



Hiking Buddies UK - Guide to Scrambling

1. Introduction

Scrambling bridges the gap between hiking and climbing, often involving hands-on rock navigation, steep ascents, and exposed ridges. It requires a higher level of skill, confidence, and awareness than regular hillwalking.

This guide outlines the different scrambling grades, risks involved, and safety precautions. It also clarifies that **Hiking Buddies UK event hosts are not qualified mountain leaders, and participation is entirely at your own risk.**

2. Understanding Scrambling Grades

Scrambles are classified into three main grades in the UK:

Grade 1 – Easy Scrambles

- Typically straightforward, but hands may be needed for balance and grip.
- Exposure (steep drops) is present but usually not extreme.
- Suitable for confident hikers with good balance and a head for heights.
- Example: **Striding Edge (Helvellyn), Crib Goch (Snowdon)**

Grade 2 – Moderate Scrambles

- Requires more technical movement and route-finding skills.
- Some sections may be exposed with significant fall potential.
- Rope protection **may** be necessary in some situations.
- Example: **Tryfan North Ridge, Sharp Edge (Blencathra)**

Grade 3 – Difficult Scrambles

- Requires climbing skills and a solid understanding of rock movement.
 - High levels of exposure and serious consequences if mistakes are made.
 - Ropes are often used for safety, and helmet use is strongly advised.
 - Example: **Cuillin Ridge (Skye), Aonach Eagach (Glencoe)**
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3. Risk Factors in Scrambling

Scrambling presents additional hazards compared to regular hiking:

Exposure & Fall Risk



- Many scrambles involve **sheer drops** where a fall could be fatal.
- Weather conditions (wind, rain, ice) can significantly increase risks.

Navigation Challenges

- Unlike marked trails, scrambles often require **good route-finding skills**.
- Incorrect choices can lead to dangerous or impassable terrain.

Loose Rock & Unstable Terrain

- Rockfalls and slipping hazards are common.
- Always check handholds and footholds before committing weight.

Fatigue & Group Ability

- Scrambling is physically and mentally demanding.
- The **slowest and least experienced person should dictate the pace**.

4. Safety & Preparation

Essential Equipment for Scrambling

- **Sturdy boots** with good grip (approach shoes or stiff-soled boots recommended).
- **Helmet** (strongly advised for Grades 2 and 3 due to falling rock hazards).
- **Gloves** for grip and protection.
- **Map & compass/GPS** (do not rely solely on digital devices).
- **Emergency whistle & first aid kit**.
- **Waterproofs & extra layers** – conditions can change rapidly.

Group Size & Management

- **Smaller groups are safer** – we recommend a **maximum of 5 people per experienced scrambler**.
- Larger groups increase rockfall risk and slow progress.
- Always check the experience level of all attendees before committing to a route.

Weather Considerations

- **Avoid scrambling in wet or icy conditions** – rock becomes slippery and dangerous.
- **Check the forecast** and be prepared to change plans if necessary.
- **Wind speed matters** – strong gusts can make exposed ridges too dangerous.

Escape Routes & Alternatives

- Research **bail-out options** in case conditions worsen or someone struggles.
- Have a **secondary plan** in case the main route is too dangerous.



5. Liability & Event Disclaimer

- **Hiking Buddies UK event hosts are not professional guides or instructors.** They are simply arranging a walk and inviting others to join.
- **All scrambling activities are undertaken at your own risk.**
- By attending an event, you accept full responsibility for your safety and decisions.
- **No liability is placed on the organiser or Hiking Buddies UK for accidents, injuries, or losses.**
- Participants should have their own **accident and liability insurance** if they wish.

6. Final Thoughts

Scrambling is an exciting and rewarding activity, but it requires good judgement, preparation, and respect for the risks involved. If you are new to scrambling, start with Grade 1 routes and gradually build your confidence before attempting more difficult terrain.

Stay safe, be responsible, and **enjoy the adventure!** 🏔️ 🧡