

# Teacher's Background Guide to Different Kinds of Skiing

## Introduction:

Although many teachers and students know of the various kinds of skiing, this guide is designed to help students become familiar with recreational and competitive skiing they will encounter at the Alf Engen Ski Museum. The two basic categories of skiing are Nordic and Alpine. The Nordic events were developed in the northern Scandinavian countries. The Alpine events were developed by the middle European countries.



## Downhill

Skiing is often referred to as “downhill” skiing. Downhill racing, however, is a specific type of ski competition, started in the mid-1800s, in which the athlete skis down a course of a few control gates at a high rate of speed. A few modern downhill racers have been clocked at well over 100 miles per hour! The winner of a downhill competition is the racer who has the fastest time while staying on the race course.

## Slalom

Slalom is a form of skiing in which agility and quickness are the keys. The slalom skier must navigate through a series of closely set poles, or “gates”, as he or she skis down a course. The competitor who skis through all of the gates with the fastest time wins the competition. Hundredths of seconds may separate one competitor’s time from another.



## Giant Slalom

Giant slalom is a recreational as well as competitive form of skiing that involves skiing through gates at a relatively high rate of speed. A giant slalom skier goes faster than a slalom skier, but not as fast as a Downhill racer. The secret to a successful giant slalom run is to minimize the amount of snow that is “kicked up” by the skis. Strength and agility are the keys to successfully running a giant slalom race.



## Super G

Super G is a combination of downhill and giant slalom and is among the most dangerous and demanding forms of competitive skiing. Super G involves skiing through a series of gates at a high rate of speed and requires great strength and agility.





### Ski Jumping

Ski jumping began in Norway in 1843 and was introduced in the United States in the late 1800s. To ski jump, the athlete needs a steep hill, a “take off” at the bottom of the hill which helps propel him/her into the air, and a landing hill. In a competition, the jumper is allowed one trial jump, which is not scored, and two official jumps. The jumper is judged on the distance traveled in the air and on jumping form. He/she

begins with 20 points per jump and points are deducted to determine the score. The score in a competition is the total point value of the two official jumps.

### Cross-Country

Cross-country is the oldest and most utilitarian form of skiing. It has been used as a method of transportation in northern countries for centuries. In fact, pictographs dating from 2000 – 2500 B.C. show figures on skis, holding long poles. Cross-country today is both a recreational and competitive form of skiing. Recreational skiers enjoy “touring” on cross-country skis, while competitors race on a course made up of approximately 1/3 uphill skiing, 1/3 downhill skiing, and 1/3 flat land skiing. The competitor with the fastest time wins. Stamina and endurance are keys to cross-country skiing.



### Biathlon

Biathlon is a form of cross-country skiing in which the athlete also competes in rifle shooting during the race. Long used for military purposes, the first recorded competition involving the skills used in modern biathlon was held in 1767 in Norway. Biathlon competitors must shift from skiing to

firing a rifle at a small target 50 meters away. The athlete must fire five shots within thirty seconds from the time he skis to the firing line and drops his ski poles. For every shot that misses the target, one minute is added to the biathlete’s running time.

Recommended reading for those wishing additional information about Utah’s ski History:

*Skiing in Utah: A History*; Alexis Kelner, 1980

*For the Love of Skiing: A Visual History*; Alan K. Engen, Gibb Smith Publishers, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1998

*First Tracks: A Century of Skiing in Utah*; Alan K. Engen and Gregory C. Thompson; Gibb Smith Publishers, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2001