

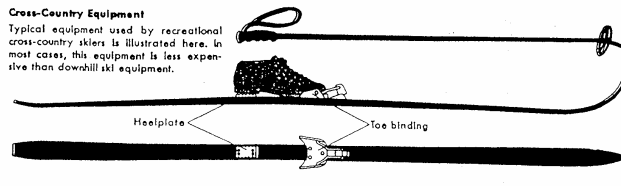
## History

Before skis were used for fun and leisure, the ski was used for work and transportation. The oldest known version is a wide, short ski found in Sweden that has been shown to be over 4500 years old, and cave and rock drawings suggest that skis were used even long before then. These first skis may have been used by a hunter or a traveler, as they were commonly used during the long winters in Northern Russia and the Scandinavian countries. Early skis were not made for speed, but to be designed to keep a traveler on top of the snow as they went about their business.

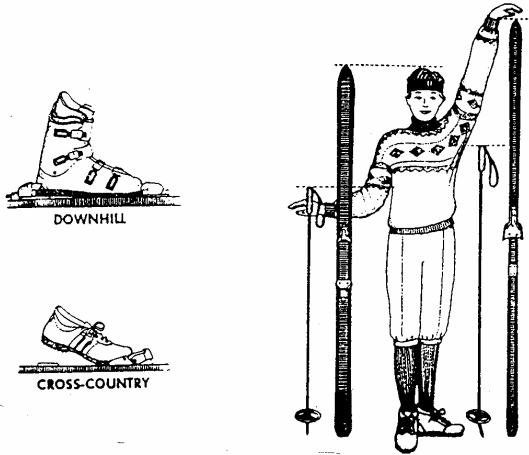
## Getting Started

Cross country skiing is a fun and low-cost winter sport that is easy to get involved in. Age should be no barrier in learning how to ski. Ski instructors say that almost anyone who can walk can easily learn how to ski.

- **The Gear** - Cross country ski gear includes a set of skis, poles and boots. You can buy a package of basic cross country ski gear for around \$100.
- **Find Some Snow** - The great thing about cross country skiing is that you don't need to pay big bucks or drive to some big resort. All you need to do is find some snow, whether it's in a school field, your backyard, or some trails in the forest.
- **Easy To Learn** - Cross country skiing is much easier to learn than downhill skiing, since you use much of the same movements you use for walking.
- **Health Benefits** - Cross country skiing is an easy-to-learn winter sport that has many health benefits. The sport is a great aerobic exercise and works the muscles in your legs, back, chest, stomach and butt. Cross country skiing is also a fun social activity and can be a fun way to get some exercise with family and friends during the winter.
- **Different from Downhill Skiing** - Cross country skiing is a relaxing sport, which some people may find "boring" compared to the high speed and big air world of downhill skiing. While cross country skiing may not have the excitement and adrenaline of downhill, it doesn't have the nasty wipeouts or high costs associated with downhill skiing either.



Skiing is that act of gliding over snow on long narrow runners called skis. Cross-country skiing is simply hiking on skis over long distances of flat or slightly hilly terrain. Cross-country skis are narrower and lighter than Alpine (downhill) skis. Many expert skiers prefer wood skis, but fiberglass cross-country skis are also popular.



Skiers determine the proper length for the cross-country skis by standing with one arm extended straight up. The skis should reach from the ground to the palm of the hand. Skis used for cross-country racing are very narrow and lightweight, and have highly curved tips. Charts may also be used to figure ski sizes based on height and weight.

Cross-country ski poles have a point that is set at an angle to the shaft. The point catches on the snow when the pole is swung forward and slips out of the snow easily when the skier glides beyond the poles. Some cross-country skiers use bamboo poles though others prefer metal or fiberglass poles. Cross-country poles should reach as high as the skiers armpits.

Bindings on cross-country skis clamp down only at the toe. The heel is free so that the skier can lift it while moving forward. A heelplate on the skis grips the heel of the boot when the skier glides downhill.

Ski clothing should be warm and waterproof. It should also fit snugly without restricting movement. Most skiers wear several layers of clothing, beginning with long underwear and working up to a top protective layer. Do not forget gloves and sunglasses.

## How to Ski

Cross-country skiing is closely related to walking. The motion of the arms and legs alternate—the left arm and right leg come forward together, then the right arm and left leg. When you speed up, just as with walking, you stretch out your

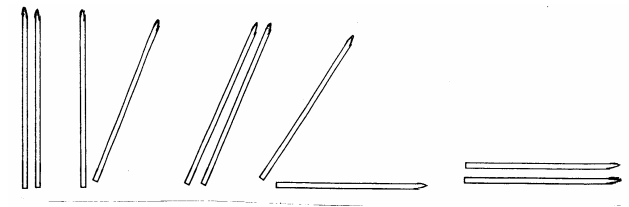
movements. And when you walk or ski uphill, you tend to lean forward and shorten your stride.

Begin on a flat open area. Simply push the skis across the snow, first with your right foot, then with your left. As you become comfortable, pick up the pace a little. Soon you will be able to glide slightly on each ski after each step and the motion becomes: step—glide, step—glide, step—glide, one foot at a time. This does require some balance. Your knees should be slightly bent and the torso held forward at a slight angle. Your arms should swing freely with each step.



Poles are an important part of cross-country skiing. They help give you balance and an extra push on each step. Push against the pole as your ski goes past it. This is a hard motion to describe, but you find that it comes quite naturally. Just remember to bring the opposite pole forward as you push with your foot.

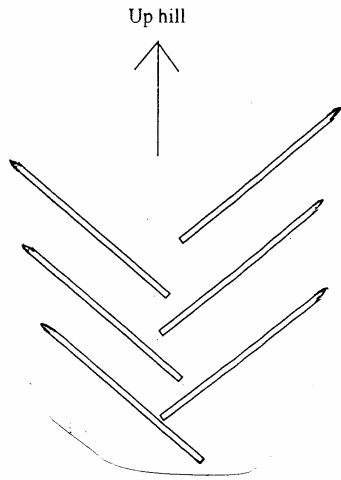
When you find it necessary to turn, you can follow the diagram below. If you want to turn right, lift the tip of your right ski, leaving the tail on the snow and place it three or four feet to the right. Your skis should now be in a "V" shape. Now bring the tip of the left ski to the right so that the skis are again parallel. Repeat this procedure until you are facing in the right direction.



If you have not fallen down yet, congratulations! If you have fallen you might have some problem getting back up with the skis on your feet. You have two options. Take the skis off and start over, or try the following. Make sure that both of your poles are together on your uphill side so that they do not break and that your skis are not pointing downhill. Get your skis as nearly flat on the snow as you can and try to center your weight over them. Now you can use your poles to pull yourself to a standing position.

## Hills Are FUN?!?!

Going up and down hills is what makes the event more challenging. Starting at the bottom to make it up a gradual hill, shorten your stride and take quick steps—sort of trotting up the hill. If the grade is steeper, different tactics are in order. You may use a herringbone step in which you flare out the tips of your skis into a wide “V” shape, taking one step at a time, uphill. Your tracks will look like the diagram below. If the hill is too steep you may always take off the skis and walk it on foot.



Now that you are at the top of the hill, you get the thrill of coming back down. To go downhill, skis should be parallel but with one ski slightly out in front. Bend your knees and lean forward slightly. Make sure you tuck your poles back underneath your armpits to avoid being impaled on them should you fall. Keep your eyes open and watch for the trees and turns!

If you are moving too fast, there are several things to do to slow down. You can drag your poles, “snow plow”, sit down, or grab something (not another person, please!). Use these methods to keep you from hitting an object that could cause injuries or broken equipment.

Once you master these skills, you’ll find endless opportunities for exploring the outdoors in winter! For directions to county parks with ski trails, go to [www.jaspercountyconservation.com](http://www.jaspercountyconservation.com).



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Getting Started With

# Cross-Country Skiing



Jasper County Conservation Board