

Safari Power Saver
Click to Start Flash Plug-in



OFF £20 All Flights*

The Best Quickdraw for Climbing Review

Like 14 | +1 1

Overview | Ratings | Price vs. Value Chart | Buying Advice | How We Test



Lead tester Cam McKenzie Ring climbs in Red Rock Canyon in Las Vegas with a set of the Black Diamond PosiWire draws.

Credit: Glenda Huxter

Quickdraws have come a long way since the oval-carabiners-slung-on-a-tripled-up-sling days. To help you find the best rock climbing quickdraw, we updated our old review by testing eight of the most popular and highest rated draws out there. Our team of more than ten testers climbed with these products almost daily for over two months; they clipped bolts, slings, cams, and nuts, on single and multi-pitch sport and traditional climbs. To evaluate each product, we measured how well it clipped and un-clipped, its portability, how well it handled, as well as how easy it was to grab. Oh, and we took some falls on each one too! In this review we will dissect all the major components of a rock climbing draw and what the key performance features are. Keep reading below to find out if your current draws are what's keeping you from sending your project, and what new innovations are now available. New to climbing and looking for your first set? We've got you covered there too!

[Read the full review below >](#)


















Review by: Cam McKenzie Ring

June 3, 2014

Top Ranked Quickdraws

Displaying 1 - 5 of 15

<< Previous | View All | Next >>

Our Ranking	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Product Name	 Petzl Spirit Express Read the Review Video	 Wild Country Helium Quickdraw Read the Review Video	 Black Diamond LiveWire Quickdraw Read the Review	 Wild Country Nitro Quickdraw Read the Review Video	 Petzl Djinn Axxess Read the Review
Editors' Awards					
Street Price	Varies \$21 - \$23 Compare at 5 sellers	Varies \$17 - \$27 Compare at 2 sellers	Varies \$18 - \$24 Compare at 4 sellers	Varies \$14 - \$17 Compare at 3 sellers	Varies \$17 - \$18 Compare at 6 sellers
Overall Score	0  100	0  100	0  100	0  100	0  100
Editors' Rating					
User Rating	Be the first to rate it	Be the first to rate it	Be the first to rate it	Be the first to rate it	Be the first to rate it
Pros	Snappy clipping action, easy to grab	Lightweight and full-sized, Unique keylock/wiregate combo	Easy to clip, deep basket	Wire gate, most of the new advances in biner technology, functional and a good medium to big or "full" size.	Easy to clip, durable construction
Cons	Expensive, Not the lightest	Expensive, Narrow sling	Not light, toward the more expensive end of quickdraws	Rubber piece on draw is fragile, gate hang up, thinner sling is not comfy to grab on sport climbs	Heavy
Best Uses	Sport climbing	Traditional and multi-pitch climbing, Alpine, Ice	Sport climbing	Sport climbing, all around use	Sport climbing

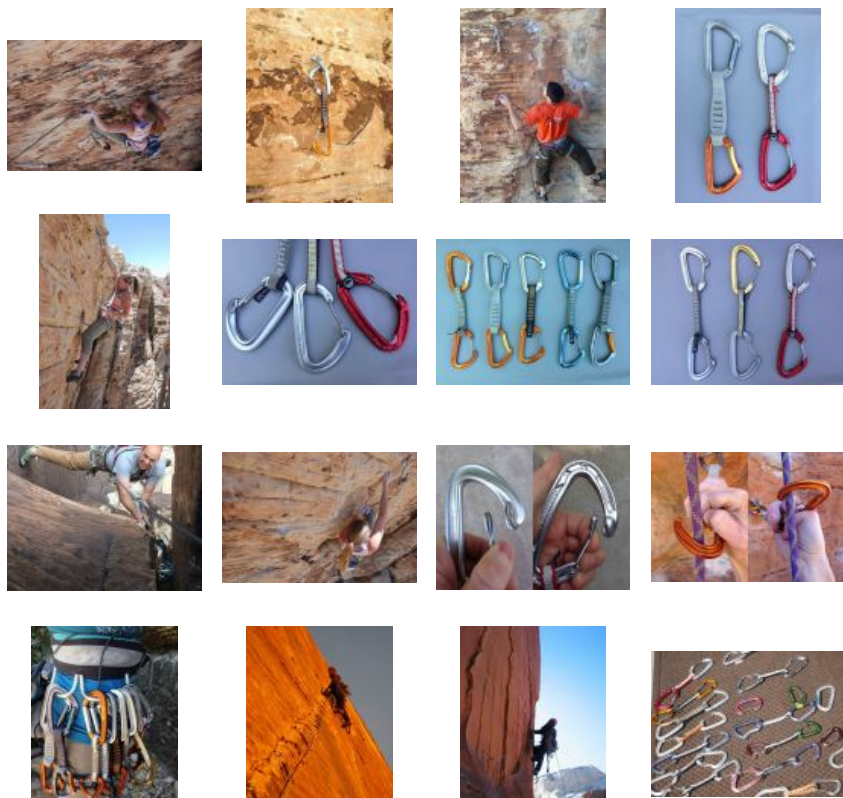
Date Reviewed	May 11, 2014	May 11, 2014	Jun 05, 2014	Jun 05, 2014	May 11, 2014
Weighted Scores	Petzl Spirit Express	Wild Country Helium Quickdraw	Black Diamond LiveWire Quickdraw	Wild Country Nitro Quickdraw	Petzl Djinn Axes
Ease Of Unclipping - 25%					
Ease Of Clipping - 25%					
Ease Of Handling - 15%					
Ease Of Grabbing - 15%					
Portability - 20%					
Product Specs	Petzl Spirit Express	Wild Country Helium Quickdraw	Black Diamond LiveWire Quickdraw	Wild Country Nitro Quickdraw	Petzl Djinn Axes
Weight (grams)	93	73	106	77	107
Weight (ounces)	3.3	2.6	3.7	2.7	3.8
Gate opening bottom carabiner (mm)	21	27	24	27	27
Width of sling (mm)	25	10	20	10	16
Sling Material	Polyester	Dyneema	Nylon	Dyneema	Polyester
Manufacturer Warranty	3 years	5 years	1 year	1 year	3 years
Non-snagging Top Biner	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Non-snagging Bottom Biner	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Forging method	cold	hot	hot	hot	cold
Unique features	Sling is wider at the bottom to facilitate grabbing, stiff sling	wiregate/keylock combo	new version has HoodWire technology to minimize bottom biner snagging	Similar to Helium, except that it isn't non-snagging; relatively inexpensive	Burly beginner quickdraw, double keylock, stiff sling
Available sling lengths	12 cm, 17 cm	10 cm, 15 cm, 20 cm	12 cm	10 cm, 15 cm, 20 cm	12 cm, 17 cm

OutdoorGearLab Editors' Hands-on Review

[Review Photos](#)

[Editors' Choice Winners](#)

[All Reviewed Products](#)



Helpful Buying Tips



How to Choose the Best Quickdraw for Climbing

by Cam McKenzie Ring



FREE HOME DELIVERY
ON ORDERS OVER £50

ONLINE DEAL OF THE WEEK
ONLY AVAILABLE 11TH - 17TH JUNE



HI GEAR FRONTIER 6 BUNDLE

TENT + CARPET + FOOTPRINT



ALL 3 FOR £299

Get More OutdoorGearLab

Follow us on Twitter, be a fan on Facebook!



Subscribe to our Newsletter

Recent Best-in-Class Reviews

Selecting the Right Product

Unless you are a dedicated boulderer and never plan to tie into a rope, chances are high that you'll need to have some type of quickdraw on your rack. In fact, this is often a new climber's first gear purchase after investing in harness, shoes, a chalk bag, and an ATC, and the current abundance of options can be overwhelming. Less than 20 years ago, each major brand had maybe one or two models to choose from, and they were not discipline specific. Black Diamond alone now makes eight different draws. To help ease the confusion, our review evaluates and compares 15 different models to determine which are best at keeping a secure connection between you and your gear, and what performance criteria you'll want to consider when selecting your next set of draws.

Also be sure to check out our [Buying Advice guide](#) for specific details on how to select the right piece of gear for the types of climbing you'll be doing most.



Our testers got some funny looks climbing with this assortment of quickdraws. Our side by side testing allowed us to compare the quickdraws to each other based on five different categories: unclipping, clipping, portability, handling and grabbing.

Credit: Glenda Huxter

Types of Quickdraws

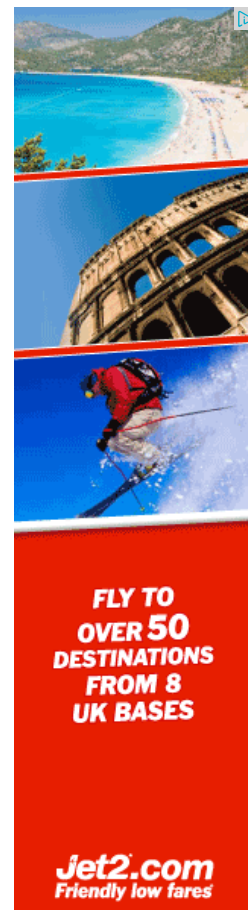
These pieces of gear have evolved from a one-size-fits-all approach to being more discipline specific. Most models will fall into these categories:

Sport - larger carabiners for quick clips, wide slings which are easy to grab.

Traditional and Alpine - lightweight carabiners (some full-sized some not), narrow lightweight slings.

All-around - there are still some draws made with this in mind, for the climber who does a little bit of everything.

- [The Best Bike Lock Review](#)
- [The Best Women's Ski Gloves Review](#)
- [The Best Softshell Jacket Review](#)
- [The Best Climbing Helmet](#)
- [The Best Hammock Review](#)
- [The Best Shoe for CrossFit Training](#)
- [The Best Ski Goggles Review](#)
- [The Best Women's Shoes for CrossFit Training](#)
- [The Best Ski Boots Review](#)
- [The Best Bike Shorts Review](#)
- [View more best-in-class reviews >](#)



Recent Editor's Award Winners

- [Tarptent Double Rainbow](#) – Recommended
- [Gibbon Classic](#) – Best Buy
- [Bushnell Bear Grylls SolarWrap Mini](#) – Best Buy
- [Aquamira Water Treatment Drops](#) – Recommended
- [Therm-a-Rest NeoAir XLite](#) – Recommended
- [Sawyer Squeeze](#) – Best Buy
- [Petzl GriGri 2](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Black Diamond Rocklock](#) – Best Buy
- [Petzl Attache 3D](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Five Ten Anasazi VCS](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Arc'teryx RHO LT Zip](#) – Recommended
- [Keen Targhee II](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Arc'teryx Palisade Pant – Women's](#) – Editors' Choice

Criteria For Evaluation

Ease of Unclipping



The Peztl Spirit Express (left) vs the Black Diamond HotWire (right). There's nothing to snag the rope on the keylock design of the Spirit carabiner, but the notch on the HotWire can get caught on the rope.

Credit: Cam McKenzie Ring

Whether you are seconding a multi-pitch climb or cleaning a sport route, the rope always has to get unclipped from your draw at some point. We've all seen someone stuck at a draw, probably on an overhanging route, cursing because they can't unclip the rope from it. Why? Sometimes the rope is too tight, and other times it's snagged on the notch in the bottom carabiner. Carabiners have various ways of latching. Some have a notch in the nose to catch a solid or wiregate. Others eliminate this notch by creating a groove in the gate that the nose sits in, and are referred to as keylock carabiners. Then there are some wiregates that have hoods in place to avoid snags, or whose wire sits into the nose. Confusing right? Long story short, if you want to avoid snags, avoid notched gates.



The Black Diamond Oz (left) and Wild Country Helium (right) wiregate carabiners don't snag on the rope thanks to a new hood for the Oz, and the unique keylock/wiregate hybrid design of the Helium.

Credit: Cam McKenzie Ring

Notched gates can also snag on your harness when you go to unclip them, or on a bolt, nuts, slings, or whatever else you might clip the carabiner into and out of. To eliminate this, many

- [La Sportiva Miura VS](#) – Recommended
- [Lowa Renegade GTX Mid](#) – Women's – Editors' Choice
- [La Sportiva Miura](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Black Diamond Camalot X4](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Feathered Friends Snowbunting](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Black Diamond FreeWire Quickdraw](#) – Best Buy
- [Wild Country Helium Quickdraw](#) – Recommended
- [Petzl Spirit Express](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Mountain Hardwear Hooded Ghost Whisperer](#) – Editors' Choice
- [DeLorme InReach Satellite Messenger](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Stansport Outfitters Series](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Outdoor Research Helium 2](#) – Recommended
- [Platypus GravityWorks](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Hiplok V1.50 Chain Lock](#) – Recommended
- [Kryptonite KryptoLok Series 2 Standard U-Lock](#) – Best Buy
- [Kryptonite New York Standard U-Lock](#) – Editors' Choice
- [Outdoor Research Arete](#) – Women's – Best Buy

draws have a top keylock carabiner. The products that performed best in this metric were the two draws with keylock carabiners on the top and bottom, the [Petzl Spirit Express](#) and the [Petzl Djinn Axess](#), and also the [Wild Country Helium Quickdraw](#), whose wiregate notch is buried in the nose of the carabiner. Although the [Black Diamond Oz Quickdraw](#) has an extra piece of stainless steel wire added above the hood to avoid snags, our testers still found it difficult to unclip due to its small size.

Ease of Clipping



When you're clipping from a tenuous position, you want the rope to clip fast and easily. Almost all of the draws we tested were easy to clip.

Credit: Scott Ring

Most of the products that we tested scored well in this category. Whether they were bent or straight, wiregate or keylock, it didn't seem to make too much difference on how easy they were to clip. What did influence this metric was the size of the carabiner. Even our reviewers with small hands found the smaller carabiners on the Black Diamond Oz more difficult to clip. Our testers' favorite draw to clip was the full-sized Camp Photon Wire Express - its bent wiregate and wide opening seemed to clip the rope for you. The Petzl Spirit Express had a snappy clipping action, and the Wild Country Helium performed well also. Our testers found the wiregates on Black Diamond's HotWire, PosiWire, and FreeWire easy to clip as well.

When clipping into a bolt, the main difference noted by our testers was that a wider and stiffer sling, like on the Petzl Spirit Express, made the draw easier to clip, particularly when stretched out. Otherwise you are just pushing the gate against the bolt and there didn't seem to be much difference between a wire or solid gate for that application.

There are some noticeable differences between solid and wire gates. Wiregates are less prone to icing up, which is important if you plan to use your draws ice climbing or in cold conditions. Additionally, wiregates are thought to be less likely than solid gates to gum up and get sticky" over time, meaning that they don't fully close back after clipping; however some of our reviewers have noticed this on their wiregates as well. Solid gates have an internal spring that can get gummed up, and with wiregates sometimes the tension on the wire can decrease, leading to the same effect. While we weren't able to assess this during our two

month testing period, it's an important thing to consider, because an open gate is potentially dangerous. The best solution is prevention. Keep your gear out of the dirt, wash your

carabiners if they get dirty, lubricate them if they are sticky, and retire them once they no longer spring back.

Portability



Brent Armstrongs happy to be using lightweight gear when climbing long routes in Red Rock.

Credit: Scott Ring

Most draws can be divided into two categories: lightweight for alpine and multi-pitch adventures, or standard weight for everything else. There is no law saying you can't take the heavy Petzl Djinn Axess up a long route, but they weigh significantly more than the Black Diamond Oz, and those ounces add up to pounds if you are taking a lot of them. Lightweight enthusiasts know that when you go light on everything, from your carabiners to your harness and pack, the difference is noticeable. However, if you are only climbing a long route every now and then, a heavier set of draws is probably fine, but if you are heading into the alpine on a regular basis and you're already weighing your harness down with a double rack of cams, then a lighter set of draws is the way to go.

Lightweight (2.7 ounces or less)

Camp Nano 23 (1.87 ounces)

Metolius FS Mini (1.9 ounces)

Black Diamond Oz (2.2 ounces)

Wild Country Astro (2.3 ounces)

Camp Photon Wire Express (2.4 ounces)

Mad Rock UltraLight (2.5 ounces)

Wild Country Helium (2.6 ounces)

Wild Country Nitro (2.7 ounces)





The lightweight quickdraws we tested, left to right: Black Diamond Oz (2.2oz), Camp Photon Wire Express (2.4oz), and the Wild Country Helium (2.6oz).

Credit: Cam McKenzie Ring

Standard (3.2 ounces and up)

Black Diamond HotWire (3.2 ounces)

Petzl Spirit Express (3.3 ounces)

Black Diamond FreeWire (3.5 ounces)

Black Diamond PosiWire (3.6 ounces)

Black Diamond LiveWire (3.7 ounces)

Black Diamond Quicksilver (3.7 ounces)

Black Diamond PosiTron (3.8 ounces)

Petzl Djinn Axess (3.8 ounces)



The standard weight quickdraws we tested in our review update, left to right: Black Diamond HotWire (3.2oz), Petzl Spirit Express (3.3oz), Black Diamond FreeWire (3.5oz), Black Diamond PosiWire (3.6oz), and the Petzl Djinn Axess (3.8oz).

Credit: Cam McKenzie Ring

Ease of Handling

This more general category encompassed everything from how each product felt on our testers' harnesses, to how well it kept the bottom carabiner in its proper position. While the former is only a matter of convenience, the latter can have serious safety implications. Carabiners are strongest when the force exerted on them is along the axis of their spine (i.e. they haven't flipped sideways and cross loaded). The top carabiner, which is clipped to a bolt or piece of gear, needs to be able to move freely in the draw's sling so as not to come unclipped from its protection point. The bottom carabiner needs to remain in one orientation so that the rope loads on the bottom scoop, and not cross loaded across the spine or the gate. (If you are a visual person check out [Petzl's great info-graphic.](#))



Three different options for keeping the lower carabiner in its proper orientation, left to right: Sewn-in rubber positioner on the Black Diamond Oz, sling sewed tight around the bottom for the Camp Photon Wire Express, and an exterior positioner on the Wild Country Helium.

Credit: Cam McKenzie Ring

In order to keep that bottom carabiner in one position, most slings have rubber keepers, either sewn into the sling or placed outside it. There are benefits to both. The sewn-in versions eliminate the potential for user error, but once it breaks you have to buy a new sling or find an exterior positioner that fits. Although none of the Black Diamond sewn-in rubber Straightjackets tore during our two month testing period, our reviewers have had personal experience with them breaking, particularly on the narrow-sling Oz.

The benefit of an exterior positioner is that it protects the section of the sling that houses the lower carabiner from fraying against the rock. However, they can be installed incorrectly so you should always inspect your new draws to make sure they were assembled properly with the carabiner passing through both the sling *and* the positioner.

Our test products had a variety of interior and exterior positioners, except the [Camp Photon Wire Express Dyneema](#), which had the sling sewed tight around the bottom opening. This did not stop the carabiner from spinning, however, and Camp has since added a sewn-in positioner for 2014. Unfortunately it was not on the model we tested and it scored poorly in this category.

Another consideration for ease of handling was the size of the carabiners. Smaller carabiners are harder to handle, particularly at the end of a long climb when your hands are fatigued, and even more so if you ever climb with gloves on. If you plan on ice climbing or doing a big wall, one of your most important criteria will be the size of the carabiners, as you want something that you can still operate easily with gloves on. A good choice for these applications would be the [Black Diamond Freewire Quickdraw](#). Its full size carabiners are easier to handle than the smaller [Black Diamond Oz Quickdraw](#).

Ease of Grabbing





Grabbing the draw may not be the best style, but sometimes it's your best option. Here Cam McKenzie Ring finds grabbing the Petzl Spirit Express the easiest way to clip the anchor.

Credit: Scott Ring

You might not set off up your climb intending to grab a draw (or two), but sometimes it just happens, and rightly so. If you are pumped getting to your third clip, the clipping hold is sub-par, and you fall off mid-clip with a bunch of slack out, you could hit the deck if the route

wasn't bolted properly. Better to grab a draw than take a trip to the ER. Similarly, if you are moving fast on a Grade V in Yosemite and don't want to be benighted on the route or descent, the "French Free" technique (grabbing draws and gear to move fast through difficult sections) is a common practice. Grabbing your draws is also pretty standard in sport climbing when working a route at your limit.

The models we tested varied in width from 10mm to 25mm. The narrowest slings, which can be found on the lightweight products, are very difficult to grab. Those in the middle of the pack (14mm) are not that easy to grab either. Our testers found that the sling had to be at least 16mm wide to do well in this category, and the wider the better, no matter their hand size. Petzl's Spirit Express took the top marks in this metric not just because it's the widest at 25mm, but also because of its ergonomic cutout design that allows you to slot your hand on the draw and go for the clip.





Easy to grab Petzl Spirit Express (left) vs difficult to grab Wild Country Helium (right).

Credit: Cam McKenzie Ring

Toughest to Grab (10-11mm)

Camp Photon Wire Express

Black Diamond Oz

Wild Country Helium

Grab with Caution (14mm)

Black Diamond PosiWire

Black Diamond HotWire

Aid Your Way Up Anything (16mm and up)

Petzl Djinn Access

Petzl Spirit Express

Black Diamond FreeWire

Editors' Choice Award: Petzl Spirit Express





The Petzl Spirit Express is our Editors Choice winner. It scored high in almost every category and the newer version is a little lighter than before. This is a great sport-climbing draw.

Credit: Cam McKenzie Ring

The [Petzl Spirit Express](#) has long been a favorite of sport climbers and beyond. It received a makeover a couple years ago, and along with some new colors, they trimmed a few fractions of an ounce off its weight (in true sport climbing fashion, of course). The Spirit Express comes with a keylock carabiner on each end and does everything a sport climber could ask for - clips are fast and snappy, the rope never snags on the keylock gate, and it was made to be grabbed. However, even with its latest weight loss it is still not really suited for long or alpine routes, so if that's your main climbing style keep reading for our Top Pick for Lightweight, but for everything else the Spirit Express is top of its class. Just don't loan them out or you may not get them back!

Best Buy Award: Black Diamond Freewire





Black Diamonds FreeWire quickdraw is our Best Buy Winner. This quickdraw is considerably less expensive than the other models we tested, but still performs well and meets all required safety standards.

Credit: Cam McKenzie Ring

If you have a Spirit Express in your hand it might be easy to overlook the [Black Diamond FreeWire Quickdraw](#), but you will do a double take when you see the price tag. You can pretty much buy two of these for the price of one Spirit! Our Best Buy winner performed well in most categories, and best of all, you can save money without sacrificing safety or durability. If you're new to climbing and not sure which type of specialized draw you might want, start off with a set of these until you figure it out, and once you do they'll make a great back-up set farther down the line.

Top Pick Award for Lightweight Quickdraw: Wild Country Helium



The Wild Country Helium is our Top Pick for lightweight gear. The innovative wiregate/keylock design clips and handles well, and a set of these will shave weight off your rack for when it counts, either on long routes or hard onsights.

Credit: Scott Ring

In our old review four years ago, the [Wild Country Helium Quickdraw](#) took the Editor's Choice and the Petzl Spirit Express got the Top Pick. Now it's reversed, but really it's a case of what type of climbing you do most, as they are both excellent draws. The Helium is lightweight and perfectly suited to traditional and multi-pitch climbing. Its keylocking wiregate is a great design, and the only downside to this draw is its hefty price tag. Put it on your Christmas list and hope Santa thinks you were nice.

— Cam McKenzie Ring

Buying Advice


- Still not sure? Read our [buying advice article](#) for tips on how to choose...

How we Test

- [Here's what we did to test these products...](#)

All trademarks property of their respective owners

How can we improve OutdoorGearLab? Got feedback?

 [Let us know!](#)

Time to generate this page: 0.39 secs.