



Special Olympics

SNOWSHOEING COACHING GUIDE

Teaching Snowshoeing Skills



Table of Context

The Warm-Up	4
Stretching	6
Teaching Snowshoeing	15
Putting on Snowshoes	16
Skill Progression – Putting on Snowshoes	16
Faults & Fixes – Putting on Snowshoes	16
Removing Snowshoes	17
Skill Progression – Removing Snowshoes	17
Faults & Fixes – Removing Snowshoes	17
Moving Forward	18
Skill Progression – Moving Forward	18
Faults & Fixes – Moving Forward	18
Avoiding Snowshoe Overlap	19
Skill Progression – Avoiding Snowshoe Overlap	19
Faults & Fixes – Avoiding Snowshoe Overlap	20
Stopping	21
Skill Progression – Stopping	21
Faults & Fixes – Stopping	21
Falling	22
Skill Progression – Falling	22
Faults & Fixes – Falling	22
Getting Up	23
Skill Progression – Getting Up	23
Faults & Fixes – Getting Up	23
Turning	24
Skill Progression – Turning	24
Faults & Fixes – Turning	25
Climbing Hills	26
Skill Progression – Climbing Hills	26
Faults & Fixes – Climbing Hills	27
Descending Hills	28
Skill Progression – Descending Hills	28
Faults & Fixes – Descending Hills	29
Sprint Starts	30
Skill Progression – Sprint Starts	30
Faults & Fixes – Sprint Starts	32
Sprinting	33
Skill Progression – Sprinting	33
Faults & Fixes – Sprinting	34
Relay Races	35
Skill Progression – Relay Races	35
Faults & Fixes – Relay Races	37
Distance Snowshoeing	38
Skill Progression – Distance Snowshoeing	38
Faults & Fixes – Distance Snowshoeing	39
Waterfall Start	40
Skill Progression – Waterfall Start	40



Pacing	41
Skill Progression – Pacing	41
Faults & Fixes – Pacing	42
Passing	43
Skill Progression – Passing	43
Faults & Fixes – Passing	44
Finishing	45
Skill Progression – Finishing a Race	45
Snowshoeing Games	46
The Cool-Down	48
Modifications and Adaptations	49
Modifications	49
Adaptations	49
Cross Training in Snowshoeing	50



The Warm-Up

Snowshoeing is an aerobic activity, which exercises the entire body. Warm-up activities will physically prepare the body for snowshoeing and will also increase flexibility, which helps to prevent injury.

Warming up is a basic and extremely important part of the practice routine. It focuses the athlete mentally, raises the body temperature and prepares the muscles, tendons and cardiovascular system for upcoming stretches and activities. By increasing the elasticity of the muscles, the chance of injury is reduced.

A warm-up period is the first part of every training session or preparation for competition. The warm-up starts slowly and systematically and gradually involves all muscles and body parts that prepare the athlete for training and competition. In addition to preparing the athlete mentally, warming up also has several physiological benefits, such as:

1. Raises body temperature
2. Increases metabolic rate
3. Increases heart and respiratory rate
4. Prepares the muscles and nervous system for exercise

The warm-up is tailored for the activity to follow. Warm-ups consist of active motion leading up to more vigorous motion to elevate heart, respiratory and metabolic rates. The total warm-up period takes at least 25 minutes and immediately precedes the training or competition. A warm-up period can include the following basic sequence and components.

Activity	Purpose	Time (minimum)
Slow aerobic walk/ fast walk/ jog/ run	Heat muscles	5 minutes
Stretching	Increase range of movement	10 minutes
Event Specific Drills	Prepare for training	10 minutes
Competition Final Warm-Up	Prepare for competition	20 minutes

Aerobic Warm-Up

This includes activities such as walking, light jogging, walking while doing arm circles, jumping jacks.

Walking/ Jogging

Walking is the first exercise of an athlete's routine. Athletes begin warming the muscles by walking slowly for 3-5 minutes. This circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching. The sole objective of the walking warm-up is to circulate the blood and warm the muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity.

Running

Running is the next exercise in an athlete's routine. Athletes begin warming the muscles by running slowly for 3-5 minutes. This circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching. The run starts out slowly, and then gradually increases in speed; however, the athlete never reaches even 50 percent of maximum effort by the end of the run. Remember, the sole objective of this phase of the warm-up is circulating the blood and warming the muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity.



Stretching

Stretching is one of the most critical parts of the warm-up and an athlete's performance. A more flexible muscle is a stronger and healthier muscle. A stronger and healthier muscle responds better to exercise and activities and helps prevent injury. Please refer to the stretching section for more in-depth information.

Event Specific Drills

Drills are progressions of learning that start at a low ability level, advance to an intermediate level, and finally reach a high ability level. Encourage each athlete to advance to the highest possible level.

Kinesthetic movements are reinforced through repetitions of a small segment of the skill to be performed. Many times, the actions are exaggerated in order to strengthen the muscles that perform the skill. Each coaching session should take athletes through the entire progression so that they are exposed to the total of all of the skills that make up an event.

Competition Final Warm-Up

Initial two phases of warm-up can be conducted inside a building or facility if space permits. Make sure the athletes stay warm if they conduct their initial warm-up outside, especially during the stretching phase.

Warm-Up Example

400-meter or less Warm-Up

- Could be up to 800 meters
- Starts
- Accelerates to top speed for shorter distances (10 m) with a gradual slow-down
- Form Drills
 - High knee lifts
 - Butt kicks
 - Bounding
 - Quick steps
 - Exaggerated arm swings
 - Relay exchanges

Distance (800 meters or more) Warm-Up

- Could be 800 meters or more
- Accelerate to race pace for 100m to 400m—up to four repetitions
- Form Drills (not as emphasized as in shorter distances)
 - Bounding
 - Quick steps
 - High knee lifts
 - Butt kicks



Stretching

Flexibility is a major element to an athlete's optimal performance in both training and competing. Flexibility is achieved through stretching, a critical component in warming up. Stretching follows an easy aerobic walk/ fast walk/ run at the start of, or end of, a training session or competition.

Begin with an easy stretch to the point of tension and hold this position for 15-30 seconds until the pull lessens. When the tension eases, slowly move further into the stretch until tension is again felt. Hold this new position for an additional 15 seconds. Each stretch should be repeated four to five times on each side of the body.

It is also important to continue to breathe while stretching. As you lean into the stretch, exhale. Once the stretching point is reached, keep inhaling and exhaling while holding the stretch. Stretching should be a part of everyone's daily life. Regular, consistent daily stretching has been demonstrated to have the following effects:

1. Increase the length of the muscle-tendon unit
2. Increase joint range of motion
3. Reduce muscle tension
4. Develop body awareness
5. Promote increased circulation
6. Make you feel good

Some athletes, like those with Down syndrome, may have low muscle tone that makes them appear more flexible than they actually are. Be careful not to allow these athletes to stretch beyond a normal, safe range. Several stretches are dangerous to perform for all athletes and should never be part of a safe stretching program. These unsafe stretches include the following:

- Neck Backward Bending
- Trunk Backward Bending
- Spinal Roll
- Medial and Lateral Knee Bending

Stretching is effective only if the stretch is performed accurately. Athletes need to focus on correct body positioning and alignment. In the calf stretch, for example, many athletes do not keep the feet forward, in the direction that they are running.

As you can imagine, there are a host of stretches and variations to achieve your goals. However, focus on some basic stretches highlighting major muscle groups. Along the way, point out some common faults, illustrate corrections and identify stretches that are more event specific. In addition, remind the athletes to keep breathing while stretching. Start at the bottom of the body and work your way to the arms and neck.

Coaching Tips

- Try to have a low athlete/coach ratio.
- Coaches and assistants must make sure that stretches are being done effectively and are not harmful to the athlete. To do this may require direct, one-on-one physical assistance, particularly with lower ability players.
- Some stretches require a good sense of balance. If balance is a problem, use stretches that can be done while in a sitting or lying position.
- Coaches should attend to athletes doing the exercises improperly, as well as provide personal attention and reinforcement to those doing them effectively.
- Use stretching as a "teachable moment" with your athletes. Explain the importance of each stretching exercise and which muscle group is being stretched. Later, ask the athletes why each stretching exercise is important.



Lower Body

Calf Stretch



- Stand facing forward, with or without snowshoes on, toes pointed forward
- Place one leg out in front
- Bend forward leg slightly
- Bend ankle of back leg

Calf Stretch with Bent Knee



- Same as Calf Stretch but;
- Bend both knees to ease strain

Standing Hamstring Stretch



- Place one leg out in front (heel on the ground, toe pointing up), bending knee of opposite leg with heel flat on ground
- Legs are not locked
- Sit back on your heels



- As your athletes' flexibility increases, have them reach toward their feet



Standing Straddle Stretch



- Spread feet shoulder width apart, with or without snowshoes on
- Bend forward at hips
- Reach down along the legs toward the ground until you feel the stretch



Standing Quad Stretch



- Stand with one foot flat on ground
- Bend knee of other leg, reaching foot toward buttock while grasping ankle with hand
- Pull foot directly toward buttock
- Do not twist knee
- Stretch can be done standing alone or balancing with partner or fence/ wall
- If pain occurs in knees during stretch and foot is pointing out to the side, point foot back to relieve stress

Step Ups



- Place one foot onto support, with bent leg
- Push hips in, toward support



Forward Bend



- Stand, arms outstretched overhead
- Slowly bend at waist
- Bring hands to ankle level without strain



Low Back & Glutes

Side Groin Stretch



- Stand with feet flat on the ground, with or without snowshoes on
- Lean body to one side, bending knee slightly
- Keep opposite leg straight
- Repeat with other leg

Hip Stretch



- Stand, with or without snowshoes on, and place hands on low back
- Push hips forward
- Tilt head back

Downward Facing Dog



- Kneel, hands directly under shoulders, knees under hips
- Lift hips until standing on toes
- Drop heels to the ground
- Alternate rising to toes on one leg, while keeping the other foot flat on the ground



Upper Body

Chest Opener



- With partner, place one hand/arm on your partner
- Turn chest, facing outward, away from your partner
- Feel stretch in chest
- Repeat with other arm

Side Stretch



- Bend to one side with or without hand over head
- Feel stretch in side
- Repeat on other side

Shoulder Stretch



- Take elbow into hand
- Pull to opposite shoulder
- Arm may be straight or bent
- Repeat with other arm



Shoulder Shrugs



- Raise top of shoulder to ear
- Relax shoulders downward

Arm Circles



- Swing arms forward in large circles
- Repeat going forward and backward

Neck Stretch



- Roll the neck from shoulder to shoulder with chin touching body at all times
- Do not perform full circles as they may hyperextend the neck
- Tell athlete to roll neck to right, center and left. Never have the athlete roll neck backward.



Stretching – Quick Reference Guidelines

Start Relaxed

Do not begin until athletes are relaxed and muscles are warm

Be Systematic

Start at the bottom of body and work your way up

Progress from General to Specific

Start general, and then move into event-specific exercises

Easy Stretching before Developmental

Make slow, progressive stretches

Do not bounce or jerk to stretch farther

Use Variety

Make it fun

Use different exercises to work the same muscles

Breathe Naturally

Do not hold your breath

Stay calm and relaxed

Allow for Individual Differences

Athletes start and progress at different levels

Stretch Regularly

Always include time for warm-up and cool-down

Stretch at home



Teaching Snowshoeing

Special Olympics snowshoeing is a track and running competition on snow. Part of the appeal of snowshoeing is its simplicity. If you can walk, you can snowshoe! If you can run, you can snowshoe faster. Many of the techniques to better snowshoeing are subtle, and you can become almost an expert by mastering the skills here. Then it becomes a matter of practice and conditioning if your athletes wish to improve.

Snowshoeing Basic Skills

The following skills have been laid out to allow skill development and improvement from first-time snowshoer to competitive athlete.



Putting on Snowshoes

Most modern snowshoes have nylon strap binding systems whose use should be figured out and mastered in a warm, dry, indoor place before putting them on in the cold. It is important to note that your athletes should not move on hard surfaces with snowshoes on.

Skill Progression – Putting on Snowshoes

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Identify left and right snowshoes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loosen binding straps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Place foot in proper position on snowshoe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tighten bindings properly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Teaching Points

1. Begin by determining the left snowshoe from the right snowshoe, if this applies. Generally, most toe and heel binding straps pull to the outside.
2. Loosen binding straps so that there is sufficient play to insert your shoe easily.
3. Place your foot/shoe on the snowshoe so that the ball of the foot is centered over the toe cord.
4. Most snowshoe bindings work best if you snugly tighten the straps from front to back.
5. Place the heel strap around the back of your shoe in some type of obvious notch or indentation in the back of the shoe, usually found where the upper meets the sole or mid-sole. Keep this strap off your sock to avoid irritating your leg but high enough from the bottom sole to keep it from slipping off.
6. Pull the straps snug but not so tight that they pinch the toes and/or restrict movement and circulation.
7. Check the tightness of straps again after 3-5 minutes of snowshoeing warm-up.
8. If the snowshoes do not point straight ahead while walking or running, reposition the feet on the snowshoes at an angle and then firmly tighten the straps so the snowshoes point straight ahead.

Faults & Fixes – Putting on Snowshoes

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Putting incorrect snowshoe on foot	Switch snowshoe to opposite foot	Repeat putting on correct snowshoes
Incorrect foot placement on snowshoe	Correctly place foot on snowshoe	
Snowshoe falls off	Tighten bindings	Repeat tightening bindings
Foot moves in binding	Tighten bindings	Repeat tightening bindings
Snowshoes do not point straight ahead while moving	Try to reposition foot on snowshoe	Have athlete move on snow, look at tracks



Removing Snowshoes

To remove snowshoes, simply reverse the order of binding-strap tightening used to put on the snowshoes. The skill of removing snowshoes should be practiced numerous times indoors when fingers are warm. It is important to note that your athletes should not move on hard surfaces with snowshoes on.

Skill Progression – Removing Snowshoes

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Loosen binding straps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Move heel strap down off of heel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Slide foot out of binding/snowshoe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. Loosen all binding straps. Don't pull binding strap completely out.
2. Move heel strap down, off heel of shoe/ boot.
3. Take weight off of foot, slide foot out of binding.
4. Repeat on other foot.
5. Make sure athletes only wear snowshoes outdoors.

Faults & Fixes – Removing Snowshoes

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Shoe not coming off	Loosen binding straps	Repetition
Foot still connected at heel strap	Loosen heel strap	Repetition



Moving Forward

To move forward on snowshoes is as easy as walking. As a matter of fact, it is walking. The movement forward is just placing one foot forward while the other foot is stationary, while making sure that the snowshoe is lifted up and is moved outwards just enough to clear the ankle and the other snowshoe. It is important to avoid overlap to prevent falling. Once athletes can competently move forward, they will be able to progress to running and sprinting.

Skill Progression – Moving Forward

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Stand without assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Move forward without assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase stride length	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase stride rate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. Begin on very flat terrain with athlete standing.
2. Move first foot forward.
3. Raise and bring second foot forward allowing for the width of the snowshoe to clear the ankle.
4. Place second foot down ahead of first foot.
5. Repeat steps.
6. To move faster, increase stride rate and/or length.

Faults & Fixes – Moving Forward

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete cannot stand without assistance	Provide poles or device to help balance	Balance drills Snow Write Drill
Athlete kicks ankle	Spread feet farther apart	Manually demonstrate proper technique



Avoiding Snowshoe Overlap

A certain amount of distance is required between foot-plants to avoid overlapping the snowshoes. When overlap occurs with a shorter stride, the tail of the leading snowshoe lands on and presses down on some part of the frame of the trailing snowshoe. When the snowshoer tries to bring the trailing snowshoe forward and off the ground to start another stride, he or she cannot since the trailing snowshoe is pinned to the ground by the overlap.



Avoiding this overlap is the primary technique to be learned when snowshoeing. Snowshoe overlap most frequently occurs at slower speeds and when walking. It is technically easier to run in snowshoes than to walk in them, simply because the stride and distance between foot plants is longer when running. Even when running, though, an athlete's stride may be too short to allow clearance.

Conditions that may result in snowshoe overlap:

1. Athletes with shorter legs
2. Deeper or looser snow
3. Uphill slopes
4. Fatigue
5. Toes do not point straight ahead when walking
6. The first few steps to accelerate from a stationary position are too short
7. Improper foot placement on snowshoe

Experienced snowshoers recognize these conditions and apply a simple technique to compensate: spreading the feet farther apart to avoid overlap. It does not take much, as you only need about five or six inches between the feet to clear eight-inch-wide snowshoes. Most people walk or run biomechanically best with one foot planted in front of the other. Some athletes must focus on spreading the snowshoes apart constantly to move at all.

Skill Progression – Avoiding Snowshoe Overlap

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Walk without stepping on other snowshoe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accelerate to a jog without stepping on other snowshoe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. Ensure foot is placed properly in snowshoe.
2. Demonstrate what can happen with overlap.
3. Explain conditions that might result in a shorter stride.
4. Move with snowshoes spread just far enough apart.
5. Show athletes tracks in soft snow that exhibit just enough clearance.
6. Show how stride length varies by looking at tracks upon starting, going up a hill, in deep snow and with fatigue.
7. Expose athletes to conditions and practice.



Faults & Fixes – Avoiding Snowshoe Overlap

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete steps on snowshoe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spread feet slightly wider apart• Increase stride length	Trail Making Drill – having athletes follow in coach footsteps. Have different athletes lead the trail making
Athlete trips and falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spread feet slightly wider apart• Increase stride length	Follow coach in same tracks Snowball Game



Stopping

Many athletes may have a fear of slick snow that resulted in a fall or an unpleasant experience with a sliding sport (skating, skiing) because stopping required a skill they did not have. You may not see this until the snowshoers come to the top of their first hill and freeze, refusing to descend.

Stopping is the same as when stopping while running or walking without snowshoes. Athlete must de-accelerate if they are moving fast by taking gradually smaller steps/strides until they can just cease taking any further steps.

Skill Progression – Stopping

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Gradually decrease stride length and rate over distance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stop without losing balance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stop without assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. Gradually, over a few strides, decrease stride length and rate.
2. Teach athlete to keep weight forward, off of tails of snowshoes.
3. Teach athlete not to use other object to stop.
4. Gradually slow down; don't stop abruptly.
5. Show athlete that a snowshoe does not slide like a ski.

Faults & Fixes – Stopping

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete keeps running	Explain to athlete when to stop	Stop on whistle or command (Stop and Go Drill) Ghostbusters Game
Athlete trips or falls	Athlete should be gradually decreasing steps and speed	Practice proper stopping technique Ghostbusters Game
Athlete leans too far back	Point toes down	Toe walks



Falling

Before you begin the on-snow portion, it is important to teach your athlete the proper way to fall. Falls are a natural part of snowshoeing and falling in the correct way can prevent injury. Take some time to talk to your athlete, letting them know that it is OK for a fall to occur. By practicing falling an athlete will become less apprehensive if a fall does occur. Be sure that the athlete also has all of the proper protective equipment prior to practicing falls.

90% of the injuries from falling in snowshoeing are to the wrist and shoulder. Most of these injuries happen when a snowboarder falls forward in the incorrect way. Practice these movements side by side with your athlete. Start on your knees and let yourself fall forward onto your forearms. Catch your weight with the forearms away from the body slightly with the elbows bent (picture of starting and falling positions). Allow your forearms to touch the ground first. Try to resist reaching out toward the ground, or placing the hands out in front. As contact is made, absorb the fall with your arms. You may want to practice this movement with your athlete until he or she is completely comfortable with the movement.



Skill Progression – Falling

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Fall safely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be aware of arm and hand placement when falling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. Emphasize that falling can be safe.
2. Emphasize keeping elbows bent and close to body when falling.
3. Teach athlete how to tuck and roll (roll on shoulder).
4. Make sure the athlete is not physically injured.

Faults & Fixes – Falling

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete does not fall correctly	Teach athlete how to fall	Fall on command while running
Athlete falls with arms extended	Teach athlete to keep elbows bent and close to body	Fall on command while stationary



Getting Up

Because falling can be a common issue in snowshoeing, it is important to teach the athlete how to get up from the snow. Many times this can be more frustrating than the fall itself, especially on an incline. The easiest way for a snowshoer to get up is to rise from a kneeling position where the athlete can then slowly rise to a standing position.

Even an athlete in good condition may have problems getting up from a fall. It is important to work until the athlete is comfortable with this task. During lessons, it is a good idea to have the athlete practice getting up if he or she falls. It is also important to make sure that the athlete isn't becoming over tired from having to get up too often. In this case you may want to offer more assistance.



Skill Progression – Getting Up

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Get up correctly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get up in a reasonable amount of time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. If athlete falls completely to ground, roll onto side.
2. Get up to the hands and knees.
3. Raise one knee and set the shoe flat on the snow.
4. Plant poles (if using poles) in front and stand up.
5. Without poles, the athlete may plant hands on one knee for a boost, if necessary, to regain standing position.
6. Make sure the athlete is not physically injured.

Faults & Fixes – Getting Up

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete does not get up	Make sure athlete works through steps	Steps to getting up
Athlete does not get up correctly	Reinforce steps to getting up	Steps to getting up
Snowshoes are not pointed in same direction	Point snowshoes in same direction	Reinforce snowshoe direction correction
Snowshoe comes loose or falls off	Replace snowshoes	Snowshoes on correctly
Athlete takes too long getting up	Reinforce time restraint	Timed getting up



Turning

Turning on snowshoes is as easy as turning when walking or running without them, as long as the turn is not too sharp and the speed is not too high. Simply make each successive step a bit farther to the side in the direction the athlete wants to go.

At high speeds or on sharp (90 degrees or greater) turns, some snowshoes may slip sideways, as most snowshoes do not “edge” well. In these situations, the athlete must plant the snowshoe flat on the snow, not angling it into the snow. The tendency is to allow the snowshoe to make contact with the snow at an angle when one leans the rest of the body into a sharp turn or at high speeds to maintain balance. To counteract this, athletes should concentrate on landing on the balls of their feet (on front claws) and not angling the snowshoe.

Skill Progression – Turning

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Take successive steps to the side	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep snowshoe flat and balanced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Turn without causing overlap on tips or tails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. Teach athletes to take successive steps to the side.
2. Teach athletes to land on the balls of their feet with the snowshoe flat on the snow.
3. Teach athletes not to cause overlap on tips and tails of their snowshoes.
4. Teach athletes not to back up in snowshoes, but to take small steps when making a 180-degree turn.



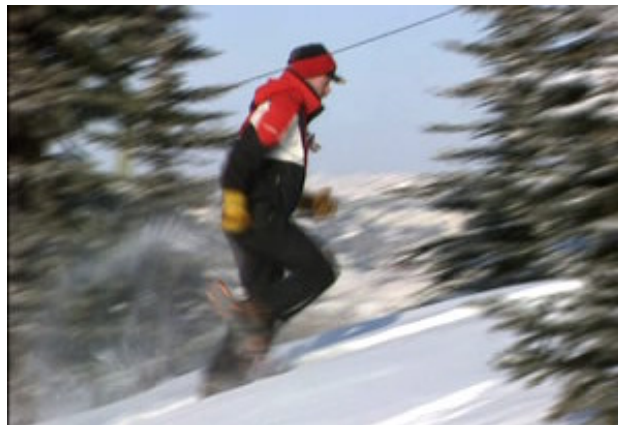
Faults & Fixes – Turning

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete can only turn in one direction	Teach athlete how to turn in the other direction	Practice opposite direction turning Snowball Game – place snowballs in a circle and have them go the other direction
Athlete takes a large area to make a turn	Teach athlete to take smaller successive steps	Set up pylons to reinforce correct turn Snowball Game - place snowballs close together and have them in a pattern to encourage small turns
Overlap occurs when turning	Teach athlete to increase number of steps and reduce the angle of step	Practice turning Snow Write Drill
Athlete leans too far back	Point toes down	Toe walks
Athlete attempts to back up	Teach athlete not to back up	Set up pylons to reinforce correct turn



Climbing Hills

The ability to go up a hill is a facet of the sport that makes snowshoeing fun. Snowshoeing is the fastest and easiest way to go up snow-covered hills using one’s own power. There are many different ways to go uphill depending on the snow conditions and size of the hill. All techniques can be accomplished on either snow or sand.



Skill Progression – Climbing Hills

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Take shorter steps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid snowshoe overlap	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep weight forward and on balls of feet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climb hills without slipping or falling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climb up moderate hills without using hands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pump arms to power up the hill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use the fall line, if necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify the fall line, if necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. Show the athlete where the fall line is (the line a ball would take as it rolls down the hill).
2. The fall line is usually the most direct route possible up a hill.
3. Take shorter steps, keeping the head up.
4. Keep weight on the balls of the feet.
5. Keep feet spread apart to avoid overlapping snowshoes.
6. Stamp with the toe to dig the crampon into the snow for better traction.
7. Pump arms to power up the hill.
8. Lean slightly into the hill.
9. On short steep hills with loose or deep snow, crawling forward using the hands for balance and traction can help.



Faults & Fixes – Climbing Hills

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete stops at bottom of hill	Teach athlete to maintain momentum	Repetition Stomp Drill on slight hill
Athlete slips backward	Teach athlete to lean forward	Repetition Stomp Drill on slight hill
Overlap occurs	Spread feet farther apart	Follow coach in same tracks Trail Making Drill Snow Write Drill
Athlete crawls up the hill	Teach athlete to stand upright	Have athlete hold items in both hands
Athlete takes circular route	Teach fall line	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow coach in same tracks• Roll ball down hill to emphasize fall line Trail Making Drill Fox Chase Game
Athlete takes extended steps	Teach athlete to take smaller steps	Snowball Drill



Descending Hills

Descending hills can be done safely using the proper techniques.



Skill Progression – Descending Hills

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Keep weight forward and on balls of feet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain traction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain balance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep knees slightly bent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid overlap	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Run down the hill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use the fall line, if necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify the fall line, if necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. Do not lean back.
2. Try to keep the upper body perpendicular to the slope, and point the toes down to maintain traction.
3. Extend arms out to help maintain balance.
4. Keep knees bent to cushion the impact.
5. It is easiest to run down a hill to get maximum traction and prevent snowshoe overlap, and it is important to do this on icy slopes.
6. It is easier to go straight down the fall line of packed snow hills than to traverse across slopes.
7. Avoid over striding. Brake and slow down by not leaning forward as much and taking shorter, quicker strides.



Faults & Fixes – Descending Hills

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete stops at top of hill	Teach athlete to maintain momentum	Repetition Stomp Drill
Athlete leans backward	Teach athlete to lean forward	Repetition
Overlap occurs	Spread feet farther apart	Follow coach in same tracks Trail Making Drill
Athlete does not bend knees	Teach athlete to bend knees	Bounding and Hopping
Athlete sits and slides down hill	Teach athlete to stand upright	Repetition
Athlete takes circular route	Teach fall line	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow coach in same tracks• Roll ball down hill to emphasize fall line Trail Making Drill Fox Chase Game
Athlete takes improper stride lengths	Teach athlete to take smaller or larger steps	Snowball Drill



Sprint Starts

A good start can make all the difference in a sprint because the athletes want to get out at the start of the race strong and fast.

In a sprint start, the athlete puts the “power foot” forward for a strong launch. Determining the power foot can be easily accomplished by having the athlete pretend to kick a ball. The foot that is used to kick the ball is the back foot. The foot that is used to support the body is the front foot, the power foot. Another way to determine the power foot is to stand behind the athlete and give a little nudge. The foot that the athlete steps out with is the back foot for the start.



Skill Progression – Sprint Starts

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Identify start line	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Position snowshoes correctly behind start line	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify proper leg placement with power leg (front leg) forward	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understand “Start” commands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lean forward slightly at hips and bend front knee slightly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Position arms correctly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain start position with minimal movement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drive back leg forward	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Push off with front foot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stay low, using arms to drive the body	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take wider steps to avoid overlap	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transition through acceleration phase	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			



Teaching Points

At Start Line

1. Stand behind start line, relaxed, with power leg in front and tips of snowshoes behind line.

"Ready" Command

2. Lean forward slightly at hips and bend front knee slightly (about 120 degrees), placing weight on ball of front foot.
3. Hold opposite arm, from front foot, flexed in front of body.
4. Hold other arm back slightly past the hip and bent.
5. Stand as still as possible.

"Go" Command

6. Drive back leg forward, leading with knee, swinging front arm back.
7. Push strongly off ball of front foot, swinging the back arm forward forcefully.
8. Stay low, using arms to drive body forward.
9. Take wider steps when leaving the start line to avoid overlapping snowshoes.

Acceleration to Top Speed

10. Use short, quick steps off the start line, allowing stride to increase in length as velocity increases.
11. Gradually transition to a more upright sprinting position.



Faults & Fixes – Sprint Starts

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
When gun goes off, athlete stands upright	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on first 2-3 strides • Keep low 	Mark spot on track about 2-3 M in front of athletes for them to focus on.
Front leg is not bent properly	Bend front knee and lean forward	Observation
Arms incorrectly positioned	Move arms into correct position	Observation
Drive off start line is not explosive	Athlete's forward leg needs to forcefully push against snow	One-foot takeoff launch Ghostbusters Game
Athlete slips at start	Reinforce correct snowshoe position and push off	Observation Stomp Drill
Athlete trips or falls	Avoid snowshoe overlap by taking wider steps	Observation
Athlete loses balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller steps • Come out of lean sooner 	Balance drills Snow Write Drill
Athlete lifts head too soon or not soon enough	Adjust timing of when athlete lifts head	Mark spot on track to have athlete look at until time to lift head
Athlete doesn't accelerate to top speed	Use short quick steps moving to longer strides to increase velocity	Snowball Drill



Sprinting

Sprinting is the art of running as fast as possible. Sprinting happens when an athlete's legs move faster to propel them forward at a greater rate of speed. Sprinting is when more steps are taken and/or longer steps are taken. Sprinting is a mechanical body action that can be refined as the athlete gets more comfortable.



Skill Progression – Sprinting

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Maintain erect position	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Push off snow with balls of feet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Move foot backward under body upon landing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drive knees up so thigh is horizontal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain upright posture with slight forward body lean from ground, not from waist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swing arms forward and back without rotating shoulders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sprint under control for entire race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. Run in an upright position so the maximum distance is attained with each stride.
2. The forearm and upper arm should form a 90-degree angle at the elbow.
3. Pump the arms (forward and back) with every stride.
4. The arm and leg movements should be synchronized. Move the right arm forward as left leg goes forward.
5. Increasing stride length or stride rate or both will increase speed.
6. Stay in lanes (25m, 50m and 100m). For other races, athletes need to keep moving forward toward the inside lane of track.



What is the body doing while you are sprinting?

Head	Straight ahead with eyes focused on the finish Relaxed jaw and facial muscles
Shoulders	Relaxed and square with little or no rotation
Hands	Clasped, not tightly, with the thumbs up
Arms	Used for balance Drive up and out and do not cross the body
Feet	The toes are straight ahead

Faults & Fixes – Sprinting

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Arms and shoulders twist and rotate	Keep torso facing in the direction the athlete is running	Running on the spot
Athlete not running in upright position	Fully extend stride	Bounding and strides
Athlete is very tense with fists clenched and upper body rigid	Practice running relaxed, with proper breathing	Break down running motion and try to break pattern Relay Drills
Head moves side to side	Keep head from moving, eyes forward	Focus on the finish line or in the distance
Runs too slowly	Increase stride rate or frequency	Fast leg drill and bounding Downhill sprinting Rabbits and Hounds Drill Sharks and Minnows Drill



Relay Races

Relay races are the ‘team’ events in snowshoeing. It is the art of running as fast as possible while making a successful connection with the next runner on your team. Relays develop a camaraderie and sense of team. Relay teams consists of four teammates who proceed around the track in order. To make a successful ‘tag’ (or ‘exchange’), the racers have to stay in a set zone while the incoming runner tags the hand of the outgoing runner.



Skill Progression – Relay Races

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Identify teammates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify start line	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify exchange zone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify if tag has been made	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remain in the exchange zone during tag	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safely move off the track	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. Receiving athlete is positioned in exchange area a few meters in from the start of the exchange area.
2. Receiving athlete is standing in ready position with body slightly turned, arm extended to the side and back, with palm facing up.
3. Receiving athlete watches for approaching teammate.
4. Receiving athlete starts to move forward when approaching athlete reaches the exchange zone or a predetermined point.
5. Approaching teammate runs up to extended-arm side of receiving athlete and tags the hand of the receiving athlete.



6. Receiving athlete runs to next exchange zone.
7. Approaching athlete continues to move in a straight line until coming to a gradual stop.
8. Approaching athlete turns to look that there are no other approaching athletes. When track is clear, proceed off track into the infield area.



Faults & Fixes – Relay Races

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Approaching athlete tags competitor	Approaching athlete identifies correct team member	Recognition drills Rabbits and Hounds Drill
Exchange made outside zone	Reposition athletes; receiving athlete may need to start later	Practice
Approaching athlete has difficulty making tag	Receiving athlete extends and holds hand still	Practice Strengthen arm
Athlete impedes other snowshoers when leaving track	Slow down gradually, continue forward, check track before leaving	Simulate situation and practice correct movement off track Fox Chase drill



Distance Snowshoeing

These are the longer races that really test an athlete's endurance. It combines cardiovascular endurance and endurance to elements such as wind and cold, if training and race conditions are not perfect. These events require specific training to ensure that athletes have the endurance to train and compete at the longer distance and not be at risk for injury.



Skill Progression – Distance Snowshoeing

Distance running is a skill of aerobic endurance.

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Run longer distances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understand the concept of pace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pace themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep tall in an upright position	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain position through race duration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain controlled relaxed arm movement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep shoulders not hunched and elbows tucked in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep body relaxed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points

1. Keep tall, in an upright position.
2. Have controlled relaxed arm movement.
3. Keep shoulders not hunched and elbows tucked in
4. Try to maintain same speed throughout the entire distance of the race.
5. Keep body relaxed.
6. Appropriate aerobic conditioning is required – athletes should increase duration first, then intensity, to improve conditioning.



Faults & Fixes – Distance Snowshoeing

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Runner is leaning back	Stand tall, look forward	Bounding and strides
Runner appears to be bobbing up and down	Keep body relaxed; keep eyes forward	Observation Relay Drills
Upper body is twisting	Keep torso facing toward direction athlete is running	Running on the spot
Athlete is very tense with fists clenched and upper body rigid	Practice running relaxed, with proper breathing	Break down running motion and try to break pattern Rabbits and Hounds Drill
Uneven speeds during race	Pace during race	Fartlek training, timing laps



Waterfall Start

For events involving a turn, 200 meters and up and the relays, a curved “waterfall” starting line is used so that all snowshoers in all lanes of the track cover an equal distance to a point at the start of the first turn. Snowshoers are lined up starting from the inside lane or lane 1. This lane is reserved for the quickest athlete.



Skill Progression – Waterfall Start

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Recognize the curved starting line and proper positioning at the line	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognize the shortest path to the first corner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain a direct path to the first corner while being aware of other snowshoers and potential collisions and/or blocking situations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Teaching Points

1. Snowshoers should have a good understanding of starting and passing skills, as both will be required.
2. Snowshoers should position themselves at the start line so that they are pointed toward their target point at the first corner.
3. The target point should be the last point along the inside edge of the track visible to an athlete positioned at the start line.
4. Snowshoers need to judge the minimum distance to the athlete(s) ahead and beside them to avoid collisions and blocking.

Following the race start, the snowshoer should take the shortest path to the target point based on the position relative to other snowshoers. Passing can occur during this section but generally requires the athlete to pass on the right. This results in a longer path which may warrant the snowshoer waiting to pass on the straight to minimize the distance covered to accomplish the pass.



Pacing

One of the most difficult advanced skills to learn for a snowshoer is proper pacing. It is more efficient and faster to maintain a constant speed during all segments of a race than to move at an uneven pace. Proper pacing is especially important in longer distance races of 800 meters and above. Depending on the skill and ability level of the athlete, pacing can become important in races as short as 100 meters.

It is sometimes difficult for an athlete to apply the concept of proper pacing, as typically many other athletes in a race will not run with proper pacing. Most athletes start too fast for their aerobic and physical ability, slow dramatically in the middle, and then sprint to the finish. After all the basic skills of snowshoeing have been mastered, improvement essentially comes down to practicing to improve fitness and conditioning so that the athlete can maintain a faster pace throughout the race until the finish.

Skill Progression – Pacing

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Snowshoe at different speeds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distinguish the difference between snowshoeing at different speeds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain a consistent speed while snowshoeing over 100 to 400 meters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distinguish the difference in effort when snowshoeing at different speeds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain a consistent speed for half to 3/4 of the race distance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain or increase race pace in the last 1/4 of the race, even as fatigue sets in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Teaching Points

1. Make sure your snowshoers can actually move at different speeds and can do this independent of others. It may help if you or someone else initially snowshoes along with your athletes to show them different speeds and paces, but realize that the athletes must eventually learn to do this on their own.
2. Emphasize that it is not always the athlete who starts the fastest who wins a longer race.
3. Inexperienced athletes usually start longer races at the pace of the fastest starter, and then as they go into oxygen debt, everyone slows down except the fittest athlete. All others must slow until they recover (which they never completely do) and then start moving faster again at their own individual threshold pace. This is a very painful and inefficient way to run a long race.
4. Emphasize that a consistent pace and speed over the entire race is what usually produces the fastest times. The effort required to maintain a high even pace will increase as fatigue accumulates. An analogy is that over 50% of the effort is used in the last 25 % of the race.
5. Athletes need to run their own best race and pace for the first part of a longer race, and then focus on actually racing other athletes later in the race. Emphasize that the skill at the beginning of a race is to run near their ideal even pace, and this may require letting other athletes get ahead.
6. Coaches should determine at what pace an athlete should move in an ideal even-paced race, or the “goal pace.” Take the best time for an athlete for a given distance, and then divide that time by the number of segments of a shorter distance that goes into the longer distance evenly. This will give you a time-per-distance speed to strive for. The shorter distance is usually 100 or 200 meters for a 400-meter race, 200 or 400 meters for an 800 or 1600-meter race, and 400 or 1000 meters for the 5 K or 10 K.
7. An 800-meter runner with a best time of 4:00 should maintain a speed of 1 minute per 200 meters for an even paced race, as 800 divided by 200 equals four and 4 minutes divided by four equals 1 minute.
8. A 5 K runner with a best time of 32:00 should proceed at a pace of 6:24 per kilometer, or about 2:56 per 400-meter segment.



9. These goal pace/distance times are a key tool in allowing athletes to practice even pacing and are useful for athletes to gauge their progress in longer races, if they can take or get intermediate split times from their coaches. Good coaches follow every step of their athletes in longer races and record intermediate split times to analyze later.
10. A workout for distance snowshoers might consist of multiple repetitions over a known shorter distance at a speed equal to the pace they want to maintain for their entire distance, with rests in between. For example, a 1600-meter snowshoer with a best time of 10:00 minutes might do a workout of six times 400 meters at a speed of 2:30 per 400, and with a jog of 200 to 400 meters between each of the six repetitions.
11. As fitness improves, the athletes can increase the number of these repetitions and/or decrease the time/distance resting between them. Athletes can increase the speed when they improve their best time.
12. Coaches should be aware that athletes' best times for a distance may rapidly improve at first, once they learn to pace themselves properly. Goal pace is something that can change weekly/daily for a novice snowshoe athlete, but is more constant for experienced athletes.
13. Be aware that snow conditions, weather, hills and terrain may drastically affect the speed at which a snowshoer might travel in a race. Athletes should thus learn to eventually base their pacing more on effort than speed.

Faults & Fixes – Pacing

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete starts fast and slows dramatically	Start slower at goal pace, ignore other racers at start	Practice goal pace, have athletes of different abilities practice together but run their own goal paces for repetitions. Have athletes run two shorter practice race time trials: one where they run an even pace and another where they start significantly too fast over the first 25% and then slow to finish at the same time as the even paced race. Ask them which was easier. Fox Chase Drill
Athlete maintains goal pace and then slows	Start a little slower at adjusted slower goal pace and/or improve fitness	Adjust goal pace, and/or snowshoe more, to improve fitness and conditioning
Athlete maintains goal pace but then is out-sprinted at end	Increase pace slightly from start, start racing others farther away from the finish, improve conditioning for faster finishes	Practice by ending workouts with simulated sprint finishes, encourage athletes to race others at end Rabbits and Hounds Drill
Athlete starts slower than goal pace, then finishes strong	Try starting a little faster than goal pace, warm up properly	Have athletes run even-paced time trial over 3/4 of racing distance at a little faster than goal pace, to give them confidence they can do it



Passing

The ability to safely and effectively overtake and pass another snowshoer is a skill all snowshoers should understand and use. Snowshoeing is unique among Special Olympics winter sports in that most of the races involve a mass start and the athletes do not have to stay in lanes. Passing is a form of interaction among the groups of racers.



Skill Progression – Passing

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Snowshoe independently without following others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognize when a pass is needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify a good spot on the course to pass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Move to the correct side of snowshoer to be passed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Move over sufficiently to pass without interference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pass snowshoer by accelerating slightly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If moving in front of other snowshoer, determine with a glance when a two-stride lead is achieved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Move in front of other snowshoer and continue race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Teaching Points

1. A pass is usually required when a faster snowshoer catches up to a slower snowshoer or a snowshoer who has fallen or stopped. Near the end of a race, it is sometimes wise to initiate a pass so that the snowshoer has a clear run at the finish in case the leading snowshoer slows.
2. Straight sections of the course or track are the best areas to pass. A snowshoer attempting to pass on the outside of a turn will have to cover more distance to pass, and thus will have to be moving significantly faster to make the pass successful. A snowshoer should be able to look ahead to see what is coming up on the course before starting a pass. If the course soon narrows, it may be best to wait until after that to initiate the pass.
3. Athletes should move to the side with sufficient space to pass, and to the side that will position them on the inside of the next turn, if possible. Generally, snowshoers on a track will keep to the left edge, and passes will have to be made on the right. It is possible to pass on the left side on a track if the snowshoer in front has



strayed from the left side and the pass can be made quickly enough so that the passing snowshoer cannot be cut off by the snowshoer in front, who has the right of way.

4. Generally, you need to move at least 50 cm (20 inches) to the side of a snowshoer to pass. More is better as long as it does not significantly increase the distance to be covered.
5. Ideally a pass can be made without significant energy-wasting changes in pace. Usually, completing a pass involves a slight acceleration in order to compensate for attempts by the leading snowshoer to maintain the lead.
6. The extra length of snowshoes requires that passing snowshoers attain a greater lead before moving in front of the passed athlete than if they were walking/running without snowshoes on. A passing athlete needs to turn the head slightly to glance over in order to determine when he or she has a sufficient lead. Generally, a snowshoer needs to be a minimum of two strides or about 1.5 meters (4 1/2 feet) ahead to move in front without interfering.
7. After taking the lead, the passing athlete should resume his or her own race. This means moving toward the side of the course so as to be on the inside of the next turn. The passing athlete should not worry about those behind him or her on the course.

Faults & Fixes – Passing

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete is reluctant/afraid to pass	Pass	Explain passing, practice passing to build confidence Sharks and Minnows Drill
Athlete tries to pass on outside of a turn	Pass on straight areas	Explain longer distance covered on outside of turn, practice passing on straight
Athlete passes too closely	Pass with space	Show by example and practice Relay Drills
Athlete interferes by moving in front too soon	Move in front after two strides (1.5 meter lead)	Show athlete proper distance, practice passing and turning head to look
Athlete passes but stays wide after pass	Resume normal race	Explain and show to athletes that "the race is in front;" practice passing and resuming race



Finishing

Finishing a race requires the development of pacing skills and timing to allow the snowshoer the opportunity to maintain or even increase speed just before the finish line. Snowshoers who effectively use finishing skills can improve their final positions relative to other athletes who do not have the endurance or energy to apply the final “kick” to the finish line. In very close finishes, the snowshoer who applies the finishing lean may improve his or her final position. The snowshoer whose torso crosses the finish line first is scored higher.

Skill Progression – Finishing a Race

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Recognize the need for a finishing kick based on position relative to that of the other snowshoer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognize the appropriate distance from the finish line to start the finishing kick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain or increase the pace to the finish line once the finishing kick has been started	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lean into the finish line with the torso during very close finishes with other athletes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Teaching Points

1. The snowshoer should have a good understanding of pace and passing skills, as both will be required.
2. The snowshoer needs to judge the maximum distance to the athlete(s) ahead and the distance required to catch and pass the athlete(s). Sufficient distance to the finish line should be given for any challenges to the passing maneuver by the opposing snowshoer.
3. An allowance of a few meters for these challenges is usually sufficient. Risk of the snowshoer regaining the position increases if the finishing kick and pass are completed too early.
4. Sprinting events require the snowshoer to maintain speed and lean into the finish line with the torso as required in close competition. The athlete should be able to lean forward just enough to gain the advantage but not so far forward as to lose balance and fall forward or lose forward speed.
5. Distance events require the snowshoer to use an adequate race pace to maintain an acceptable recovery distance from the leading athlete.



Snowshoeing Games/ Drills

With a few modifications, almost any outdoor game can be played on snow. Popular chase and capture games work well. With imagination, the possibilities are endless. The games should suit the ability and ages of the athletes; races or technical games may be intimidating for beginners. The names of the games can be changed to make them more appropriate to the level of the athletes while maintaining the principles and skills. In most games, it is a good idea to play without poles. These games will help develop conditioning and coordination at any time of the year. These games are not intended to replace skill training but to enhance the training experience with some fun activities.

Rabbits and Hounds (could be called ‘Chase Drill’)

The “rabbits” are released into an open field wearing a streamer or ribbon. The “hounds” are released to chase down the rabbits and collect the ribbons as trophies. Switch roles and repeat the game. Which team can collect the most ribbons?

Relays

Teams of two racers take turns snowshoeing a loop and to each other. Incorporate a variety of terrains in the loops and increase the number of total loops per athlete over time. Variation: Practice snowshoe skills with the relays. For example, run to a designated point, remove and replace a snowshoe, then return.

Sharks and Minnows (could call it “Zone Tag”)

“Minnows” line up on a beach (edge of a field or open area) with one “shark” in the ocean (middle of open area). The minnows try to snowshoe across the field without being tagged by the shark. The beaches are the safety zones. When a minnow is tagged, he or she becomes a shark. Continue the game until there is only one minnow left.

Ghostbusters (could be called “Freeze Tag”)

Spread athletes randomly in a field or open area. Choose one person to be the “Ghostbuster” the others are the “ghosts.” Anyone tagged by the ghostbuster becomes a stationary haunted house, arms and legs out to the sides. Haunted houses are freed when a ghost tags them or runs under their arms.

Fox Chase (could be called “Trail Chase”)

One snowshoer or a group goes out snowshoeing with a head start, and the others later try to follow the trail by the tracks in the snow.

Snow Write

Have athletes try to write their names in big letters in the snow (using cursive style) by snowshoeing a trail, and then run back over it quickly.

Stomp

Athletes each get an area delineated by a line in the snow. Then they try to stomp down all the snow in the space. Bigger spaces should be given to more advanced athletes.

Trail Making

Given untracked snow four or more inches deep and some open land (a park, athletic field, or similar area), it is possible to design, create and maintain snowshoe trails simply by snowshoeing through untracked snow. You can delineate a route quickly and easily. This can be used for a number of games.



Snowball Drill

Coach places several snowballs on the ground. Then athletes try to stomp on all the snowballs. Can be used to develop skills based on how far apart the snowballs are placed.



The Cool-Down

The cool-down is as important as the warm-up; however, it is often ignored. Abruptly stopping an activity may cause pooling of the blood and slow the removal of waste products in the athlete's body. It may also cause cramps, soreness and other problems for athletes. The cool-down gradually reduces the body temperature and heart rate and speeds the recovery process before the next training session or competitive experience. The cool-down is also a good time for the coach and athlete to talk about the session or competition.

Activity	Purpose	Time (minimum)
Slow aerobic jog	Lowers body temperature and gradually reduces heart rate	5 minutes
Light stretching	Removes waste from muscles and increases range of motion	5 minutes



Modifications and Adaptations

In competition, it is important that the rules not be changed to suit athletes' special needs. There are, however, approved snowshoeing aids that do accommodate athletes' special needs and are permitted in the rules. Also, coaches can accommodate athletes' special needs by modifying the training exercises, communication method and sport equipment to assist athletes in achieving success.

Modifications

Modifying Exercises

Modify the skills involved in an exercise so that all athletes can participate.

Accommodating an Athlete's Special Needs

Use the sound of a bell for visually impaired athletes.

Modifying Your Communication Method

Different athletes require different communications systems. For example, some athletes learn and respond better to demonstrated exercises, whereas others require greater verbal communication. Some athletes may need a combination: to see, hear and even read a description of the exercise or skill.

Modifying Equipment

Successful participation for some athletes requires equipment modifications to suit their particular need.

Adaptations

More specific adaptations for snowshoeing are listed below.

Orthopedic Impairments

Have courses marked by flags and/or fencing.

Auditory Impairments

Use flag or hand signals for start.

Visual Impairments

1. Use brightly colored equipment.
2. Use the sound of a bell for visually impaired athletes.



Cross Training in Snowshoeing

Cross training is a modern-day term that refers to the substitution of skills other than the skills directly involved in the performance of the sport. Cross training is mostly used in injury rehabilitation and is now used in injury prevention as well. When athletes sustain injuries in the legs or feet that keep them from training or competing, other activities can be substituted to keep up their aerobic and muscular strength. Cross training for athletes comes in the form of swimming pool workouts, bicycling and athletics.

There is a limited value and crossover to this specific exercise. A reason to "cross train" is to avoid injury and maintain muscular balance during a period of intense sport specific training. One of the keys to success in sports is staying healthy and training over the long haul. Cycling is not the same as snowshoeing. But if cycling takes the pressure off shins, knees and hips on a recovery steady-state day, then it will probably make the next snowshoeing workout better. Why? Because it keeps athletes injury-free and snowshoeing. Cross training allows athletes to do event-specific training workouts with greater enthusiasm and intensity and minimal risk of injury.

Swimming Pool Workouts

Have athlete swim or perform running actions in the pool. Have athlete swim at a steady state for a minimum of 2 minutes. Using a flotation vest or inner tube, have athlete perform running actions while in an upright position. Use intervals of 30 to 120 seconds with 2:1 rest.



Bicycle Workouts

Have athlete ride a bicycle as interval and steady-state workouts. The athlete works out on a stationary bike or spinning bike doing aerobic and anaerobic workouts. The athlete rides an outdoor bike for 20 minutes to 1 hour at various paces.

Summer Sport Cross Training

Athletics

Athletics is a great sport for training and competing during the winter/spring/summer season. Several of the basic principles, such as mechanics of running and energy systems, are common between snowshoeing and athletics. Athletics and snowshoeing also share some principles in how their events and competitions are set up.

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