

TECHNIQUES, TRAINING & GEAR REVIEWS.

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Rappel Racks.

I have been using racks for twenty years, mainly for canyoning, and I really like their easy use.

The rappel rack is one of the most common descenders. There are many variations in design, such as:

1. Number of cross bars. More bars create more friction. Can have up to six bars.
2. Cross bars may be either aluminium or stainless steel.
3. Some are a one-piece construction for heavy loads.
4. Some have locking side gates for additional safety.
5. Some have a longer bar at the top and bottom to allow for other rope configurations to vary friction levels.

Its advantages are:

1. Excellent heat dissipation.
2. Easy to attach rope without the need to remove from a carabiner.
3. Easy to lock-off.
4. Can be used on single or double ropes.
5. Friction can be adjusted. Some enable adjustment to be made while on rappel.
6. Very wear resistant.
7. Various rope configurations to control friction.
8. Very smooth rope control.

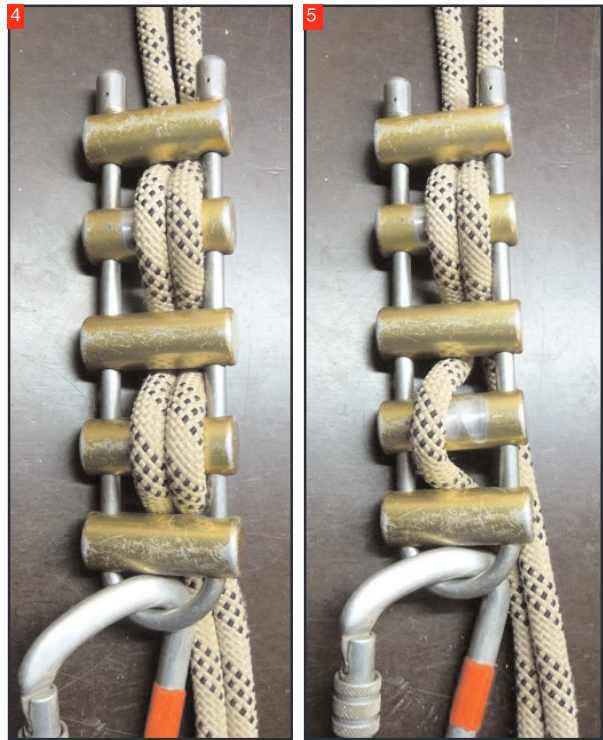
Its disadvantages are:

1. Can be heavy and bulky
2. Can be expensive.
3. Rope cannot be pulled in both directions. This can make it harder to pass rebelay.
4. The bars can swing open when unloaded, although this is very unlikely.
5. No auto braking function.

If you are interested in buying a rack for caving and not sure what type to buy, drop me an email and I can help out.

The photos (Nos. 1-5) are of my own rack. It has five alloy bars and has done over 400 abseils, and it still looks good for many more.

JSSS



Photos above, all by Chris Curtis.

Photo 4: The Rappel Rack, with double ropes fitted using all bars.

Photo 5: The Rappel Rack with double ropes fitted with reduced friction.

Photos below, all by Chris Curtis.

Photo 1: The Rappel Rack attached to a carabiner.

Photo 2: The Rappel Rack with bars open.

Photo 3: The Rappel Rack with single rope fitted.

