

A Parent's Introduction to Alpine Ski Racing

Why Alpine Ski Racing?

Alpine ski racing is a sport that brings kids who love to ski together to learn technical skills, tactical awareness, speed and control, and performance psychology. Alpine ski racing demands physical and psychological preparation that can lead to a valuable payoff off of the mountain: determination, confidence, resilience.

The conditions like temperature, wind, snow pack, and slope in which our athletes compete can change dramatically from race experience to race experience. Because of this, skiers learn a deep respect of nature, the mountains, and other competitors. No other sport is in the same arena!

What is a ski race?

A ski race can stage any of the following events (see below). Typically, each day of the overall ski event will stage a different type of race (e.g., Friday is Slalom, Saturday is Giant Slalom, and Sunday is Kombi). Because each day usually offers a different type of race, your skier can attend a ski event and choose which race(s) appeal to her.

A skier finishes the race if she completes the course after crossing the finishing line. The skier with the fastest time wins. For more information on what it means to complete the course, please see [The Rules of Alpine Racing: What a Skier Needs to Know](#).

Slalom (SL) is a technical event requiring the execution of many short, quick turns.

Giant Slalom (GS) is also a technical event that requires competitors to race down the mountain through a faster and more open course than slalom.

Downhill (DH) is a speed event characterized by a course that tends to follow the contours of the mountain trail and allows competitors some freedom to find the fastest "line." This event is restricted to U14 and older.

Super Giant Slalom (SG) – sometimes referred to as Super G - is a hybrid of downhill and giant slalom. This event is restricted to U14 and older.

Kombi (K) is an internationally recognized event for youth racing that consists of a mixture of standard turns and gates.

SkillsQuest competitions are organized in such a way that athletes can be scored in various areas. This will allow coaches, trainers, and parents the opportunity to assess an athlete's strengths.

How can I register my child for a Northern Division race?

1. Go to my.usskiandsnowboard.org.
2. Sign into your account.
3. Make sure the athlete you would like to register is selected.
4. Select "Athlete Event Registration."
5. Select "Add a Competition."
6. Select the month of the race you are interested and make sure that "Northern" is selected for the Division.
7. Select "Search Competitions"
8. Add the events you would like to register for by selecting "Add to Cart."
9. Complete the checkout process.
10. You should receive a confirmation email with your event registrations.

*Most registrations close the week before the race. Please inform the Black Hills Ski Team coaching staff as soon as possible so they can determine the number of coaches needed for the events you are interested in participating.

What does a race day look like?

8:00 a.m. The day begins early on the mountain. Your skier will meet up with her team for the race schedule and to secure her bib. Her bib will have her number on it that will help you identify her race order. Please allow yourself plenty of time to park, ensure you have a lift ticket, and time to find the team.

8:30 a.m. After the team assembles, the team will start at the top of the course and "inspect" the course. The reason why it is called, "inspecting the course," is because the skiers are not allowed to actually ski the course. They will talk about the course turn by turn, gate by gate, by skiing sideways or backwards next to the course. The coaches will take this time to point out specific strategies for the course.

9:00 a.m. The race begins! Make certain that your skier is in the holding area at the top of the course in plenty of time before her turn to ski. Girls and boys run separately. After the athlete skis the first course, she will have a brief period of time for the race course officials to either reset the course or prepare the other course that is already established on the mountain. (Pro tips: You may want to scout a good viewing spot of the course ahead of time. You are not always able to see the entire course. Also, you may want to consider a jacket so when your racer finishes the course, she can have a warm coat. Make certain your skier also has a lift ticket so she can get back to the top after the race. Most ski resorts are great about letting racers on the lifts without a lift ticket, but some are sticklers or have RFID lift entrances.)

12:30 p.m. To get ready for the second run, the athletes will once again slip or inspect the second course.

1:00 p.m. Then the racers will have an opportunity to ski the course, often in a reverse order from the first run.

3:00 p.m. Once all skiers have cleared the course, the teams will be assembled for awards.

The race results can be found on a website called Live-Timing.com. You can find the race by location. The results are loaded in real time.

† Note: Not exact times, just an example.

What equipment does my child need to have?

Your racer will need appropriate skis: combined race skis or all mountain skis depending on your racer's level of intensity, poles (these can have pole guards if "knocking gates"), shin guards (if "knocking gates"), and a hard-sided helmet for GS. Your child will also need a lift ticket.

What does my child need to wear?

A speed suit is a racing suit that is one piece and allows for less resistance. *It is not at all required!* Your child will also need to wear the race bib issued at the race.

Who can race?

Any member of the Black Hills Ski team who has a USSSA Alpine Competitor Racing Membership. You can complete this registration while signed into your account. If you previously selected a non-competitor membership, contact USSSA and they will upgrade your account, only charging you the difference.

How do I know what age class my child will race in?

A competitor's age class is determined by their age on December 31 of the current competition season. The current competition season is Season 2026, so a competitor's age class is determined by actual age on December 31, 2025. The U stands for Under so, for example, competitors in the U12 age class will be aged 10 and 11 by December 31, 2025.

When and where are the away sponsored ski races this year?

The sponsored races mean that the club will pay for the coaching staff travel and lodging and other associated expenses.

It is important that you communicate your interests to the Black Hills Ski Team coaches so we can make certain we have enough coaches for the race.

***To prepare for the away races, make certain you have registered your child on USSSA.org. Make a reservation for lodging. You can contact BHST Board at bhst00@gmail.com if you need lodging recommendations. You will need lift tickets for any skiing spectators. Ask BHST Board if discounted tickets for parents are available. The team will typically purchase the racer's lift ticket at a discounted price and will make parents aware of how they can reimburse for those tickets.**

When and where are the local Club races?

The Terry Peak races will be February 2 (Slalom), March 9 (GS) and End of the Year Race and BBQ.

You can register your child for the local Terry Peak races by RSVPing on the TeamSnap app. The Terry Peak Races are typically held on the Empress Ski Run, except for the End of the Year Race which is held on Stewart Slope.

How can I help with away sponsored races?

You can help by having fun yourself! When you enjoy the race, your skier relaxes and enjoys it, too. The coaches do an excellent job of preparing your skiers. You just need to make certain they are on time and have the proper equipment. Get to know the other parents on our team and other teams. Look around at the beautiful scenery and be grateful you are not sitting on a bleacher!

If you are interested in taking a more active role, contact a BHST Coach or Board Member.

How can I help with local races?

We are so glad you asked! There are plenty of volunteer opportunities (e.g., BNET setting, gate judging, timing, course set up and take down and more!), even if you are not a skier (race registration, bib collection). It takes all of us doing a little to make a great race for our skiers.

Additional Resources:

The Rules of Alpine Racing: What a Skier Needs to Know

[article_12_f_rules.pdf \(sunridgeskiteam.com\)](https://www.sunridgeskiteam.com/article_12_f_rules.pdf)

INTRODUCTION TO SKI RACING: COMPETITION OFFICIAL – ALPINE

[UNITED STATES SKI AND SNOWBOARD ASSOCIATION \(usskiandsnowboard.org\)](https://usskiandsnowboard.org)

Here is a link for further information regarding USSA Officials volunteer positions in the race arena:

[LINK](#)