NEWS LESSON

Who Should Be Allowed to Climb Everest?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you still want a summit photo if you had to queue for it?
2. What makes an adventure feel like an achievement?
3. Is a famous challenge more appealing because many people want to do it?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**infrastructure**	☐	A	reached the top of a mountain
2	**novices**	☐	B	without any help
3	**enforceable**	☐	C	able to be made to happen by law
4	**certify**	☐	D	the basic buildings and services that an activity needs
5	**unaided**	☐	E	to confirm officially that something is true
6	**revenue**	☐	F	money that a business or country earns
7	**summited**	☐	G	people who are new to an activity and have little experience
8	**uneasy**	☐	H	not comfortable or settled

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Nepal is considering stricter rules for Everest climbers. Experience may help safety, but it could also make the mountain more expensive, and guides and porters carry the risks.

1 Mount Everest occupies an uneasy position between an extraordinary mountaineering challenge and a global adventure industry. Its summit still demands exceptional endurance, but the commercial infrastructure built up around expeditions has fuelled concern about inexperienced climbers taking on the world's highest mountain with extensive paid assistance. Nepal's debate over tougher entry requirements reflects precisely that tension.

2 At extreme altitude, danger is not confined to dramatic storms or technical accidents. Thin air, fatigue and narrow weather windows can render delays life-threatening, while crowded sections of a route leave little room for individual judgement. Numbers compound every other hazard: what would be a minor inconvenience at sea level becomes, high on Everest, a question of how much oxygen is left in the cylinder. A poorly prepared climber adds to the pressure on guides, porters and rescue workers, who rarely have the option of turning back alone.

3 In 2026, Nepalese lawmakers considered revisions to tourism legislation that would impose more demanding qualifications on aspiring Everest climbers. One prominent proposal required applicants to have summited another mountain above 7,000 metres in Nepal. Other suggested changes concerned insurance, environmental responsibilities and the regulation of expedition companies. These measures formed part of a legislative process rather than a settled body of newly enforceable rules, a distinction easily lost once a headline announces that Everest has been closed to novices. Coverage that collapses the two risks misleading precisely the climbers any new rule is meant to protect.

4 There is a compelling argument for requiring demonstrable experience. Organised support cannot do away with the need for judgement, physical preparation and familiarity with high-altitude conditions. Climbing another mountain first is no guarantee of good judgement. Requiring extra expeditions could also make Everest more expensive and increase the travel involved. Rules intended to filter out the unprepared may end up filtering out the less wealthy. Competence, inconveniently, is harder to certify than altitude.

5 The economics weigh just as heavily. Mountaineering generates employment and revenue in regions with few alternative opportunities. Restrictions that sharply reduce visitor numbers would be felt first by guides and local communities, while rules that prioritise volume expose those same workers to avoidable danger. Responsible policy has to hold both considerations in view rather than treating climbers as the only parties with interests at stake. No version of the rules leaves every interest untouched; the real question is which trade-off can be defended.

6 The controversy illustrates a broader problem in adventure tourism. Paying for professional support can open up remarkable experiences to people who would never have reached them unaided, but no amount of money buys immunity from physical risk. Everest is simply the most dramatic illustration of a straightforward principle: the freedom to pursue a dream does not cancel the responsibility to consider who else bears its consequences. That holds well beyond the Himalayas, wherever difficulty itself has been packaged up and sold.

Sources: Kathmandu Post. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer suggests that the 7,000-metre rule could favour richer climbers. T F NG
2. Headlines saying Everest has been closed to novices are accurate. T F NG
3. Nepali guides have asked lawmakers to cut the number of permits. T F NG
4. The writer implies that an earlier climb would not necessarily improve a climber's judgement. T F NG
5. Rules that limit visitor numbers and rules that favour volume would affect guides in the same way. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

alleviate	compound	demonstrable	fuelled	immunity	prioritise	render	undermine

1. The leaked report _____ speculation that the government would abandon the plan.
2. Poor visibility will only _____ the problems for climbers who are already short of oxygen.
3. A single delay can _____ an otherwise routine descent hazardous.
4. The permit office wants _____ evidence of experience, such as certificates, not just a verbal claim.
5. Fame does not give a mountaineer _____ from the effects of thin air.
6. Operators that _____ profit over safety are likely to attract tighter regulation.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. Insurers are increasingly reluctant to cover _____ climbers. (EXPERIENCE)
2. Critics doubt the _____ of rules that rely on a single earlier climb. (EFFECTIVE)
3. Any attempt to _____ the rules would need the support of local communities. (STRONG)
4. Regulators are calling for greater _____ about how many clients each company takes. (TRANSPARENT)
5. The tourist board praised the _____ of local guides who stayed with a struggling client. (DEDICATE)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. At this level, look for fixed expressions: an adjective plus a preposition (contingent on) or a longer phrase (at the expense of, in lieu of).

at	by	from	of	on	to	with

1. Approval of the permit is contingent _____ proof of prior high-altitude experience.
2. The commercial interests of operators are often at odds _____ the safety of their staff.
3. Companies that cut costs _____ the expense of safety invite tighter regulation.
4. A rule this strict would be tantamount _____ a ban for most amateurs.
5. A cheaper package may offer extra oxygen in lieu _____ a second guide.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Who should be able to decide how many climbers a mountain receives?
2. Would you choose a less famous mountain for a better experience?
3. What should a visitor owe the people who make a dangerous trip possible?

9 Role-play: who should climb Everest?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · a mountain guide

Nepal may ask climbers to prove their experience first. You think this is a good idea because rescues are dangerous for guides. Explain your worries and ask the climber about their experience.

Student B · a keen climber

You've saved for years to climb Everest, but you've never climbed a 7,000-metre mountain. You think the new rule is unfair. Explain why you should be allowed to go, and look for a compromise.

Useful phrases

I'm worried about the risks for the guides.
Have you ever climbed above 7,000 metres?
I've been saving for this trip for years.
That's not fair, because I'm very fit.
What if I did a training course first?
Let's find a solution we're both happy with.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the guide agree to take the climber, and what was the compromise?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 D · 2 G · 3 C · 4 E · 5 B · 6 F · 7 A · 8 H

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 fuelled · 2 compound · 3 render · 4 demonstrable · 5 immunity · 6 prioritise

6 Word forms

1 inexperienced · 2 effectiveness · 3 strengthen · 4 transparency · 5 dedication

7 Language focus

1 on · 2 with · 3 at · 4 to · 5 of

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