal tales.
 - D lack of enthusiasm for the challenge he'd been offered.
- 32 In the second paragraph, we know that the writer is
- A keen to learn as much about mountain climbing as he is able to.
 - B worried that he won't have time to prepare well enough for the climb.
 - C amazed by how easy professional climbers make the activity seem.
 - D concerned about the difficulty of climbing in certain conditions.
- 33 What do we learn in the third paragraph?
- A The coach makes the writer realise how complicated climbing is.
 - B The writer doesn't think he'll be able to cope with the equipment he needs to use.
 - C The writer is confused by the information about food that the coach gives him.
 - D The coach doesn't believe the writer is doing enough work towards his climb.
- 34 What does 'it' refer to in line 21?
- A a daily workout at the gym
 - B the challenge
 - C a detailed action plan
 - D the writer's coach
- 35 How does the writer use the example of an avalanche in the fifth paragraph?
- A to highlight a strong and unexpected feeling
 - B to explain the way he sat down on his bed
 - C to describe what he could see from his window
 - D to emphasize how quickly he wanted to run away
- 36 How does the writer feel looking back on his climb?
- A satisfied that he had done his best
 - B relieved that he wouldn't have to do it again
 - C surprised that he had managed to complete it
 - D regretful that it hadn't gone as smoothly as it could have

Pirate radio stations

In 1964, a radio station on a boat off the coast of Britain began broadcasting pop music. Radio Caroline's style was young and fresh – and the station itself was outside British law.

The British government now grants licences for people to operate radio and TV stations, but in the 1960s the only radio stations that existed legally in Britain were run by the BBC, the state-owned broadcasting company, and the government would not allow anyone to operate a private radio station. 37 The Irishman who founded Radio Caroline simply put the radio equipment on a boat and anchored it just outside the three-mile limit.

Why would anyone go to so much trouble to start up a radio station? One reason was the BBC's policy on the kind of music it broadcast. During a period when pop music was extremely popular, the BBC played very little of it on its radio stations. It was felt that the BBC should cater for more conservative tastes in music. 38 It was only a matter of time before an enterprising businessman who managed some pop music bands realised that here was a huge potential market.

There was, in fact, a radio station operating outside Britain at the time transmitting programmes that could be received in the country: Radio Luxembourg. 39 It was only after Radio Caroline went on the air that people were able to listen to pop music broadcast in English all day.

As well as playing the sort of music that young people liked, Radio Caroline was popular with listeners for

other reasons. The disc jockeys didn't have the typical BBC pronunciation, which was considered by many to be formal and old-fashioned. Instead they spoke with regional accents, they used colloquial English, they were cheeky and informal. Audiences loved it and soon large numbers of listeners were tuning in.

Then other pirate radio stations began to spring up and the British government decided that some action had to be taken. 40 However, it soon became clear that the authorities were being forced to face the new situation created by the pirate radio stations. These had shown that pop music was here to stay, and that young people desperately wanted to listen to radio stations that played it.

Was there a lesson to be learnt from all this? Indeed there was! The BBC decided to start up its own pop music radio station, Radio 1, and before long Radio Caroline disc jockeys were working there. 41

In a further development, the British government decided to allow commercial radio stations to operate in the country. This meant stations could now do legally what Radio Caroline had been doing illegally – and in far more comfortable conditions. 42 Its situation became even worse when the ship from which it was operating sank. The crew and disc jockeys had to be rescued.

Today Radio Caroline still exists although it is no longer as popular as it was in the 1960s. But it made history by forcing the BBC to change its policy on pop music and the nature of its relationship with its listeners.

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| A The radio station went on to become a legend, and its disc jockeys won fame and fortune. | E But this station used to play only a short section of each song – and this was clearly not satisfactory. |
| B Not surprisingly, Radio Caroline found itself in serious financial difficulties. | F However, the government's power only extended to the country itself and the seas around it up to around five kilometres from the shore. |
| C As a result, there were large numbers of young people who wanted to listen to a particular type of music, but couldn't. | G In 1967, a new law was passed making it illegal to advertise or supply an offshore radio station from the UK. |
| D What is more, increasing numbers of listeners were switching from the pirate stations to the eminent broadcaster. | |

Art 1
Art 2
Art 3
Art 4
Art 5
Art 6
Art 7

You are going to read an article in which four people talk about their experiences of playing a musical instrument. For questions 43–52, choose from the people (A–D). The people may be chosen more than once.

Mark your answers **on the separate answer sheet**.

Which person

mentions other people's reluctance to do what's required?	43	<input type="text"/>
mentions an initial confidence in their ability?	44	<input type="text"/>
experienced indirect musical input from others?	45	<input type="text"/>
says that a certain belief is relevant to other activities?	46	<input type="text"/>
recognises a particular advantage of studying music?	47	<input type="text"/>
proved another person right?	48	<input type="text"/>
had an unexpected understanding of what they were trying to do?	49	<input type="text"/>
prefers to keep their skills to themselves?	50	<input type="text"/>
is keen to disprove a particular opinion?	51	<input type="text"/>
wanted to fulfil someone else's wish?	52	<input type="text"/>

Musical magic

A Andrea Beecham

I play the bass guitar in a band. Everyone assumes that it's just one of those teenage things – something I'll get bored with or grow out of. They reckon I'm just in it because I want to be famous but nothing could be further from the truth. Sure, the money would be fantastic, but I'd rather not experience being recognised everywhere you go. The reality is that I just love performing, and striving to produce something that other people want to listen to. You've got to be patient and persevere and practise, practise, practise if you want to get any better at an instrument – which I think a lot of people tend to overlook. That's why they tend to give up before they've even started. I guess you could apply that same principle to lots of things – you only get out what you put in.

B Mike Tindale

I wouldn't say I had any particular desire to learn an instrument, but when I was about eight my parents insisted I give it a go. They'd both turned down the chance to learn the piano when they were younger because they thought it looked like hard work, and they both regretted their decision. So I went along to my first lesson just to keep them happy. To my surprise, I took to it really quickly and was keen to get ahead. I still play now and, although I'll let my own kids decide for themselves whether they want to take up an instrument or not, I've noticed there are some benefits to keeping your mind active in this way. I like to think I have pretty good coordination skills, which I put down to learning an instrument that requires you to use both hands, both feet and engage your brain simultaneously!

C Dave Warwick

I remember hearing someone play the violin on the radio when I was little and that was it! I pestered my dad to let me have some lessons, and he was happy to indulge me in what he thought was just another phase. We hired an instrument from a local music shop and I went along brimming with enthusiasm and excitement to my first lesson, convinced I was about to become a famous musician. More fool me! I was shocked by the awful scraping sound which I produced and suddenly realised what I'd let myself in for. This was going to be no easy task and it would be a very long time before I'd come close to the beautiful singing violin I'd heard on the radio. I never went back. Do I regret not sticking it out? Maybe. But I think I'd rather listen to the professional musicians. I know they do it so much better than I ever could.

D Maria Perez

I'm pretty shy when it comes to getting up on stage and showing people what I can do on my drum kit, even though my friends are always really encouraging. I've been messing about on drums as far back as I can remember – my mum plays them, so there was always a kit in the house. I never had any formal training, I'd just pick up the rhythms I heard Mum play and then imitate them. I'm glad I grew up in such a creative environment – there were always loads of other musicians hanging around the house when I was a kid and some of them were pretty inspirational. It's just that performing isn't really my thing – I've only ever played the drums for my own amusement, rather than intending to make a career out of it.