

## **JACK'S TWELVE GOLDEN RULES FOR BETTER LEADING ON ICE**

1. **Have an efficient system together and consistently use it every time you lead. Remain organized!**
  - Use same system for racking each time you climb.
  - Always keep your feet in full view.
  - Have glove program completely dialed.
  - Become ambidextrous placing protection.
  - Have your leash system completely dialed.
  - Rack with a purpose. Know why you have decided to use the systems you use.
  
2. **Be confident. Gain confidence (gain experience) by practicing on a top-rope.**
  - Practice placing protection close to the ground.
  - Boulder using a tope-rope to extend your strength and abilities.
  - Practice placing gear at no higher than chest level. Waist height is best.
  - Keep your comfort factor high.
  
3. **Know your limitations and do not climb too far above them.**
  - It's OK to retreat if you aren't psyched or the ice is crap.
  - Listen to your intuition; ESPECIALLY regarding hanging pillars.
  
4. **Lead with your head NOT your arms. Head strength is the most important.**
  - Visualize the path (stances, cruxes, easy places etc) before you leave the ground.
  - Visually inspect the route and be confident you can protect it.
  - Move only on solid placements. Your axes are you immediate belay.
  - Shake your hands out frequently and do not over-grip.
  
5. **Have a strategy and stick to it. This helps you keep/maintain control.**
  - Never begin a lead with cold hands. Begin with a warm body.
  - Seek out grooves, ledges and places you can stem and get a rest & relax.
  - Occasionally reorganize the rack for optimal efficiency.
  - Constantly evaluate the quality of the ice and protection opportunities.
  - **PLAN AHEAD.**
  
6. **Do not worry or concern yourselves with other people's climbing style.**
  - "Tis always better to hang and place pro than it is to fall trying"
  - Bad style is falling on ice.
  - Do what feels right NOT what someone else is doing.
  
7. **Being gripped is OK; being so scared you cannot ascend or descend is not.**
  - Place gear whenever you feel the need and doubling-up is OK.
  - Constantly monitor your mental and physical states for stress.

8. **Look at and keep in mind the BIG picture. Look around for opportunities**
  - Keep an open mind. Let the ice dictate where you climb and where you place pro.
  - Where can you unweigh your arms and get a rest?
  - Remember that it is about LEARNING how to get from POINT A-B.
9. **ALWAYS take two more ice screws than you think you may need.**
  - Having more gear than necessary keeps the head calm.
  - Sometimes the ice is more rotten than it at first appears.
10. **Always climb in control. Breath through the crux and keep moving**
  - Remain mentally organized
  - The goal when leading is always to reduce the amount of weight on your arms.
11. **Placing ice protection**
  - Ice quality is more important than screw length.
  - Belays must always be bombproof
  - Belayer must always be protected from falling debris.
  - Carry screws of varying lengths for optimal strength protection.
  - Place screws in dense, cold, bonded ice (i.e.: behind ice pillars).
  - Place protection at waist level for a secure, comfortable stance.
  - Clean ice screws as soon as they are removed. Bang on hanger.
  - Place pro BEFORE you get pumped, out of balance and frightened.
12. **Climbing with a rhythm helps. Slow to the crux; climb quickly at the bulge etc.**
  - Climb up, place the pro then down-climb to a rest; continue etc.
  - Be decisive with your tools: ALWAYS stay on your feet.
  - Do not climb below other parties. Keep a safe distance from falling objects.
13. **Be prepared to hang if necessary in order to place protection.**
  - Style is secondary to safety.
  - At the end of the pitch clip into the tools and THEN place the belay anchors.
14. **Always carry a V-threader and know how to quickly pace a V-Thread.**
  - The ultimate back up for retreat. Know how to use this and always carry one.
  - A V-thread can sometimes be used as protection in junk ice.

OK..... SO THERE ARE MORE THAN TWELVE RULES.....

#### **FOUR RULES:**

1. Practice leading on easy routes BEFORE you lead at your limit.
2. Before you leave the ground have a strategy in mind for what to do.
3. Have a leading system in place and always use it so it becomes intuitive.
4. Always be able to communicate in some way, either verbal or otherwise.

**MORE MENTAL GYMNASTICS TO PONDER**

Use proper posture. This gives you a sense of confidence. Intentional movement.  
Keep your face relaxed, DO NOT grimace. SMILE.....  
Pay attention to your breathing. Breathe deeply and slowly with rhythm.  
Remain mindful of why you are climbing the route you have picked.  
Is it for the challenge, the beauty, the position. What is your motivation?  
Keep an open mind and be willing to learn. The medium of ice always changes.  
Analyze the challenge and risk assessment by breaking the pitch down into little parts. It is too easy to become overwhelmed by fables, stories, and fiction. Once broken down into parts, intimidating leads become more reasonable and manageable.  
Face reality. Accept the climb and conditions as they are and discover what you can or cannot do about them. Stop wishing that the ice was thicker, the temperature cooler,  
Stop blaming your poor performance on weak forearms. Accept the conditions for what they are and thereby claim personal power or go home! WHAT CAN YOU LEARN?

Understand that each lead is an opportunity to learn more about yourself. Difficult experiences and failures are the ways in which we learn and grow mentally. Explore the opportunity to lead an ice or mixed climb in less than your idealized conditions but do not be afraid to back off if conditions warrant it. Remain curious and explore the reality rather than avoid it. Just because you are curious however, does not mean you are not focused. Focus on the possibilities at hand and what is required to achieve your goal. It isn't about getting to the top it is about learning what is required to get to the top.

### **PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES FOR CLIMBING ON STEEP ICE**

The steeper, thinner and wilder the ice is the more interesting and engaging the climbing becomes. More difficult climbs involve a wider range of varying and unusual situations, which may feel steeper than vertical because you are forced away from the ice. Each time you move on this sort of ice be sure to move in balance first so that the foot or tool you want to move is unweighed. Move efficiently between rests, rest as frequently as possible and protect before the climbing gets really difficult. Remember to use the terrain of the climb to your advantage by always moving and changing your body position to what it dictates. Steep ice climbing technique mimics steep rock climbing technique remarkably closely. Footwork becomes more important as the angle steepens. Use body tension as a tool to assist in overcoming overhanging ice. Think three-dimensionally. If the ice above is bad look to the sides and if need be, swing and pull from the side. Use underclings to your advantage. Heel-hook to the side? Maybe.....

**SMILE! Remember you're having a good time!**