



Cross-Country Skiing: Safety Activity Checkpoints



Also referred to as “back-country,” “Nordic,” and “XC skiing,” cross-country skiing is an excellent form of exercise and an opportune way to explore the outdoors in the wintertime. As with downhill skiers, cross-country skiers use two poles for guidance, and bindings to connect boots to skis. Unlike downhill skiing, in which the entire boot is attached to the ski, only the toe of the cross-country skier’s boot is attached to the ski. Contact ski shops and cross-country ski organizations to inquire about rental equipment. Cross-country skiing is not permitted for Girl Scout Daisies.

Know where to cross-country ski. Designated cross-country ski trails are recommended. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions and approval. Also, xcski.org provides information about cross-country [skiing trails](#).

Include girls with disabilities. Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that www.SitSki.com and [Disabled Sports USA](http://www.disabledsportsusa.org/cross-country-skiing/) <http://www.disabledsportsusa.org/cross-country-skiing/> provide to people with disabilities.

Cross-Country Skiing Gear

Required Gear:

- Skis
- Ski poles
- Boots
- Thick, water-resistant gloves or mittens

Recommended Gear

- Winter hat
- Heavy insulating socks
- Thermal underwear or long johns
- Sunglasses or ski goggles to protect eyes from bright snow glare
- Sunscreen and (SPF of at least 15) and lip balm
- Water bottle, high-energy food (such as fruits and nuts)
- Daypack to carry personal belongings
- Windproof, waterproof jacket
- Snow pants or tights and windbreakers made for skiing, bicycling, or running

Prepare for Cross-Country Skiing

- Communicate with council and parents.** *See the Introduction to Safety Activity.*
- Girls plan the activity.** *See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.*
- Arrange for transportation and adult supervision.** *For the recommended adult-to-girl ratios please see the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.*
- Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** Instruction is given by an adult with experience teaching and/or supervising cross-country skiing for the age group(s) involved or has documented experience according to your council's guidelines..
- Compile key contacts.** *See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoint.*
- Select a safe cross-country skiing site*.** Girls are encouraged to plan trip details and include adequate rest periods with opportunities to replenish fluids and eat high-energy foods (such as fruits and nuts). The nature of the terrain, potential hazards (such as an avalanche or frozen lake), mileage, and approximate cross-country skiing time are known to all group members. When a latrine is not available, individual cat holes at least 200 feet away from water sources are used to dispose of human waste (visit www.lnt.org for more information).
- Map the course*.** The route is marked on a map and before skiing designate a meeting place where girls can contact a supervising adult.
- Prepare for emergencies.** Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in First Aid, including Adult and Child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of frostbite, cold exposure, hypothermia, sprains, fractures, and altitude sickness. Emergency transportation is available. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with Wilderness First Aid. Girls are trained in winter survival (such as snow-cave building, whiteouts, and avalanche avoidance), as needed. Search-and-rescue procedures are written out in advance and arrangements are made for medical

emergencies and evacuation procedures. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

On the Day of Cross-Country Skiing

- **Get a weather report.** On the morning of the activity, check weather.com or other reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. Xcski.org provides reports about snow conditions by region. If severe weather conditions prevent the activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternate activity, or postpone the activity. Write, review, and practice evacuation and emergency plans for severe weather with girls.
- **Use the buddy system.** See *the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- **Follow cross-country safety standards*.** Ski area rules are explained and observed:
 - Girls ski under control to avoid other skiers and objects.
 - Girls yield the right-of-way to those already on the trail. They step to the side to let faster skiers pass. A descending skier has the right of way.
 - A faster skier indicates her desire to pass by calling “Track, please.”
 - Girls do not ski close to the edge of an embankment or a cliff.
 - Girls do not walk on ski trails.

Cross-Country Skiing Links

- Cross Country Ski Areas Association: www.xcski.org
- National Ski Patrol: www.nsp.org
- The World of Cross Country Skiing: www.xcskiworld.com

Cross-Country Skiing Know-How for Girls

- **Get in shape.** Before cross-country skiing, run and/or participate in other aerobic exercises to build endurance.
- **Recover from a fall.** The act of hoisting back up while wearing skis can be a cumbersome process. Learn how to get back up on your skis at the XCskiworld website.

***These checkpoints must be reviewed with the vendor and/or facility, when appropriate.**