



Frequently Asked Questions

Racer Topics

Why pole guards?

Pole guards are used to move the gate out of the athlete's way. This depends on an athlete's "line" through a course. If the racer's line is tight enough going through the course then the racer will have to use a small clearing motion to move the gate out of the way.



Figure 1: Pole is in the way of athlete's line of travel so the athlete will move the pole away so that it doesn't bonk athlete in the face! Note: a rule in ski racing- the ankles and ski tips have to go around the gate however, the racer's upper body can take the short cut- taking an athlete's mass the quickest way down the hill through the course!



Figure 2: The gate is not in the racer's line of travel. No need to use pole guard or hand movement to clear the gate out of the way. This is likely a GS situation, similar to a panel SL in the way that an athlete would pass by the gate while attempting to ski a line that takes the racer close to the gate, brushing the gate but not having upper body pass through the gate. See figure 3.

Note: depending on the racer's tactics (this involves course inspection and knowing what to expect) the athlete may want to stay off the gate as in figure 2- possibly a line tactic due to such factors as the terrain changes. The goal is skiing the best line in preparation for how upcoming gates ahead are set.



Figure 3 (above): This is likely a GS or possibly a Super GS situation where an athlete would pass by the gate while attempting to ski a line that takes the racer very close to the gate, brushing the gate but not having upper body pass through the gate. With the panel being attached to the two gates it can be very disruptive to pass through the gate. Note: in a speed event such as Super GS or DH an athlete may likely



not want to make too much contact with the gate due to the potential speed and impact (risk management).



Figure 4: Racer aggressively skiing a tight line, likely in GS although similar to running a panel SL course. **Note: pole guards may not be advised in panel SL and are not permitted in GS or speed events!**

When are shin guards required? See figure 1 above.

This protective piece of equipment is used when the gate may be hitting against the shins. We often use a type of shorter gate called "hero gate" (Figure 5) where there is potential and intent to have athletes to be skiing close, ideally and eventually having knees and shins be directed through the gate! In fact, the goal is to teach the racers how to ski a line that would bring them close to the gate. This involves strong use of edging skills and good tactics in training and well ... maybe great coaches!! LOL!



Figure 1



Figure 5

Figure 5: the athlete's line of travel is not close to this gate. Edging skills are likely the cause. It is likely that the racer is close to some or many of the gates and likely requires the shin guards- doesn't appear to be wearing any in this photo.



Figure 6: a more desirable line through hero gates (the softer, shorter gates). Strong edging performance enhance the racer's ability to ski this type of line!



Figure 7a



Figure 7b

Figures 7a, 7b and 8: Racer does not require the use of pole, shin guards or chin guard on these specific turns. A few things about this- Athletes learn to use discretion (involves tactics, confidence, competence) depending on the situation. Additionally, these athletes are likely at the initial stages of clearing gates or choosing that for some turns/gates in the course “I not need to be close”. As they progress, these athletes will be clearing more gates and in a variety of situations on a variety of terrain. Note: Chin or face guards (Figures 7a and 7b) at some point may become the personal preference and not necessarily expected.

My child has indicated that he/she is learning to *carve or edge the skis*? Huh? Figure 9 shows world cup level and figure 10 below displays pretty strong edging of the skis during different situations (speed and SL)! The racer will have to use body joints to place themselves in an angulated position to enhance edging the skis. Some athletes may demonstrate good edging skills early in the skiing yet not look as aggressive as the athletes featured in the photos below- see figure 8.

Figure 8 displays an athletic looking racer who is demonstrating strong edging skills, however, is requiring more enhanced performance to be edging (carving) earlier in the turn. This ability of beginning the edging above and prior to the gate involves good tactics (knowing where to do this) and good edging technique. Stronger level will show edge engagement prior to the gate, and likely change this racer's line to have him closer to the gate and, finishing the turn with more power, sooner after the gate! Proper practice, tactics, equipment, physical growth and development may facilitate this. I am sure that



there are some turns in which his line (figure 8) will be better, where he “shins the gate”- but he is likely lacking consistency at this point in his growth.



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

When do I need pole guards?

Ask your coach! The coach’s decisions are based on factors such as:

It is often possible that a racer may require shin guards but not yet require the pole guards. ie. Hero gates versus skiing taller gates. *Young athletes, when wearing pole guards at first may feel like they need to punch those gates right out of the way!* When the athlete's line is not travelling close to the gate- the punch action, or reaching movement of the hand, arm and upper body (less desirable, figure 11) may disrupt the skier's ability to properly edge the skis, thereby slowing the racer down.

Note: Light weight racers- who aggressively contact the gate may experience disruption, by jarring them too much! Coaches may at times, direct these athletes to ski what is called “classic” style. Classic involves a style where one would use GS gate clearing technique in SL.



Figure 11

When it is time for pole guards an athlete will require a second set of poles for GS, and likely free skiing. **At GS and speed events, pole guards are not permitted as they can become a catch-risk on gates or the snow at higher speed.**



When are chin, face guards used?



Figure 12: Chin (face) guards are only used in SL for skiing taller gates, as protection. The purchase of this type of protection is considered by some athletes and parents when the racer is skiing closer to tall gates. The chin guard can protect the face and teeth! A fitted internal mouth guard will also protect the teeth in many instances.

Chin guards are not permitting for skiing GS or speed types of events. These guards are generally designed for easy removal and re-installing onto the helmet. That piece of equipment may become a risk factor when a racer falls at higher speeds as the device could catch the ground (the snow).

When should we consider the use of a back protector?

Back protectors are mandatory in Ski Cross events and highly recommended for GS and other higher speed events. This device is designed to protect the vertebral column and spine. Racers who have back protectors tend to wear them all the time, including for free skiing for the extra protection that they provide. Athletes report that the back protectors provide additional warmth as well.

When should we get a racing suit?

By U12+ most athletes will want to use a race suit. Then race shorts become a factor and possibly side-zip long pants! Sheesh! Note: there are cold weather rules for racing involving race suits versus must have shorts and “jacket” (could be a light jacket or soft shell) or vest.

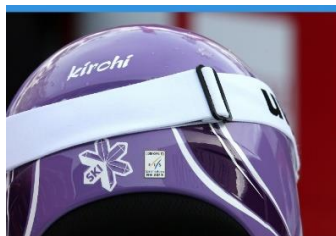
When will athletes require GS skis in addition to the SL skis that they are already using? Usually at about the 12 year old age with other things to consider:

- costs involved in the sport
- age, ability and strength
- size of athlete
- coach opinion/athlete performance level
- coaches may approach you about this



What are the ski helmet requirements? As per ACA domestic rules, FIS helmet rules are in place for National Point races and above (ie. FIS level). Excerpts from the Manitoba Alpine Racer Handbook include: “All competitors and forerunners are required to wear a crash helmet that conforms to the competition equipment specification.” Ski helmets specific to alpine skiing are mandatory at all times. “Only helmets are permitted whose shell and padding cover the ears” (U10). “Helmets with spoilers or edges that stick out are not permitted. Helmets used in FIS Snowsports shall be specifically designed and manufactured for the particular discipline and shall bear a CE marking and conform to recognized and appropriate standards such as CEH.Din 1077, ASTM F2040, Snell S98 or RS 98 etc.”

In GS, SGS and DH the FIS sticker “RH2013” **is required** as indicated **for U12 and older** in figure 13, below. U10 athletes in GS and SL require ski race helmets with hard shell and padding covering the ears.



For non-national points races- helmets must be “ski helmets” (designed for skiing) fitted properly with hard sided ears and do not need to be FIS approved for U10 category and younger.

Age group categories confuse me??

Category	Age Group
U10	8-9 yrs old
U12	10-11 yrs old
U14	12-13 yrs old
U16	14-15 yrs old
U18	16-17 yrs old
U21	18-20 yrs old

Further- age groups:

- U12+ means 10, 11 age category, plus older
- U12 means U12 and younger ages

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