



## Chapter 15: The Cross Country Skier Lifestyle

Cross country skiing is not just a winter sport, it's a way of life. It's a love of being outside, playing with and supporting friends, exploring trails, and learning or making up new games. Someone who cross country skis gets to play outside year round!

For BKL-aged children, the focus is on general athleticism like agility, balance, speed, strength, and endurance. The best approach to training young children is an instructional program that builds basic aptitudes. Children younger than age 10 benefit from a loosely-structured program which focuses on fun and general fitness. Older children can learn the basics of ski technique. Children who are 11 to 13 years old should be committed to competition before they train more than three to four days per week. A BKL caregiver/parent/leader can encourage and guide healthy, active children to do the following:

**Diversify:** Enjoy a wide range of activities, games, and sports to develop a wide range of motor skills.

**General Fitness:** Children can develop overall physical fitness and general athleticism during the off-season through a variety of activities. Voluntary participation in these activities allows a child to stay fit naturally. Club activities can encourage group participation in off-season sports, games, and events. These activities should encourage endurance, heart and lung development, and power and body strength. Below are some suggestions:

- **Running:** Vary the distance, terrain, and speed. Fun games and relays can help build a young child's speed
- **Hiking:** Explore! Bring last year's ski poles along, or swing your arms when hiking to simulate skiing. Older children may want to carry a backpack or a water bottle carrier.
- **Bicycling:** Master the two wheeler! Where it's safe, bike to school, to the store, to your friend's house, to the park, or on trails. Helmets are a must!!
- **Swimming:** Learn to swim. Be a part of a swim team. Perfect your dive.
- **Canoeing, Kayaking, and/or Rowing:** Canoe to explore a lake or a river. Canoe to get to a picnic spot. Canoe-camp with your family. Paddling is a great activity for the upper body.
- **Gymnastics:** Great for developing strength, agility, balance, and flexibility.
- **Ball Sports:** Tennis, basketball, baseball, football, and softball are great for developing hand-eye coordination, speed, agility, and teamwork. Be a little cautious of these sports. Ball sport coaches tend to increase the intensity of the workouts as competitions increase which can cause mental and physical burn-out and result in children losing valuable aerobic endurance work that's key to physical development at a younger age.



- **Soccer:** Soccer is terrific for developing speed and agility. It's a game best played with friends and it helps develop teamwork.
- **Natural Weight Training:** Chores are the ideal 'weight training' for kids at this age! Weights and machines aren't fun or productive yet. Instead, carry out the garbage, help stack the woodpile, or haul some hay to the garden.
- **Rollerskiing:** Roller skis are great fun, but it takes a lot of time to get comfortable on them. If your child does choose to rollerski, make sure they are closely supervised by coaches for both safety and technique. Rollerskiing for youth skiers should emphasize double poling and skating, not diagonal striding. However, classic rollerskis can be a good way to start since they are more stable than skate rollerskis. A helmet is absolutely necessary and gloves are suggested.