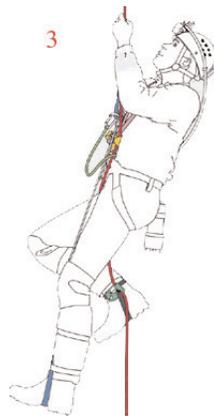
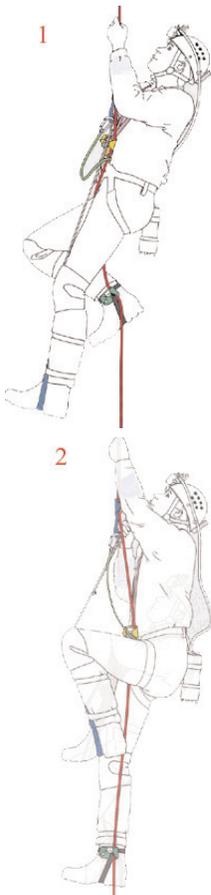


The Petzl Pantin



In a recent survey conducted by Caves.com participants were asked among other things if they use a Petzl Pantin or similar device. 58 cavers from around the world participated, and 11 of those or approximately 19% currently stated that they use the Pantin.

Petzl states on their site that the Pantin offers a big advantage for long rope ascents and helps to hold the body in a more upright position with faster ascents and less tiring of the arms. It is not an item of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).



The Pantin by Yvonne Droms

The Pantin foot ascender is a nifty little device that helps you climb ropes more effortlessly when using a frog system. It has been around for a few years but has only recently been widely adopted by froggers. This is especially true in Europe, but I am starting to see it being used more and more in the US. I was introduced to the Pantin by a British caver, Robbie Warke, during an expedition to Mexico in 2001. There was a sequence of pits that included a 150-foot climb followed almost immediately by a 300-foot one. Robbie showed me his Pantin, and explained that it made climbing long drops with a frog system much more efficient.

After trying it out myself, I was convinced. The main problem with climbing long-distance with a frog system for me was always that I tired out my arms after a while, maybe due to poor form. The Pantin forced me to keep my position on rope vertical, which allowed me to climb without using my arms as much to pull myself towards the rope at each step. This is because when you step on the Pantin, it straightens the rope with the weight of your body, thereby lining up the three ascenders vertically.

Once back in the US, I got myself one and have since used it on all long drops. I don't bother using it on short ascents under 60 feet or so, unless of course I happen to have it strapped to my foot already. This

past summer my Pantin came in really handy when working in Hellhole, WV: I would take it down the 160-foot entrance drop and leave it stashed there for the climb out. The other pits were all under 90 feet and so it was not worth dragging the device with me through the crawls, even though it's very lightweight at 125 grams (5 oz) and takes up very little room.

Other advantages of the Pantin include not having to trap the rope in between your feet when self-starting; having an automatic footstep on rope when needed, for example when doing change-overs from ascent to descent, during rebelays against sheer walls, or when getting off rope at a difficult lip; and keeping your pack's tether from tangling up with the rope while climbing.

The Pantin is not always an advantage on rope: when crossing a deviation or redirect, for example. But luckily it is very easy to disconnect from the rope: by bending your knee and kicking back with your foot, it comes off automatically. Since it does that so easily, the Pantin is strictly considered an accessory on rope, not a main ascending device, and should therefore never be used as a safety or to replace another ascender. It belongs strapped on your foot. This is achieved by means of a little harness that positions the device in the correct place, just a couple of inches above your heel.

In a way the Pantin turns a frog system into something similar to a rope-walker, but not quite. I find it a real help on long climbs and it has now become an integral part of my ascending system.