

## MAT-SU JUNIOR NORDICS PARENT HANDBOOK



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**Web Page:** <https://matsuski.org/junior-nordics/>

### INTRODUCTION

The Mat-Su Junior Nordic program provides an opportunity for children to enjoy winter by learning cross-country skiing. We welcome children ages 5 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 volunteers who organize the volunteer coaches, helpers and schedules the practices. All parents of participants are encouraged to volunteer throughout the season.

### ELIGIBILITY

MSJN is open to all children ages 5 through 16. Children who are 5 **MUST** have a parent participate at each practice. Children must be age 5 on the day of registration to qualify. 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 \$75 for a family membership to the Mat-Su Ski Club and an additional \$100 per child in Junior Nordics. These fees cover maintenance and administrative costs. Scholarships are available for families unable to afford the fees. Applicants for the scholarships should contact us at [info@matsuski.org](mailto:info@matsuski.org) for more information.

Please consider a contribution to trail grooming efforts by donating at <https://matsuski.org/product/donate/>

A Mat-Su Borough Parking Sticker is required to park at GPRA. These can be purchased online or at the Mat Su borough building in Palmer. (Please note this sticker is NOT the same as an Alaska State Parks parking sticker.) Here is the website for purchasing your MSB parking pass online. The annual cost is \$40 per sticker. These are available for purchase in November of each year for the following year.

<https://ecommerce.matsugov.us/Pages/CD/AnnualParking.aspx>

## **PRACTICE LOCATION AND TIMES**

Junior Nordics ski practice takes place at the Government Peak Recreation Area (GPRA). We have three sessions: Monday/Wednesday from 5:30-6:30 pm, Tuesday/Thursday from 5:30-6:30 pm and a mid-day session on Monday/Wednesday from 1-2 pm. 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. ***Parents must attend the first day.*** 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 canceled due to the following conditions: heavy snowfall, rain, ice, high winds or exceptionally cold weather. Please sign up for REMIND messages for updates on cancellations and the wax of the day (WOTD). Decisions will be communicated as soon as possible.

## **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, Junior Nordics events or MSSC events.

### **COACHES and SWEEPS**

The MSJN Manager 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 ski waxes.

RENTAL SKIS are available on a first come, first served basis, through MSJN for \$100 (per season) plus a separate refundable check for ski deposit of \$150 per skier. Both checks must be made out to Mat-Su Ski Club or MSSC. Most of our 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.

If you choose to rent, you must still provide your skier with boots. Boots are available for rent on a first-come, first serve basis and are provided through Backcountry Bike and

Ski on the same day of Ski rentals. Boots may be rented for \$40 per set. If you choose to pay with cash, bring exact amounts.

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 that 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 combi 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 combi 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). Kick wax kits are available for purchase through Backcountry Bike and Ski for \$45. BCBS offers Start brand wax and will guide you in the correct wax to purchase. The WOD (wax of the day) will be shared in both Swix and Start brand colors.

## **DRESS REQUIREMENTS**

The key to a happy skier is being dressed warm enough for the 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.

## **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 Manager, 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.