

MAT-SU JUNIOR NORDICS PARENT HANDBOOK 2020-2021



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INTRODUCTION

The Mat-Su Junior Nordic program provides an opportunity for children to enjoy winter by learning cross-country skiing. We welcome children ages 4 through 16 of all abilities to develop skills in a healthy, life-long sport. The emphasis is on having fun and learning proper technique rather than competition. MSJN is a parent-run volunteer organization affiliated with Mat-Su Ski Club. The program is run by a Volunteer Coordinator, who organizes the volunteer coaches, helpers and schedules the practices. All parents of participants are encouraged to volunteer at various times throughout the season.

ELIGIBILITY

MSJN is open to all children ages 4 through 16. **Children 5 and younger MUST have a parent participate at each practice.** It is our experience that children younger than 6 are not ready to go out with a group without their parents on cold dark nights.

PROGRAM FEES

MSJN is self-supporting. The fee is \$50 for a family membership to the Mat-Su Ski Club and an additional \$40 per child in Junior Nordics. These fees cover maintenance and administrative costs. Fellowships are available for families unable to afford the fees. Applicants for the fellowships should submit a letter to the MSJN Coordinating Committee at info@matsuski.org.

Please consider a contribution to trail grooming efforts by purchasing a Trail Pin on the Mat-Su Ski Club web page.

Equipment rental fees are covered on page 3 of this handbook.

A Mat-Su Borough Parking Sticker is required to park at GPRA. These can be purchased from local vendors or the borough building in Palmer. (Please note this sticker is NOT the same as an Alaska State Parks parking sticker.)

PRACTICE LOCATION AND TIMES

Junior Nordic ski practices take place at the Government Peak Recreation Area (GPRA). Our weekday program begins January 4, 2021. We have three sessions: Monday/Wednesday from 5:30-6:30pm, Tuesday/Thursday from 5:30-6:30pm and a homeschool session on Monday/Wednesday from 1-2pm. Participants are not permitted to mix or attend multiple sessions.

FIRST DAY OF PRACTICE

The first day of practice in each session will be a mandatory orientation for parents and kids at the GPRA Chalet. ***Parents must attend the first day (Jan 4, 2021 for M/W, Jan 5, 2021 for T/Th).*** Participants will be placed in groups based on skiing ability, not age.

WEATHER

Practice is normally scheduled regardless of weather conditions. However, practice may be cancelled due to the following conditions: heavy snowfall, rain, ice, high winds or exceptionally cold weather. Please sign up for REMIND messages to get updates on cancellations and the wax of the day (WOTD).

PARENT PARTICIPATION

MSJN is a parent volunteer organization and only functions if parents are willing to pitch in. We ask that you volunteer 6 hours per family per season. You will be asked to pick an area in which to help. The choices include coach, sweep, chalet monitor, ski rentals, ski returns or Junior Nordic events.

COACHES and SWEEPS

The MSJN Coordinator solicits parent volunteers and other members of the ski community to coach our skiers. These are not paid positions. You do not have to be an expert skier to be a coach or a sweep. Coaches are responsible for leading their group's daily ski activities and placing children into groups. Each group has at least one "sweep" who skis behind the last skier to ensure the group remains together and safe. Get to know your child's coach and sweep; communicate any concerns to them directly.

SKI TECHNIQUES

MSJN skiers learn both classical (diagonal stride) and skate skiing. We start with developing a firm foundation in the classic technique, and then move on to the skate technique, depending on ability level. For most groups, classic is the focus in January, and skate is the focus in February.

EQUIPMENT

The most important rule about equipment is to **MARK ALL YOUR GEAR** with your name. Durable tape should be used to label rented equipment.

Skiers need skis, boots, and poles, proper clothing, and waxes.

RENTAL SKIS are available on a first come, first served basis, through MSJN for \$50 (per season). If you choose to rent, you must still provide your skier with boots. Rental skis are combis—they work for both classic and skate skiing, but if you need high performance skis for an advanced skier, they may not be appropriate.

BOOTS to be used with rental skis must be compatible with the New Nordic Norm (NNN) binding system. These bindings feature 2 thin raised ridges which fit into matching grooves in the soles of compatible ski boots. The boot has a short metal rod at the toe, which clips into the front of the binding and acts as a hinge. A rubber bumper on the binding provides a soft interface between boot and binding. Boots are specialized like skis, but a combination boot, which is designed to work for both the traditional diagonal and the skate techniques, is the best value. Remember to get boots that have a little extra room to accommodate wool socks and some foot growth during the season. Feet that are squeezed into boots that are too small will be COLD.

The following general methods are used to choose the appropriately sized skis and poles. For skis, have your child reach for the ceiling with his or her hand. The tips of the skis should measure 2 to 3 inches below your child's wrist. Go a little shorter for beginners, and a little longer for advanced skiers. Skis come in a variety of styles. The best bet is a combination ski, which is designed for both diagonal stride and skate techniques. **Do not purchase waxless or "no wax" skis** with a fish scale pattern on the bottom, since they will not work when your child starts to skate. If you already own waxless skis and your child is a beginner, they will work until your child advances to skate skiing, at which time it is recommended you rent MSJN skis. Do not buy strap-on type skis. It is not possible to learn to use the ski edges properly with these skis and it limits the skier's ability to advance.

POLE length varies with technique. For classic technique, poles should fit uncomfortably under the skier's armpit. For skate skiing, poles should be between chin and nose. If you rent MSJN ski gear, we will swap classic poles out for longer skate ones when we switch to skate technique in February. If you can only provide one pair of poles for your child, choose a length in-between the above guidelines.

KICK WAXES are needed for classic skiing in order to create grip (“kick”) on the snow to propel the skier forward. For each family, you will need a range of kick waxes for various temperatures, a synthetic WAX CORK to smooth out the kick wax and WAX REMOVER. A good selection of kick waxes for our climate includes green (coldest), blue (cold), blue extra (mid-temperatures) , purple (warm), and occasionally red (warmest). Blue and blue extra will be used most frequently. (Please note that we use the standard Swix brand color scheme; other brands may differ)

DRESS REQUIREMENTS

The key to a happy skier is being dressed warm enough for conditions while allowing adequate freedom of movement. Dressing in layers is the best way to accomplish this.

BASE LAYER—this thin “long underwear” layer is designed to wick moisture away from the skin.

INSULATION—traps warmth.

PROTECTION—the outer layer that protects you from wind and wet.

Synthetic fabrics (polyester, polypropylene, nylon) and wool are the materials of choice for all layers. **NO PART OF THE LAYERING SYSTEM SHOULD INCLUDE ANY COTTON CLOTHING**

Keeping the extremities warm is the biggest challenge when it is cold. Mittens are warmer than gloves. Wool socks and synthetic socks keep feet warm.

Chemical heat packs are helpful for the coldest days if boots and mittens/gloves have enough spare room inside.

Being well hydrated and fed is just as important as warm clothing.

A hat is a non-negotiable requirement. **NO HAT, NO PRACTICE!** A light headband can be worn under a hat to protect the ears if an overheating skier needs to temporarily put their hat in a pocket.

During the **2020-2021** ski season, there is also a requirement for a **face covering**, such as a buff, which should be worn whenever skiers cannot social distance. Buffs are popular because they function well to protect the chin and neck with a thin layer of insulation that doesn't cause overheating. On very cold days, breathing through it can help warm incoming air.

SAFETY

There are risks inherent in any outdoor activity like cross country skiing and although every effort is made to prevent accidents, minor scrapes and bumps do occur from time to time. Parents are responsible for making sure their children know and follow the rules to prevent injury to themselves and others. The most important rules that parents should discuss with their children are:

You must ski with a group.

Obey the coach, sweep, and parent helpers.

Never ski alone. If you are late you cannot go and find your group alone. A parent can ski with you or you may join a group that has not left the stadium. If you are in front of the group and come to an intersection, always stop and wait for the coach.

Never leave your group without permission.

Use your equipment properly—especially poles (people have been seriously injured by the sharp points of ski poles.) Keep poles pointed at the ground and do not point with poles or use them for games like tripping others.

Avoid moose encounters—Moose are not an uncommon sight on the trail. Usually moose mind their own business, but they can be unpredictable. Never pass a moose on the trail, get between a mother and her calf, throw anything at a moose, yell at it or walk or ski toward it. If a moose moves towards you, get behind a tree or anywhere you are out of sight.

Remove your skis before entering the parking area. Ten seconds of skiing on gravel can permanently destroy a pair of skis.

Never play in the parking area.

DISCIPLINE

The inherent dangers of cross country skiing combined with the large size of MSJN require that children promptly obey the rules established by the coaches. Children who are unable to obey the rules pose a threat to the safety of others as well as themselves and put an unfair burden on the coaches, other children, and parents. Children who are unable to follow the rules established by the coaches will not be allowed to attend practice.

Normally, the following progressive procedures will apply:

First infraction—Formal warning to skier

Second infraction—Meeting between coach, child, and parent

Third infraction—Suspension for 2 weeks

Fourth infraction—Suspension from the program

At the discretion of the board, certain serious infractions (such as fighting or situations involving risks of physical harm) may result in deviation from this progressive discipline policy, up to and including immediate suspension.

MEDICAL

If your child has a medical condition (asthma, allergies, seizures, etc.) alert the Head Coach and your child's group coach. Coaches are volunteers, and are not trained medical providers. Please plan for any medical situations proactively with the coaches.