

TRACK ATTACK: EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Track Attack skiers focus on skill refinement, improvement in fitness level and having fun with friends. They will be encouraged to participate in club races and the Ontario Provincial Midget Championships at the end of the season, however racing and training are not the focus of this group. The 2015/16 ski season is fast approaching and soon it will be time to pull out last year's equipment and see what fits. Before you spend money on equipment, please review the following recommendations to outfit your Track Attack Skier.

Skis: Only classic skis are required to participate in Track Attack. At this stage of skill development classic skis should be wax skis. Skiers will be given basic instructions on applying their own grip wax and will be encouraged to begin to learn to do this themselves. Scale skis are much slower than wax skis and may lead to frustration for the skier at this stage of skill and ability. Skate skis are optional for this group and for those who wish to learn and improve their skating technique the coaches will provide this option. (It is recommended at this age for children to learn and practice skate technique so it will be a skill they will have for life).

Boots: Combination boots are a great product for this age group – (and saves money). They provide the child with 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! If you do not have combination boots, your skier will need skate boots for skate technique and classic boots for classic techniques.

Poles: should be measured with the child either standing in their ski boots on their skis or standing in socks/shoes slightly up on their toes. Classic poles should be no lower than their child's armpit, but not higher than their shoulder/collarbone. Skate ski poles should come to just below the tip of their nose (upper lip) and not below their chin. Poles that are too long for children are hard to manage and get the timing correct. Poles that are too short may cause back fatigue/pain with a longer ski (anything longer than 1-2km)

Clothing: 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 you stop. It's good to be able to add or subtract layers as needed during changing conditions instead of waiting to get back indoors. If you haven't 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:

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.

Hard shell jacket: A soft shell, however, will not prevent heavy moisture from penetrating, so a waterproof/breathable “hard shell” layer is a good item for days if there is heavy snowfall.

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.

Hats and Gloves: A significant amount of body heat can be lost from your head and hands if not covered. A lightweight hat snug fitting hat 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 your hands, use the same base layer/insulating layer/shell layer combination as for the body. A thin glove inside a waterproof mitten is ideal. 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. Cold hands are not fun!

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.

Sun Protection: Remember to wear apply sunscreen to exposed skin. This is also a good age to start wearing sunglasses. The earlier children get used to wearing sunglasses the better for their eye protection. Sunglasses need to be snug fitting. If they slip on their nose the child will not want to wear them.

The Ski Swap is on Saturday, November 7th. This is a great opportunity to sell/pick up equipment and get advice from experienced volunteers. In addition, our local ski shops provide excellent service to help fit your child.

Not sure about waxing? Parents are encouraged to attend waxing clinics to prepare their children’s skis for lessons. More details about upcoming clinics will be posted on soofinnishnordic.com as they become available.