

Best Little Descender To Ever Slide Down A Rope

by Bonnie Crystal



I've been using the SRTE Stop Descender (SRTE Australia brand) for over 10 years. It is by far the best descender I've ever slid down a rope on... and I've tried or owned most of the popular caving descenders on the market.

The SRTE Stop is a dynamically-variable-friction descender. The friction surfaces are cast and milled stainless steel. The handle and side plates act as heat sinks to dissipate the heat from the friction surfaces.

SRTE (Australia) Stop Descender

It may be red and look like a Petzl Stop, but that is where the similarity ends!

If you see a friend with one of these, make sure to borrow it for a drop or two. I'm sure you will agree it's reaaally sweet!

The performance, and especially the safety, is superior to a rack. Indeed it is more like a 3-dimensional rack than it is like other "bobbins". You can adjust the friction instantaneously as you rappel. The friction adjustment is easier and quicker than sliding bars on a rack. For longer than 600ft drops, due to some heat, it is necessary to go slower than a full size long 6-bar J-rack, unless it is a cold cave or wet rope. It has superior heat sinking than any short rack.

Unlike some popular bobbin descenders, the handle of the SRTE Stop varies the friction from complete STOP to complete GO, and everything in between, instantaneously letting you apply the exact friction you require. Compensation is at your fingertips for fast/slow ropes, thin ropes, stiff/muddy/frozen ropes, etc. The handle is like an accelerator pedal... squeeze to go; squeeze some more to go fast; squeeze less to slow down; release to brake completely. Unlike euro-bobbins there's no need to push the rope through it on american-style muddy rope situations.



SRT or SRTE (Single Rope Technique Equipment) is the Australian company founded by Boris Rogelja, who holds a number of patents on descenders and other gear. All the gear they make is considered by many to be "the rolls royce of caving and rescue gear". Here is a link to their website: <http://www.srte.com.au/products.htm>
Users Manual for SRT Stops here: <http://www.srte.com.au/pdf/Descenders.pdf>

SRTE Stop Descenders



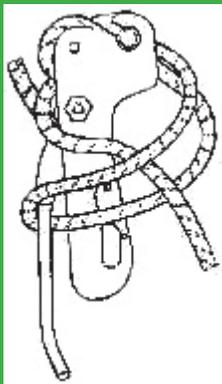
As you can see, there are many different models of SRTE Stop Descenders!

These include:

1. single (D1) or double (D2) ropes
2. stainless steel (-s) and aluminum (-a) sideplates
3. single (-) or double braking (-DB) action

The most common and lightest weight SRTE Stop personal version utilized by cavers is the D1a Single Rope STANDARD Stop Descender with aluminum side plates. Is not the same as the stop-go-stop models called the “SRTE Stop Descender with Double Brake Attachment” . I also have one of the D2 Double-Rope Stops (blue color). The double-roper is suitable for either double rope or single rope applications, however, the slightly heavier weight and single purpose (rappel but not belay) will probably not find acceptance by most rock climbers (who happen to do the most double rope rappels). Sorry, I can’t report on the Double Brake Attachment on the SRTE Stops, since I have not tried it yet.

Change-overs and lock-offs are a breeze. There is a recommended simple lock-off method for use with this descender. I have found that it is required neither for change-overs nor most caving situations... due to the excellent security of the release-to-stop mechanism. For that extra boost of on-rope confidence, I confess to using a simplified version of the lock-off with rope simply looped around it when I have to stop on rope for extended time. Here is a drawing of the manufacturer’s recommended lock-off.



C – LOCKING OFF

1. Lock-off – bring the tail end of the rope up and between the head of the descender and the incoming rope.
2. Place a half hitch over the head of the descender.
3. Unlock – using a firm grip, remove the tail end of the rope from between the head of the descender and the incoming rope – never let go of the tail end of the rope.
4. Squeeze the handle when you are ready to descend.

SRTE gear was difficult to obtain in USA for a number of years, but I just noticed that Inner Mountain Outfitters now has it back in stock. Here is the IMO blurb on it:

<http://www.caves.org/imo/descender.htm#Bobbins>

“21-3211 SRT “STOP” Descender \$200.00 Back in stock!

This improvement on the classic “spool” descender offers several innovations. The auto brake is longer and easier to use. The amount of auto-brake friction can be adjusted by rotating the eccentric pivot point, or disabled entirely. Red anodized sideplates and rubberized handle grip. Max. load 880Kg/1,945 lbs. 14.1 oz./403g. Subject to availability. “

Five years ago, when they were getting scarce, I bought another one, so that I would never be without one if my original was to become lost. It is the kind of heavy duty gear that will last a lifetime (...actually, it will probably be an heirloom).

I think of it like they say in the L’oreal commercial... “It costs a little more, but I’m worth it!”

Bonnie Crystal

Disclaimer: I have no commercial connection with SRTE Australia or Inner Mountain Outfitters. I’m just a caver who enjoys really excellent gear