



Chapter 1: Starting Up

Creating something where nothing has existed before can be challenging. To help you, this Manual covers the step-by-step process of starting a Bill Koch Youth Ski League club and also directs you to other helpful resources.

NENSA: NENSA's website (www.nensa.net) is a great general resource and the first place you can go with questions. This Manual is available for free on our Youth Resources page (www.nensa.net/youth) along with many other helpful links and suggested reading material. NENSA staff can provide you with helpful contacts and advice. Individual and club NENSA membership can be activated or renewed through the website, and bulk club memberships can be processed by NENSA staff. Email staff@nensa.net or call 207-688-6503 for assistance.

New England Bill Koch Youth Ski League: The New England Bill Koch Youth Ski League is led by a committee made up of the following people:

- **Committee Chair:** Leader of the New England BKL Committee
- **NENSA Youth & Introductory Program Director:** The NENSA program staffer who educates clubs and coaches, and helps provide the framework for BKL development across the region.
- **District Chairs:** The District Chairs make up the BKL Committee and represent the clubs in their area. The districts in the East currently consist of:
 - Northeast Vermont (NEVT)
 - Northwest Vermont (NWVT)
 - Central Vermont (CEVT)
 - Southern Vermont (SOVT)
 - Eastern Massachusetts (EAMA)
 - Western Massachusetts (WEMA)
 - Maine (ME)
 - Northern New Hampshire (NONH)
 - South/Central New Hampshire (SO/CENH)
 - New York (NY)

On the local level, clubs are led by a Club Leader. Within each district there are a varying number of clubs, and each club has a club leader. The NENSA website (www.nensa.net/bill-koch-league-club-directory) lists contact information for all the people holding all the positions listed above, as well as each club leader. These people can share their experiences with you and help answer questions.



The Role of The Club Leader

The BKL Club Leader plans, organizes, and directs BKL activities at the club level. Skillful leaders delegate responsibility so not all of the tasks listed below need to be done by the leader themselves, but they do all come under the broad job description of a Club Leader:

- Plans or supervises the planning of all club activities
- Arranges the schedule and meeting place for club sessions
- Involves and coordinates caregiver/parent participation in the club
- Supervises and assists with enrollment and registration
- Registers the club with NENSA
- Is the liaison with the District Chair and Committee Chair
- Conducts and evaluates club sessions

Recruiting Volunteers: While successful Clubs have a leader or co-leaders, clubs are organized and run by a host of volunteers working under the leader's direction. Many volunteers will be caregivers/parents of club members, but help can also be found within your local ski, fitness, and service communities.

Where to Look for Help

- Town recreation departments, YMCA/YWCA, or service clubs etc.
- High school cross country ski program(s). Many high schoolers love to work with younger children and many of them may have younger siblings in the program. If you are fortunate, you may end up recruiting parents/caregivers, instructors, and participants in one contact.
- Ski shops, sporting goods stores, and cross country ski areas may all be interested in supporting a local BKL Club.
- Local NENSA members (NENSA staff can provide you with contacts)
- Teachers and physical education instructors, particularly in elementary and middle schools
- Local fitness centers and outing clubs
- Local email lists or Facebook groups

The Mental Side To Recruiting Volunteers: The first step in recruiting is understanding exactly what it is you are doing and what it is you are not doing. You are **not** selling anything. You are **not** asking for money. You are **not** being bothersome or imposing on people. You **are** providing a service to your community. You **are** giving people an opportunity to work with children in fun and exciting ways. You **are** giving caregivers/parents the chance to join their children in a health-affirming activity. You **are** giving businesses and service clubs a new means of interacting with their community. Be happy in your work. Feel good about what you are doing.



You are engaged in helping others! When you feel comfortable with this, you are ready for the next step.

When you begin to make connections, make them positive in tone and get right to the point. Some things you can say include:

- “I’m interested in starting up a cross country ski program for children. I’m looking for some help to get things underway. Don’t worry about whether or not you ski. You just have to enjoy working with kids!”
- “Cross country skiing is super fun and it’s an activity that can involve the whole family. It’s safe and recreational, but offers competitive options for those who want them. It’s educational, healthy, and environmentally sensitive. You’re not going to find a better lifetime sport!”

Have a brochure or flyer to leave behind or to distribute via email. At a minimum it should include your name and phone number, but it should also have the date and site of your informational meeting. An informational meeting is your next step because once you’ve recruited a pool of potential volunteers, you’ll need to educate and organize them.

Club Organizer Meeting: This is the first watershed moment in your efforts to start a BKL club. This is when you turn a collection of individuals into an organized team. What follows is a sample agenda for your club organizer meeting. Do your homework so that you have preliminary information to facilitate discussion at every point.

- The Reason for the Meeting
 - Introduce guests/volunteers
 - Explain the New England Bill Koch Youth Ski League and its parent group, NENSA
- Distribute printed materials
 - Explain the BKL Philosophy
 - Discuss starting a club; determine the will of the group
 - Outline club needs
- Choose facilities, both indoor and outdoor
- Inventory jobs and people to fill them
- Membership
 - Promotion and recruiting
 - Database management
 - Signing membership and liability release forms, and collecting money
 - Officer/leadership roles
 - Coaches, instructors, chaperones
- Equipment for kids and caregivers/parents (loans, rentals, special deals, etc.)



- Accessories (wax, first aid, game equipment, bibs, banners, trail markers, etc.)
- Grooming—how, who, when, where, with what?
- Travel: buses, carpooling, etc.
- Financial
 - Club fees, NENSA fees, and what they will cover
 - Sponsorship from local businesses
 - Competition fees and awards (if applicable)
 - Fundraising possibilities: silent auctions, bake sales, etc.
- Planning the Club Program
 - Outline goals
 - Assign duties
 - Compile list of action items and timeline their completion (who does what by when)

Recruiting Participants: At this point you've organized a working group. Everyone has assignments; things to check on and things to do. Of all the tasks which lie ahead, the single most important thing is to find children. It's pretty straightforward—no kids, no club. But before you begin to talk to people you need to do some planning. Be aware that there are three primary avenues through which kids learn about BKL and enter the program and three basic reasons why they do so.

How Kids Learn About BKL

- Their caregivers/parents
- Peers who are already in the BKL
- Their school and/or youth group

Why the Kids Come (and stay)

- Because it's fun and exciting
- Because their caregivers/parents share a love of winter and cross country skiing
- Because their friends do it

Targeting Kids for Your Club: Be aware that you will need to have the permission of those in charge of school and community groups before you promote your club to the children involved in them. You should probably start with the principals of local elementary or middle schools, but be prepared to talk to the school board, especially if you plan to use school grounds for club activities. Try looking for participants in:

- Youth groups such as boy/girl scouts, church groups, etc.
- School clubs
- Summer and fall sports teams



- Recreational centers
- Nordic Rocks (if your local elementary school has a program)

Promoting Your Club: No matter how many adults, children, and groups you contact personally, you still need to be able to promote your club and to advertise it in a wider arena. This means employing other means of communication such as:

- Social media
- Newspapers
- Email lists
- Community bulletin boards/forums
- Local businesses

If your club decides to register with NENSA as an official club, NENSA can help promote via the NENSA website and social media outlets.

Some Notes on Newspapers: Newspapers are still relevant, and many appreciate the personal approach. If you want your news release to make it to the local paper, whether online or in print, you should send it directly to the sports or events editor. Make sure to include all of the basic information that parents need, including:

- Time and place of practice
- Any associated costs
- Transportation needs
- Services you might require of them
- Equipment needs for their children