

Cross Country Skiing



History of

Evidence shows that cross country skiing originated over 5000 years ago in Norway with people using primitive skis. Cave paintings, from as early as the 10th century, portray Vikings using archaic skis as a mode of transportation. Improvements in technology, and mans love of sport, transformed Cross Country skiing from a simple way of getting around to an exciting and challenging event that was contested at the first Winter Olympic Games in 1924.

At the Olympics

There are two distinct styles of cross-country skiing: classical and freestyle technique.

- Most people are familiar with the classical style that closely resembles the motion required on the typical cross-country exercise machine. Skiers take alternate steps and use their poles to glide along the snow. Most courses actually have two parallel ski tracks that skiers glide in.
- The freestyle technique looks more like a skating motion and is a faster than the classical technique, but much more exhausting.

Cross-country skiing is divided into four disciplines: the sprint, the middle/long distance events, the pursuit, and the relay.

- In the sprint the athlete tries to cover a short distance in the least amount of time. Both men and women compete in a 1.5 km sprint and are permitted to use the freestyle technique – the fastest skier wins.
- The next event is the middle/long distance races. Men compete in 10 km, 30 km, and 50 km events, while the women compete in 10 km, 15 km and 30 km races. For both men and women, the 10 km event is always raced using the classical technique, but for the longer races, the required style changes from one Olympics to the next.

- In the pursuit, skiers compete in two races on the same day. Wow... that's got to be tiring! In the first race the skiers use the classical style, whereas in the second race they use the freestyle technique.
- The fourth discipline is the team relay. Athletes compete in teams of four with one skier racing at a time. When the first racer finishes, the second racer starts and so on, until the fourth racer crosses the finish line. In both relay events, the first two skiers use the classical style whereas the last two racers compete using the freestyle technique.



Getting Involved

Cross-country skiing is a great activity for people of all ages. It allows you to enjoy the great outdoors while spending time with family or friends. Why not try it out as a fun way to keep fit over the winter? There are numerous cross-country facilities that offer lessons – please visit www.cccski.com for more information on a facility near you; or for information on how to get involved at a competitive level.