



Chapter 10: Clothing and Equipment

Clothing

While new types of fabric and new accessories have emerged in recent years, the principles of layering remain the same. In order to best protect against the elements, layers of clothing should be worn to help trap air. The amount of still air trapped in the clothing is directly related to the warmth of the child! Having many layers on hand also allows children to adjust what they are wearing to stay comfortable if the weather or their activity level changes. It is important to note that most wet clothing will not keep a body warm. It is also important to note that there is a fine line between being warm and being too warm. With the right materials, layers will work together to wick sweat away from the skin and keep the child from overheating. However, if a child is dressed too warmly and sweats a lot, they can get cold very fast if they stop skiing.

Leaders should keep an eye on children to make sure no one is getting too overheated during practice. If they are, encourage them to shed a layer. By the same token, if children get too cold or cannot keep their hands and feet warm, they should be encouraged to put on an extra layer. The best way to keep warm, of course, is to keep moving!

Layers

Base Layer: The base layer consists of the clothing worn next to the skin. Base layers can be made from many wicking materials including wool, synthetics, and silk. Cotton should be avoided at all costs as it soaks up sweat instead of wicking it away from skin and does not dry quickly. For cold days, base layers should be worn on top and bottom.

Mid Layer or Insulating Layer: This layer does a lot of work to keep children warm by retaining body heat. The more efficiently this layer traps heat, the warmer the child will be. In general, thicker/puffier layers are warmer. The best materials for mid layers include fleece, wool, or down/synthetic down. Vests can be a great option for a midlayer and are easily packable (although they do not tie around waists).

Outer Layer or Shell: The outer layer protects from wind, rain, and snow keeping children dry and trapping warm air. In wet conditions, it's important to have a waterproof shell layer so that water doesn't penetrate the other layers and make the child cold. For variable conditions, a lightweight packable shell carried in a fanny pack can be a lifesaver.



Accessories

Hats: The head is a very important regulator of body temperature. A large amount of body heat is lost through the head. As children warm up during exercise, suggest that they remove layers of clothing, but not their hats. Hats should be worn at all times unless it's really warm.

Mittens & Gloves: Mittens are usually warmer than gloves because the fingers are not separated and can keep each other warm. Gloves are a good choice for more warm/moderate days while mittens are a better choice when it's cold.

Bufs/Neck gaiters: Bufs or neck gaiters help keep children's necks and chins warm and can be pulled up over the ears or face for additional protection on particularly cold days. A buff can also be modified to wear as a headband.

Eye Wear: There are days when eyes must be protected from the sun and the sun's glare reflecting off the snow, or from falling snow that makes it hard to see. Sunglasses are great for glare and goggles or clear-lens glasses are great for snow.

Skin Protection: Lip balm can be used to prevent windburn and sunburn on the lips. On sunny days and at high altitude, children should use sunscreen as well. On very cold days children should wear vaseline or dermatone to help protect exposed skin from frostbite.

Drink Belt, Fanny Pack, or Water Bottle Holder: These are a great way for children to carry their own water during practice, as well as some spare wax, snacks, or an extra layer. Encourage children to bring water to practice and drink it as necessary.

Post-Practice Clothes

It is very important to change into dry clothes after practice. When a child stops moving at the end of practice, sweat/moisture in the clothes cools off and the body rapidly becomes chilled. By encouraging children to change into dry clothes for the ride home, you can help them stay healthy throughout the winter.

Skis, Poles, and Boots

Choosing equipment can be overwhelming; there are a lot of different kinds of skis, boots, and poles out there and new advances in materials and technology means the offerings are regularly changing. All the latest and greatest equipment is available online or at your local shop but for a cost. Equipment can be a hugely limiting factor for families who are new to the sport of cross country skiing, and it's important to remember that beginners do not need to have the fanciest or most expensive equipment to start. Chances are they'll outgrow it soon anyway.



So where should you start? If your child is a true beginner, it's recommended to start with a pair of waxless classic skis, combi boots (for more ankle support), and classic-height poles. As your child gets older and more experienced, consider getting a pair of skate skis and skate-height poles. After your child has a few years of skiing experience you may want to consider purchasing a pair of waxable classic skis. The proper equipment will make it easier to learn to ski.

We no longer suggest combi skis as very few beginner children have the skills, or develop the skills fast enough, to classic ski on wax and caregivers/parents may not yet know how to wax skis. Additionally, combi skis rarely get cleaned well enough to make skating fun. However, combi skis can effectively be used as standalone skate skis.

In a world where online shopping has become the norm, we still recommend going to a local shop to get fitted for skis instead of ordering online. Proper ski fit depends on more than just height and weight, and your local shop may be able to let your child demo a pair of skis before buying so you can be sure that you are getting equipment that fits.

An intro video to classic equipment from NENSA sponsor, the Craftsbury Outdoor Center: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoVuh_8QL6w.

Ski Swap/Sales

A ski swap is a large community event where used ski equipment is brought to a central location and sold with proceeds usually going to the local club/business organizing the swap. Because of the rate at which children outgrow equipment, buying used gear can save a family a lot of money especially if they have multiple children involved in the BKL!

Hosting a swap is a great opportunity to fundraise for your club, and you can sell snacks and hot cocoa as well as ski gear. To hold a ski swap, you'll need to leverage all your community outreach methods. Email lists, social media groups, newspaper ads, and personal outreach will help you find people looking to part with old equipment. Have a place where people can come and make equipment donations prior to the event so your club can inventory, inspect, and price the gear.

Once you've accumulated enough skis, poles, boots, and clothing, it's time to spread the word. Reach out to caregivers/parents in your club, as well as other clubs in the area, with the time, date, and location of the ski swap. Put an ad in your local paper, create a Facebook event, or post to your community bulletin board. It can also be helpful to include a caregiver/parent info session on your club at the same time or before/after your ski swap. You can also use a Google Group for club members and local skiers to post used equipment throughout the season.