

Cross-Country Skiing

8 Week Practice Plan

Pre Season:

Meet with volunteers, family members and future athletes. Discuss practice schedule, clothing and equipment, competition schedule. Put as much of this information in writing as possible so everyone knows what will be happening. Discuss goals with the athletes and what they can do at home between practices. Also exchange contact information and a plan for communicating changes in practices (i.e. cancellations, extra practices). Show a XC video to get everyone "psyched" for the upcoming season.

Note: Try to have at least 2 practices/week even if one of them has to be dry land or indoors. If the practices are on consecutive days, the body often "remembers what it has learned" the day before and skills can be more quickly learned. Also, most competitions are on two consecutive days and the athletes will be accustomed to skiing two days in a row. The more advanced the skier, the more practice they may require (and want). If the snow is exceptionally good, try to squeeze in extra practices.

Week 1 to 4 (two practices/ week)

Equipment fitting

Practice taking skis on and off

After the group warm-up, divide the athletes by skill level and adjust drills to the athletes. Make it challenging for everyone. Bring the group back together for the game time at the end.

Dryland (No snow):

Warm-up:

Stretching and exercises: Always include falling down and getting up on both sides, with and without poles. Have an athlete or athletes lead the group in this.

Skills:

Ready position

Diagonal arm swing then stride

Weight shift

Diagonal stride with poles

Double Pole arm swing

Skate Hops, Skate Walk

Endurance drills:

Standing in place and hopping from one foot to the other

Skipping, jogging (concentrate on arm swing)

Hill bounding with and without poles

Game time:

Anything that keeps everyone moving (Dodge ball, volleyball, tag)

Snow:

Have skis on at all times. The more time the athlete spends with skis on, the more the skis become an extension of their bodies. This applies to the coaches as well.

Warm-up: with skis but no poles

Stretches, fall practice, star turns, ski 10 minutes or more without poles.

Skills:

Uphill techniques: classical technique, V1, herringbone, and sidestepping

Downhill techniques: wedge (snowplow), gliding wedge and wedge turns, controlled fall, getting up on a hill

Poling: diagonal, double pole, kick double pole

Flat terrain: Diagonal stride and classic technique, scooter drill, skating techniques (V1, V2 and marathon), turning.

Endurance:

Ski for 30 minutes or more with the course determined by skill level.

Game time:

Soccer on the snow, Frisbee, tag, dodge ball. Have a "just for fun ski" with everyone.

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Week 5 to 8 (two practices/week)

Basically the same structure as the previous weeks but get out the stopwatches. Instead of the endurance part of practices, have the athletes ski the events that they will be entered in. Get as many times as possible. Make sure you use proper start commands. Also work on relay exchange with everyone. Do not abandon the skills training; always take the time to isolate and work on specific skills.

Start discussing the upcoming competitions with the athletes. Try to have practices at different locations so the athletes become accustomed to skiing on different terrain. This also avoids boredom.

If you have been training especially hard, have a "just for fun" ski tour at a XC ski area. This reminds everyone that XC skiing is also a lifetime sport that most people do for recreation and not for competition.

Take time out to watch a XC video again with the athletes and discuss techniques with them.

Post Season:

Have a party to watch videos and look at photos of the past season. Discuss what to do in the off season to stay in shape. Have the athletes think about goals for next year.