

## Introduction To Slacklining

### What is slacklining?

Slacklining is a multidisciplinary recreational sport that involves maintaining balance on a length of synthetic webbing spanning two points. Slacklining can take many forms. At low heights in parks, it is most popular. It can also be conducted over water (waterlining) or up high (highlining) along with a host of other sub-disciplines. All of these variations come with their own challenges, and rewards. Additionally all can be enjoyable and safe activities that benefit the participants while encouraging strong relationship and community building.



The sport first gained popularity in the 1980's as an avenue to refine balance, mental focus and body strength. Since then, Slacklining has increased in popularity dramatically and is well established in Europe and America with competitions and events becoming a regular occurrence. Slacklining is used as a training tool for athletes in a range of competitive sports, school sports, enriching public spaces and can be utilised in physiotherapy.

### Who is a Slackliner?

Contrary to popular belief, the vast majority of slackliners, in particular those who partake in highlining are not “daredevils.” The Australian community is exceptionally diverse and includes people from all walks of life, young and old, mathematicians, doctors, engineers, construction workers and social workers to name just a few. The sport is a tool to refine mental control and is without doubt a form of meditation. People do not highline to get a buzz, far more to appreciate the outdoors, spend time with like-minded people and to challenge themselves both mentally and physically\*.

The activity also has creative aspects, with a tradition in performances and shows along with a rich history as a school camp activity.

Tight rope walking is commonly associated with slacklining, while it is similar in many regards, it also differs in numerous ways. A tight rope entails walking a length of steel cable at high tension with a bar to

assist balance. It is not uncommon for tight rope walkers to forgo a safety leash. Comparatively slacklines are generally rigged at low tension with synthetic webbing (not rope), with no bar to aid balance and, when rigged at heights, redundancy is built into the system with a safety tether used. As modern synthetic webbing is used, a highline rigging system is much lighter and the lower tension directly correlates to lower peak load, therefore less equipment is required to achieve a desirable safety margin.

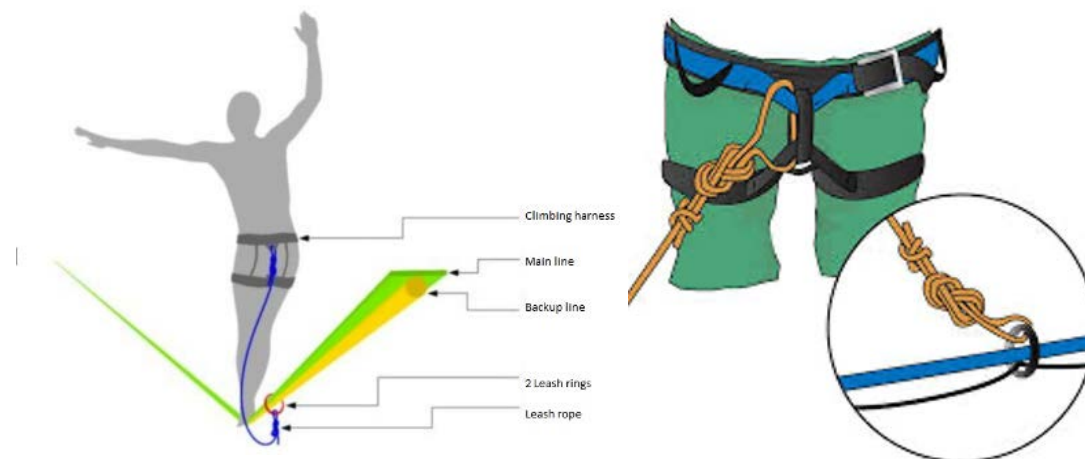
### How safe is it and what is the environmental impact?

A slackliner practising the sport at a distance above ground is secured by a tether running over a mainline (surface walked and balanced upon) and a backup strand for the unlikely event the mainline becomes compromised.

Significant injury has never occurred in Australia despite the regular involvement of many people over the past fifteen years.

Anchors are created from naturally existing features such as large boulders, trees or traditional climbing gear such as camming devices and chocks in cracks that leave minimal impact once removed. If historically installed hardware exists and is deemed safe to use it may also be utilised.

Maintenance and replacement of fixed anchors systems is always in accordance with the ASA Fixed Anchor and Highline Establishment Guidelines 2019. A single point is never used. All anchors consist of multiple points equalised to add redundancy appropriate safety margins. Counterintuitive as it might be, highlining between clifftops is actually safer and lower risk than slacklining in a park only 15cm above the ground! In fact both of these activities are among the safest and lowest impact outdoor activities in the world.



The above pictures represent how a slackliner is safely tethered to a highline.

When a fall (often multiple) takes place, the slackliner will be suspended below the line hanging from the leash and can easily climb back on top and continue walking.

### Why Slackline?

Arguably the greatest benefits slacklining brings to those who participate is exposure to the natural



environment and the incredibly strong relationships formed between those who share the passion. The sport may be a vehicle that brings people together but ultimately it's the sense of community, improved coordination and mobility combined with a shared connection to the natural world that continues to keep slackliners slacklining.

The Australian slackline community actively attempts to give back to the broader population as well as using the activity as an impactful way to promote change.



Some of the clean up projects include removing large quantities of rubbish from difficult to access locations along the coastal cliffs bordering eastern Sydney.



\*ISA (International Slackline Association) Demographics survey 2018 & 2021 - <https://www.slacklineinternational.org/2019/09/demographics-survey-analysed/>