

Renting and Buying

Renting is an excellent way to find out if you will enjoy nordic skiing before investing much money. Unfortunately most rentals (Camp Sagawau included)

are of the no-wax variety. Many shops will apply your first rental toward the purchase of new equipment.

When buying find a shop with knowledgeable people who will take the time to help you choose the right equipment and fit it properly. Total cost for skis, boots, bindings, and poles will vary greatly. Generally expect to pay between \$190 and \$300 for a moderate to high quality light touring ski set.

Clothing

Comfort and flexibility is the rule for nordic ski clothing. Let the weather and your activity level determine your clothing. More active skiing builds up more heat and requires less clothing. Dress in layers so that as your activity or the temperature changes you can adjust easily. Avoid bulky heavy coats or parkas, they will be too warm, build up sweat while you ski, and restrict your movement. ALWAYS wear a hat; up to 50% of body heat loss may be through your head. Wear warm gloves or mittens. Be prepared for wind with a light windbreaker. Wear polypropylene or capilene underwear. These materials transport moisture away from your body and keep your skin dry. Depending on your activity level wear a fleece or light wool outer garment. Wool keeps you warm even when it gets wet. Very active skiers wear stretch synthetic outer garments to dissipate heat.

Lessons

Beginners who want to start off on the right track should take lessons from qualified instructors. Nordic skiing techniques require balance and timing to be efficient. Inefficient skiing requires much more energy, is very fatiguing and less fun. The Professional Ski Instructors of America is a national organization that specializes in the training and certification of ski instructors. Instructors at Camp Sagawau are certified by the Central Division of PSIA. Anyone who desires

to learn the sport of Nordic skiing or who wants to improve their skiing skills and efficiency should take lessons from a certified ski instructor. The cost of quality lesson will be repaid in the form of greater skiing enjoyment.



Come Learn With Us— And Have Fun

Camp Sagawau was established to promote the study of our environment and provide the opportunity to experience the beauty of nature. The nordic ski program includes:

- Seminars
- Lessons at all Levels of Ability
- Instructors Clinic
- School Group Programs
- Group Lessons
- Nature Ski
- Trail Skiing
- Equipment Rental

For information on other programs at Camp Sagawau contact:

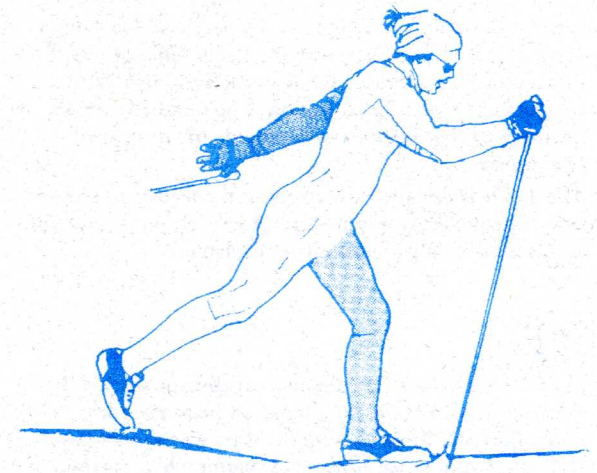
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Hypothermia is the lowering of core body temperature to the point the body no longer functions properly. This happens when the body loses heat faster than it can produce it. It is not freezing (frostbite). Hypothermia is caused by exposure to water, wind, and cool temperatures. Injury, poor physical condition, or fatigue are often contributing factors. Protection and prevention are most important. Stay dry — avoid over dressing that will cause sweat build up. Dress in easily removable layers. Wind over wet clothing or skin causes rapid evaporation and thus cooling. Wear wool over polypropylene. Carry a windbreaker. Take along high energy snacks. Hypothermia can occur when it is as warm as 60 degrees but becomes increasingly more dangerous at lower temperatures.

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Nordic Skiing

A Preparation Guide for Beginners



Camp Sagawau

Forest Preserve District of Cook County



Nordic Skiing — A Preparation Guide for Beginners

Camp Sagawau, The Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Introduction

There are more possibilities than in any other sport. Choose your style — slow and easy or fast and hard. Enjoy the comraderie of touring with friends or the precision of track skiing. Join the crowds in a race with a mass start or slip into solitude. Find the challenge of the back-country or the thrill of Telemarking. Ski the traditional diagonal stride or skating techniques or both.

While a bewildering variety of equipment is available, skiing is still skiing. The beginner can purchase equipment providing the most fun under the many different conditions. Don't be confused by the trend in nordic ski equipment toward specialization. The purchase of high quality gear that fits right will provide many years of enjoyment.

This guide is designed to introduce the factors to consider when making that first purchase. Its purpose is not to describe all of the equipment available.

Skis

Skiers move forward by diagonal striding or skating. In the diagonal stride the ski alternately grips the snow then glides forward. In ski skating the skier gains momentum much like an ice skater. No matter which technique is used, gliding is the name of the game. The skier glides up, over, and down hills, around corners, and over the flats. Skis that don't glide very well must be avoided!

Most nordic skiers begin by learning the diagonal stride on what is referred to as a light touring ski. This is a ski of medium width (about 50 mm) and not too heavy or light. To obtain the required grip manufacturers have employed several strategies. Traditionally a "wax" was applied to part of the ski base. The wax type or hardness varied to match the snow conditions of the day. More recently many skiers have turned to "no wax" skis that grip the snow with a patterned base. Each has advantages and disadvantages.

No Wax skis are very common. They require less preparation and are convenient. This convenience is at the sacrifice of performance and glide. No Wax skis typically perform best only under certain conditions and glide poorly — no matter what the ads say to the contrary! Ski skating is impossible to learn with no wax skis.

Waxable skis perform better in almost every snow condition. They take the skier one third farther or faster with the same amount of energy. They do require more preparation (typically about 5 - 10 minutes) and a basic understanding of snow conditions. While waxing techniques are varied they do not have to be complicated or time consuming. A simple two wax system is effective, fast, and easy to use for beginners. Additionally it is much easier to learn the skating techniques on waxable skis which glide well.

Short Skis are the new Nordic equipment craze. Some manufacturers have a one size fits all while others have two size ranges, one for smaller folks another for larger. While short skis are fun and work well under some conditions (waxable ones only), they do not replace the traditional length ski for all around use and performance.

When choosing which type is best for you consider the following. If you plan to ski more than once or twice a year and performance and versatility are important then choose a waxable ski. If you will only go out once or twice a year, and if you plan only to "hike" on skis then a no wax model may be best.

Ski Fit

Skis are made for a variety of uses. They are always made and sold in pairs that have matching serial numbers. A pair of skis on a dealer's shelf that has unmatching serial numbers is actually one ski from each of two pairs. Whatever type of skis you choose: Skis Must Fit! Ski fit is a combination of the correct camber (stiffness) and length of ski. The best way to determine best camber is to use a camber caliper. This device actually measures the amount of force required to flatten the camber or flex built into the ski. This force should equal approximately 65% of the your body weight. The ski should also be long enough for the tip to reach the wrist of your arm held straight up over your head.

Other methods have been employed to fit skis. A paper test can be used as a substitute for the camber caliper. Although not as accurate it is better than nothing. To perform the paper test find a smooth level hard surface. Put both skis down and stand on them at their center. With your weight evenly distributed a business card should slide

freely between the skis and floor from your heels to about a foot or so in front of your toes. Then with all of your weight shifted to one foot the card should not slide at all under the skis. Be sure to test both skis.

Avoid the salesperson who tries to fit your ski by considering length alone. You will most likely be disappointed.

Boots and Bindings

Nordic ski boots should fit like any other shoe for active wear: not too tight in the toe to avoid pinching, and not too loose in the heel to avoid slipping. Boots should be fitted with the socks you will wear while skiing. The boot sole should be stiff enough so you cannot twist it like a dishrag but not so stiff that it will not flex at the ball of the foot. Boots come in many styles and types. A good model for beginners will fit comfortably and give good control.

There are a variety of binding systems. Their function is to provide for a stable connection between boot and ski. Generally the boot and binding are designed to work together as a system but are sold separately. Four of the best systems are either version of the New Nordic Norms (NNN or NNN II) or Solomon Nordic Systems (SNS or Profil). Within these systems the fit of the boot is most critical since a SNS boot will not fit an SNS Profil or a NNN binding and so on.

Older binding types such as 75mm or 50mm do not provide the same level of performance and except for some specialized applications like cross country downhill (XCD) are fading from the scene and should be avoided.

Poles

Most poles are made of fiberglass, have a readily adjustable strap, a sharp and angled spike, small basket, and are designed specifically for nordic skiing. A properly fitted pole for the diagonal stride should reach the top of the armpit when held straight up next to your body. Do not use a downhill type pole for cross country skiing and be sure the strap is easy to adjust.