

IBL Routesetter Guidelines

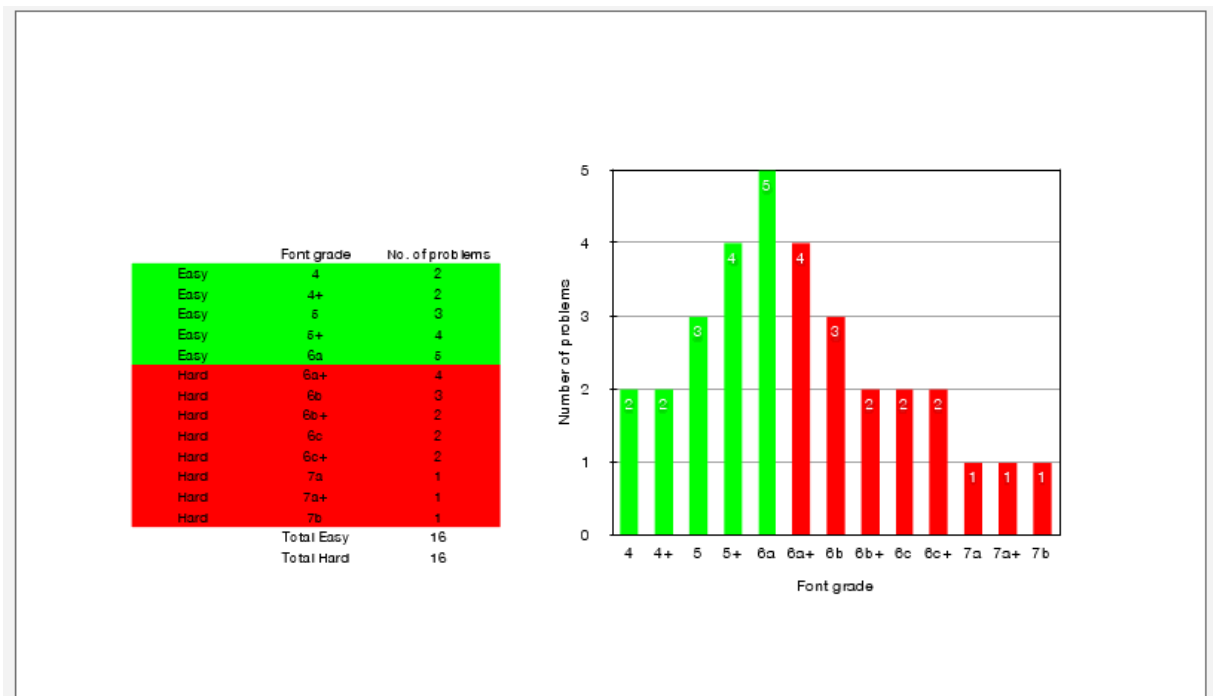
1. Routesetting for the IBL normally happens the day before the competition. However we may need your assistance stripping down the wall and we may need your assistance resetting the wall. Please consider this part of the task.
2. Routesetting is done on a voluntary basis. It is tradition that routes are set by climbers local to the venue who are giving up their time and expertise freely. However the IBL recognises that time may have to be taken off college or work in order to set the competition. As a gesture, the IBL makes a sum of €150 available per routesetter up to a max of three routesetters.
3. All expenses are expected to be covered by this sum. The IBL is a non-profit set of events and operated to a minimalistic budget.
4. Equipment to facilitate routesetting will be provided by the IBL organisers or the local venue in terms of allen keys, marking tape, ladders etc. On occasion the routesetters may have to purchase additional materials but please approve this with IBL organisers BEFORE you purchase and ALWAYS keep a receipt.
5. IBL events require between 15-25 problems depending on the size of the venue. Each problem should be set with a hard and an easy variation making a total of 30-50 problems including all the variations. This is to facilitate the IBL scoring system.
6. Be aware that there can be up to 200 climbers attending an IBL round so this will expose any bottlenecks etc. Safety is paramount.
7. The IBL scoring system awards 20,19,18 points for the harder variation problems and 10,9,8 points for the easier variation problems. Each competitor has a maximum of 3 attempts per problem irrespective of whether they try the hard or easy variation.
8. All problems require a 2 hand finish in control (i.e. hold for 3seconds).
9. A routesetter may choose to design a problem with a different scoring format e.g. unlimited attempts or bonus points etc. but keep these problems to a small number please. Because we operate on a league basis we cannot have different scoring formats between rounds.
10. It is quite acceptable to set fewer problems in the interest of:
 - a. Using the venue space well and designing a more interesting sequence using more space
 - b. Not having problems overlapping

- c. Not causing a congestion problem on the day
- d. Keeping competitor and observer safety in mind

11. Please keep in mind that we have three competition categories:

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Juniors (U-16 – there is no minimum age limit)

12. Although the IBL is a competition, it is treated as a fun social event by the vast majority of entrants. Most of the attendees are non-elite and climb to a very modest level compared to the typical field of the British Bouldering Championships for example. There is no pre-qualification required. We need the problems to be set so that everyone gets value for money however we still need to determine a winner. As an example here is a grade spread that resulted in an almost textbook perfect points spread between climbers and had very clear winners:



13. Starting and finishing holds should be clearly marked. The boundary between problems should be clearly marked. The easy variation should be clearly marked.

14. Don't make the problem too high – remember we have kids competing. Also even the BBCs state that the climber is maximum 3m above the crash pads

15. Don't make sit starts too hard – we want the climbers to make a certain amount of progress on each problem rather than not being able to get off the deck

16. Don't have overlapping routes or routes which will cause a serious obstruction to other climbers on other problems.
17. Don't make problems unnecessarily reachy – there are kids climbing the same problems as adults.

In summary bear in mind that given the numbers attending that routesetting for an IBL competition is NOT about ideals. It's not about setting the most beautiful problems. Safety and achieving a high throughput of climbers is of equal importance to the quality of the technical moves.

IBL Route Setting Guidelines

By Ronan Browner

[Note that under the new system there are no extra hold for juniors, male Bs or female – there is simply a hard and easy variation of each problem]

This set of guidelines has been put together to give route setters a better idea about what the bouldering league is attempting to achieve. We hope that by doing this we will make your job easier. These guidelines are not intended to dictate how your problems should be set. They are only suggested guidelines. We are relying on your experience imagination and ability to produce a good competition.

Most of the following points will seem obvious but we believe that they are still worth pointing out because the same fundamental mistakes have been made at different competitions, by different route setters year after year. Pointing these potential mistakes out should make them easier to avoid.

The correct breakdown of problem grades is essential for the success of a bouldering competition.

Only a handful of people are capable of getting placed in a competition. The vast majority of competitors are there to climb, to test themselves on enjoyable problems and to generally have a good time. The needs of this majority must be catered for.

The primary objective of the route setter is to get as many people up as many problems as possible. If people are climbing they'll probably be enjoying themselves. If a climber travels halfway across the country, pays their entry fee and is unable to climb, then the competition will have been a failure. This has happened far too often in the past and it should not be permitted to happen again in the future.

It is, of course important to test the harder climbers and establish a winner. But if at the end of the competition there are problems that remain unclimbed then these problems will have been a waste of limited wall space that could have been put to much better use.

For these reasons we have given a suggested list of how the problems and grades might break down. The problems should also vary in difficulty within the grade to spread out the final scores of the competitors. The style of climbing should also vary throughout the grades, i.e. don't put all the hard problems on the steep section and all the easy problems on the slab. Give everyone a taste of everything and ensure that the competition isn't won or lost on a particular style of problem.

Grade	A	B
6c	1	
6b	3	1
6a	4	3
5c	4	4
5b	4	4
5a	2	3

This list would suggest that there are twenty five different problems to be set. There are very few walls where this would be possible so a hard 6c problem that only the A's will be climbing may have to share the same wall space as a 4b that only the B's will be climbing. This can be easily achieved without confusion by using different coloured holds.

When adapting problems to make them easier or harder for a different category, it should not be done as an afterthought. An effort should be made to maintain the quality and character of the original or design an equally good variation at a different grade. It would be a shame to ruin a good problem by throwing jugs at it at the end of the day.

It is worth taking note of how young and small some of our junior competitors are. Extra junior holds should be used to ensure that there are no reach difficulties on these problems.

The selection of holds available to the route setter is often limited. Using different coloured holds to distinguish between the holds that A, B and junior category climbers can use reduces this selection even further. This reduces the options available to the route setter. But despite this it is still worth doing. It makes the problems simple, self explanatory and user-friendly.

Overly complex problems with rules that are not easy to explain or simple to understand should be avoided. A competition is already a stressful environment. Adding to this stress will detract from people's enjoyment of the competition.

The quality of the boulder problems is key to the success of the competition. We all have our own ideas about what the best problems are, but when setting problems it is important to remember that we are not setting problems for ourselves. We should attempt to look at them from a competitor's point of view.

Our own favourite move or particular strength may not necessarily be suitable for a competition. Bum starts for example; they get you cranking right from the start, they can add a valuable extra two moves to problems that are already too short, they sap your strength which adds extra difficulties to the higher moves. Maybe they should be used on all our problems.

However bum starts tend to be particularly strenuous moves. They tend to be harder for bigger and less flexible climbers. They are contrived and are not familiar to climbers who do not specifically boulder. They can often shut climbers down before they have even left the ground. So instead of adding extra moves to a competition they can eliminate competitors from even trying the problem. This is particularly frustrating to those competitors who would have been capable of attempting the upper section of the problem and it can take away from their overall enjoyment of the competition.

Similar arguments could be made about high mantles, dynos, horrendous slopers etc. This is not to say that we should ban certain types of moves or problems from a competition, variety and interest are essential. But that it is important to consider the needs of the competitors as we set the problems.

Potential bottlenecks, i.e. areas where queue's will tend to form, should be identified and an attempt should be made to limit there effect. Corners and cracks for example, or a slab where the climber will tend to contemplate an intimidating move, from a reasonable stance, for an extended period of time.

Wall space is usually limited but setting two adjacent problems that would put the two climbers in such close proximity to each other that only one of the two problems can be attempted at any one time should be avoided if possible.

As we have already said, these are only suggested guidelines. You may not agree with all of our suggestions and some of them may not be practical or even possible. Ultimately it is up to you the route setter to produce a set of problems that will determine a winner, spread out the field and that everyone will enjoy.