

## Kids ski equipment

### Boots

Boots are the most important piece of ski gear. Their fit and quality should be the top priority in choosing/buying equipment. Boots should be warm (an obvious statement – but some aren't). Two pairs of normal socks should be able to fit inside. They should be snug fitting at the heel but roomy for the toes. If too much sock material is packed into a boot, restricting toe freedom, cold feet will result.

### Skis

The key aspect of kids and learning to ski is to be able to move forward. It is better to have too much grip than too much glide. All skis require grip wax at some time or another. Waxless or waxable types of skis are fine. So are wood or fiberglass. Waxless skis work well in a narrow range of snow conditions - not all of which exist here in Winnipeg. The leaders usually carry wax with them and can “touch-up” skis if it is required.

### Learning to ski and the issue of poles

Learning to be effective on XC skis requires that skiers learn how to apply their body weight over each ski to provide traction. This is learned through the senses. The presence of poles in the skiers' hands greatly interferes with the sensory input from the legs/feet. Even something as simple as holding their hand completely changes the sensory input skiers receive through their legs. For this reason we do not emphasize the use of poles for beginning skiers. Skiers—kids and adults—learn to ski more easily without poles. Don't feel bad if you should forget the poles at home for the first couple of years.

## Final words

### Be a good role model

Wear layers, a toque and mittens, play games and ski without poles.

Have a great ski season!

[www.redrivernordic.ca](http://www.redrivernordic.ca)

# Red River Nordic Ski Club

## Jackrabbits

Philosophy for teaching cross country skiing to children

### A note to parents

The magic and success of the Jackrabbit ski program is based in the concept that learning through playing is the most effective and fun method. The Jackrabbit leaders in our club are all experienced skiers, and parents too. We know that, at times, our kids take direction from other adults better than from their parents. The interpersonal dynamic is just different.

We have found that often the best thing is to try to let your child become part of the group and let the *leaders* interact with your child. This allows your child to develop independence on skis and helps build confidence. As parents you can assist other children or just “hang back” to be there for your child if required for items such as: washroom breaks or a very tired child, and ensuring your child is at a comfortable temperature.

Tips for helping people learn ski, especially the younger ones.

**Let the kids ski behind you.** You are bigger and faster. They can go at their own speed and you can go ahead at your speed and come back repeatedly in order to stay close, if required.

**Children learn to get up from a fall** by feeling their body weight over their skis. The sensory input from the legs/feet is greatly reduced when they are being touched. For this reason, *try to avoid picking up your child* when they fall over or holding their hands while skiing.

**Rig up a tow** from long rope with a stick at one end, like a water-ski tow rope, and carry it with you. It can be a fun game (pulling the young skier), it can give the child a rest, it can get you all back to the warm building faster and allow you to get some exercise without “dropping” your kids. If you include a bungee cord section in the tow, it will smooth out the skiing. Teach your kids to let go if they should fall.

## Kids clothing

Winnipeg winters are famous. Winnipeggers, too, are famous for their hardiness to enjoy such winters. XC skiers are experts at managing the elements to get the most out of our great winters. To be active here, one must know how to deal with cold, wind, snow and perspiration. Here are some of our tricks:

**Wear layers of clothing.** What does this mean and why is it important? The reason layers are important for xc skiers is that they allow the skier to remove or add a layer if they are too warm from exertion or become chilly from standing around or changing conditions. Layers help to deal with perspiration by keeping the skin dry and moving the moisture to the other clothing layers. Moisture and wetness are enemies of people outside in Manitoba winters.

Layering consists of an inner, middle and outer layer.

The **inner layer** (closest to the skin) should be soft, not itchy, and snug to the body. Ideally it will be made from a material that will not absorb and hold moisture, but rather “wick” moisture away from the skin and remain relatively dry. Some long underwear made from polypropylene is designed specifically to have these properties. A good quality layer on the trunk should take priority over the legs, if cost is an issue. “Waffle” (thermal) underwear is a good cheaper alternative.

The **middle layer** can receive the moisture from the inner layer (eg. cotton). This is also the insulation layer. Polar fleece is a good material that offers warmth even when wet



A recipe for a great day of skiing with the kids. Everyone is happier this way and the kids love skiing!

The **outer layer** is usually some kind of jacket. The key characteristics of the outer layer is that it has wind resistant qualities and will not “pick up” snow. Layers themselves can each be comprised of more than one layer. (eg. a shirt and a sweater, a light jacket and a windbreaker) Sometimes it is not unusual to find someone who is actually wearing about 5 layers. More layers of lighter clothing items can be warmer than heavier winter parkas. Denim jeans should be avoided at all costs.

Some examples of clothing combinations for the upper body would be a poly-pro long sleeved underwear top, turtleneck, polar fleece jacket, and windbreaker. On the lower body you could try sweat pants covered with wind pants.

**Avoid exposed skin.** Toques are *essential*. Make sure that ears are covered. Some estimates of heat loss show that 75% is lost through the head. If your child complains of cold feet or hands and does not wear good headgear: this is usually the problem.

**Mittens not gloves** should be worn and be of a material which does not “pick-up” snow. Ensure that the mitten extends up the sleeve of the jacket so that snow cannot come in contact with the skin and melt. One idea is to have a mitten inside a larger over-mitten (layering again).

**Socks.** Try to avoid cotton sweat socks if possible, as they absorb moisture. Better yet – change into a dry pair of socks immediately before putting on ski boots in the club house. When on a ski outing, *carry extra socks!* Feet become damp when exercising - a constant fact. Any longer outing (>2hrs) should have a sock-change planned to help keep the feet and boots dry and warm. Remember, moisture is our enemy.