

Jackrabbit Level Three and Four Equipment Requirements

Your child will be learning and improving their skate skiing technique in addition to continuing with classic skills. The most important thing is that your child has a pair of wax skis. This is the year to move away from waxless (scale) skis and on to wax skis. Eventually your skier will benefit from having a set of skate skis and a set of classic skis; however, at this stage of skill development one set of skis and poles is fine, provided s/he has:

1. Wax skis
2. Combination boots
3. Ski poles that are no lower than armpit, preferably a bit longer to the shoulder/collarbone (but not much longer than that)
4. Breathable layers of clothing

Rationale:

1. Wax skis can have grip wax applied for the classic days and the skier can still learn to skate ski with grip wax on. They may be a bit slower when skating, but during early skill development this is actually a good thing; it is easier to learn to skate ski on slow skis rather than super slippery fast skis. The grip wax also helps them get up hills when learning to skate ski, so your skier will be less frustrated. It is very hard to skate ski on scale skis and this will frustrate the skier tremendously.
2. Combination boots are a great product for this age group. They give the child enough lateral support to help them when skate skiing, and at the same time permits the necessary ankle and foot motion for classic technique. The other great thing about these boots is that they are typically a little higher on the ankle than traditional classic boots, which helps keep the snow out of their ankles when they decide to dive into a snow bank 10 minutes before classes start!
3. Poles should be no lower than your child's armpit, preferably a bit longer to the shoulder/collarbone (not much longer than that though). Poles that are too long for children are hard to manage and hard to get the timing correct. Poles that are too short may cause back fatigue/pain with a longer skiing distance (anything longer than 1-2 km).
4. Cross-country skiing is a highly aerobic activity that can generate a lot of body heat. Though the weather may be wet and cold, clothing needs to protect your child from the elements while allowing sweat to quickly ventilate away. If it doesn't, your child risks getting chilled (or even hypothermic) once he/she stops. It is good to be able to add or subtract layers as needed during changing conditions instead of waiting to get

back indoors. If you have not already dropped the heavy parka for cross country skiing, this is the year to do it. Now that your skier can really move on their skis, they will be better prepared with the following items:

- a. **Soft Shell Jacket:** Cross-country skiers need a shell layer with exceptional breathability. A soft shell is a great choice for most skiing days. Soft shells are tightly woven jackets typically featuring a durable water repellent (DWR) finish. This repels the moisture of light snow or rain while providing exceptional breathability.
- b. **Hard Shell Jacket:** A soft shell will not prevent heavy moisture from penetrating, so a waterproof/breathable “hard shell” layer is a good item for days when there is heavy snowfall.
- c. **Base Layers:** An outfit of lightweight base layers and light pants is usually sufficient in mild conditions. Avoid bulk when layering. On really cold days, several light layers provide more warmth than a single bulky layer. This creates more “dead air” space between layers to retain warmth. Keep layers snug-fitting; layers must not be bulky to the point of limiting skiing motion, so tight-fitting layers are a better choice. However, don’t go so tight as to limit blood flow or remove the dead air space between the layers.
- d. **Hats and Gloves:** A lightweight and snug fitting hat/toque is usually sufficient. A hat that is too bulky or heavy will cause the skier to overheat and often doesn’t stay in place. Add a headband or buff to cover ears and face when it gets cold or windy. For hands, use the same base layer/insulating layer/shell layer combinations as for the body. A thin glove inside a waterproof mitten is ideal and either can be removed and stuffed into a pocket when necessary. A good supply of hand warmers are a great investment for those really cold days!
- e. **Socks:** A good insulating (wool or synthetic socks) are best. Cotton socks stay wet when feet sweat and this will cause little toes to get cold very quickly. While thick socks can certainly be used to create more warmth, first be aware of how much space is available in the ski boots. A base layer (liner socks) are a good addition on really cold days.
- f. **Sun Protection:** Apply sunscreen to exposed skin. This is also a good age to start wearing sunglasses for overall eye protection. Sunglasses need to be snug fitting; your child will not want to wear them if they slip on his/her nose.

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