



DEUTSCHER OLYMPISCHER **SPORT**BUND

KURATORIUM
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Slacklining – an ecologically friendly sport

Recommended action for outdoor sports athletes, local authorities and land owners

Slacklining, the balancing on webbing between two anchor points, originates from the sport of climbing and has developed from a special training unit for promoting coordination and concentration into a popular sport.

Slacklining: sport and sports apparatus

Originally a simple climbing rope tensioned between two anchor points, the slackline has developed into a practical piece of sports apparatus – in most cases consisting of wide webbing, tree protection and a ratchet.

Slacklining is an attractive sport and trains coordination, concentration, nature awareness and social learning. Last but not least, slacklining is an exemplary outdoor sport in terms of playing environmentally friendly sports, as only two anchor points, e.g. trees, are required. For several years, slacklining has been attracting growing numbers of outdoor athletes who mainly play their sport close to urban areas.

At the same time, the goodwill of local authorities in many German cities towards slacklining has started to gradually dwindle. Their wait-and-see and defensive position is based on the possible risk of damage to trees caused by the webbing and the concerns of other interest groups in the public arena.

The reason for this polarisation is a lack of knowledge about why people take part in the sport and the sport's positive effects, incorrect set-up of the tensioning webbing and a partly ignorant regarding the topic of tree protection.

Slacklining: balancing the interests of sports and environmental protection

The aim must be to combine the advantages of this close-to-nature, attractive sport with the environmental demands of an ecologically friendly sport and to avoid negative effects on nature and the environment.

Slacklines which are incorrectly attached to trees can have the following effects on their anchor points:

1. Friction on the bark: when slings are attached without tree protection, the movement of the athlete creates vertical friction which can lead to signs of wear on the bark through regular use, particularly on trees without scaly bark.
2. Pressure on the cambium: depending on the slack, the line length and the slackliner's weight, 5 to 8 kN affect the slackline's anchor points. The load is bigger with longlines, highlines and falls/jumps. This results in a high-pressure load which can be reduced by using wide webbing or wooden sleeves.
3. Peeling damage through shear force: because of its concentric structure, bark can withstand radial loads. A correctly placed industrial round sling can distribute the pressure equally onto a relatively large area and reduce the rotational load. However, if the anchor is attached crookedly to the tree using a simple cow hitch, the shear load can increase. Trees are particularly vulnerable to this in the months from January to May when they hold lots of water.

Slacklining: criteria for playing a sport in an ecologically and environmentally friendly way

Ecologically and environmentally friendly slacklining is possible when the following points are observed:

- Only use healthy, firmly rooted trees with a trunk diameter of at least 40 cm at attachment height for anchoring
- Only attach the slackline with tree protection
- Use tree slings that are at least 5 cm wide, if possible. Suitable slings are industrial round slings with a working load of at least 1 t or special slackline tree slings made from flat polyester webbing
- Prevent shear loads: from the centre of the trunk, the knot must point to the second anchoring point
- Consideration for the needs of other people seeking relaxation

At climbing rocks, special attention should be paid to the following:

- Use anchor points that withstand the load of tensioning the slackline without damage
- Because of the extensive loads, (drilled) hooks of existing climbing routes must not be used as anchor points
- Legal restrictions such as climbing bans on rocks or access bans on mountain tops (highlines) are of course also applicable to slackliners

Many positive examples show that it is possible to find consensus between a suitable place for the outdoor sport of slacklining near to where people live and nature conservation. Cologne, Stuttgart, Freiburg, Fulda, Immenstadt, Muenster, Karlsruhe and Munich are some examples of that (see links).

Slacklining is permitted in certain areas at many signposted places. Artificial ground anchors allow tightening a slackline even when there is no suitable natural anchoring point; trees that are often used are fitted with wooden sleeves.

This requires cooperation with the parks and recreation department of the local authority and an expert from the sports department.

These and similar measures for finding consensus are sometimes complemented by info boards about tree protection and safety. For example, this is practised by the respective departments of the local authorities in Cologne, Freiburg and Stuttgart.

Many outdoor sports associations offer slacklining as a core component of their course and leisure programme particularly for youths – a training aid has become a piece of sports apparatus in its own right, with a high psychosocial value that should be promoted through a willingness to find consensus.

Literature references:

Building and traffic authority canton Basle city (ed.), 2010 'Slacklining und Baumschutz'.

German Olympic Sports Confederation (ed.) 2013: 'Trendsport Slacklinen auf dem Vormarsch'. In: 'Informationsdienst Sport schützt Umwelt No. 106', page 28 et seq.

JDAV Bavaria (ed.) 2012: 'Machts mit – Baumschutz beim Slacklinen', leaflet Kößler/Geyer.

2011: Slackline – 'Handbuch für Freizeit, Schule und Verein'. Pohl Verlag. Miller/Friesinger.

2012 : Slackline – 'Tipps-Technik'. Panico Verlag.

Rodenkirch et.al. 2012: 'Baumschutz beim Slackline in der Schweiz'. Publication of the association of Swiss slacklining clubs 2012.

Roth/Thomann (ed.) 2011: 'Aktuelle Studien zu Entwicklung und Praxis der Trendsportart Slackline'. In: DSHS/INÖK, Schriftenreihe Natursport und Ökologie. volume 28 page 15 et seq.

Zack 2011: 'Slackline – das Praxisbuch'. BLV Verlag.

COLLECTION OF LINKS: HOW SOME LOCAL AUTHORITIES DEAL WITH THE TOPIC
SLACKLINE AND TREE PROTECTION

Fulda:

<http://www.fulda.de/aktuelles/news/einzelansicht/slackline-und-baumschutz.html>

Münster:

http://www.muenster.de/stadt/umwelt/gruen_spielplaechen_slackline.html

Freiburg:

<http://www.freiburg.de/pb/,Lde/363653.html>

Cologne:

<http://www.stadt-koeln.de/1/presseservice/mitteilungen/2012/07334/>

Zurich:

http://www.stadtzuerich.ch/content/ted/de/index/gsz/angebote_u_beratung/sport_im_gruenen/slacklinien.html

Munich:

<http://www.davplus.de/uploads/images/JO1vYRSkL6TiFmNXBEF0XA/handlungsempfehlung-slacklinien-im-englischen-garten.pdf>

ACTIVITIES OF THE (OUTDOOR) SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS:

German Alpine Association (DAV):

http://www.alpenverein.de/dav-services/panorama-magazin/trendsportarten-geocaching-und-slackline_aid_11601.html

JDAV - Youth of German Alpine Association:

<http://www.jdav-bayern.de/cms/index.php?id=265>

Munich section of the DAV

<http://www.davplus.de/uploads/images/JO1vYRSkL6TiFmNXBEF0XA/handlungsempfehlung-slacklinien-im-englischen-garten.pdf>

The German Ski Federation:

www.deutscherskiverband.de/datei.php?system_id=122486#

Bavarian Gymnastics Association

<http://www.turnverband-bayern.de/359.html>