

SKI TRIPS AND SNOW SPORTS

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DOWNHILL SKIING/SNOWBOARDING

Skiing is a very popular and exciting sport. The vast majority of skiing group visits are organised through reputable and experienced tour operators. Such companies invariably include a part or full day of qualified instruction.

Visit leaders should nevertheless be aware that skiing/snowboarding is a potentially hazardous activity, taking place at altitude in winter. Supervision and group control must be ensured at all times.

When planning a ski or snowboard trip you should consider:

- Dates - snow conditions, cost, weather and crowds
- Country - language, climate, diet
- Travel - insurance, length of journey and suitability in line with your educational objectives
- Resort - Ensuring that the resort can accommodate school groups safely and the resort has a range of ski runs that are suitable for the young people.
- Snowsport School - Is the Snowsport School reputable/accredited and provides a good standard of coaching and instructing to the group that meets current qualification standards?

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ORGANISERS' QUALIFICATIONS/PACKAGE

Many ski trips organised by schools are arranged through a tour operator and further guidance on tour operators can be found in the '[Use of External Providers and Tour Operators](#)' found in the Planning a Visit or Activity webpage of the Outdoor Education website. However, it is recommended that at least one member of the staff team (usually the visit leader) has attended the **Snowsport England Ski Course Organiser** course when planning a ski or snowboard trip.

This Award is associated with general organisational issues. It does not indicate ability or experience to supervise skiing.

Ski Instructors Qualifications

Organisers will normally be expected to opt for full instructional provision of a minimum 4 hours per day.

All skiing instruction must be given by formally qualified instructors who are either:

- instructors employed by the tour operator through the local ski school
OR
- instructors with qualifications at B.A.S.I. Level III as a minimum, or equivalent

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SPECIAL NEEDS

Specific situations may suggest that some participants would benefit from direct supervision by establishment staff (e.g. participants with specific learning difficulties, special needs groups) rather than enrolment in standard instructional groups.

The decision to deal with a given situation in this way must be that of the visit leader. Such participants must be led by appropriately qualified staff and risk assessments specific to these individuals built into the management of the trip.

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FULLY SUPERVISED PACKAGES

Some Tour Operators provide ‘fully supervised’ packages, whereby leaders are provided by the Company to supervise much of the skiing outside instructional periods and to lead some social activities of the programme.

Visit Leaders should ensure that:

- such leaders are properly qualified (Snowsport England/Scotland);
- they are always accompanied by a member of school staff;
- they supervise skiing only and do not instruct;
- their activities are carefully monitored.

Use of External Providers and Tour Operators

There are a large number of providers in the UK and abroad offering a range of adventurous and other activities. Turnover of these companies can be high, with many new operators each year. Such a situation makes it impossible for the LA to maintain a register of such organisations.

Many such operators offer services at a very acceptable level but wide variation exists and some are very poor indeed. Visit Leaders are strongly advised to ensure that the company/organisation through which they are seeking to arrange their ski trip/snow sport activity is reputable, has appropriate insurance (including travel cover, e.g. ABTA covered) and provides staff that have the relevant qualifications to lead the planned activity.

It is imperative that appropriate checks are made before groups commit themselves to working with any external organisation. This can be achieved by completion of the [EV4](#) form, which is generated by the Corporate Health and Safety Unit. Please contact 01823 355089 or email oea@somerset.gov.uk if you are seeking use a provider or tour operator who is not currently listed on Somerset Council's list of registered adventurous activity providers.

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SCHOOL/ESTABLISHMENT STAFF SUPERVISED SKIING

Where staff wish to ski with groups outside instructed periods, they must be qualified as follows:

For supervision on:

Nursery Slopes

1. Alpine Ski Leader Award
Or
2. BASI Instructor

Green and Blue pistes:

1. Alpine Ski Leader Award
Or
2. BASI Instructor

Red and Black pistes:

1. Alpine Ski Leader Award
Or
2. BASI Instructor

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GUIDELINES FOR ADDITIONAL GROUP SKIING ACTIVITY

The decision whether or not to provide skiing additional to the standard four hours per day instructor-led sessions is a crucial one. It must be recognised that fatigue can quickly lead to deteriorating performance and an increased risk of injury. For younger participants and novices, it is probably wiser to restrict skiing to four hours per day.

Where the decision is taken to provide additional skiing, visit leaders must ensure that such groups are supervised and led by a qualified adult skier (see above). Unless visit leaders can satisfy themselves of the qualifications of such adults they must opt for additional, instructor led, supervisory sessions, despite the increased cost.

NB: This is a crucial decision, which must be made at the planning stage. In making additional skiing provision, visit leaders must recognise that:

- The effect of staff injury or illness can be disastrous in groups with small staff numbers and limited experience. This should be a major factor in deciding whether or not to opt for full, professional supervision.
- The cost of additional qualified instruction should not be the main factor in this decision. The safety and well being of students and the added flexibility of this arrangement should be paramount.

The following guidelines must be applied.

- Sessions should only be undertaken on local, easy slopes familiar to group members and leaders and should be of short duration.
- Most staff supervised sessions will usually take place following formal instructional sessions, normally towards the end of a skiing day. It is essential to recognise the likelihood of fatigue and plan accordingly.
- Group size should be restricted to safely manage the participants (risk assessment to determine applied ratio).
- Under no circumstances should groups be taken off-piste or on pistes unfamiliar to the group or the leaders.
- Jumps and speed skiing must be strictly managed throughout or not be allowed.
- Staff who are not qualified to instruct should avoid any attempt to coach or to introduce new skills.
- Expeditions and extensive travel from piste to piste should be discouraged.
- There must be a minimum of two adults with the group.

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ARTIFICIAL SLOPE SKIING

When skiing on artificial slopes the minimum instructional qualification is the SSE Artificial Ski Slope Instructor (ASSI) or the BASI level 1 Instructor. Neither award has validity for snow skiing.

Safety guidance specific to the slope must be adhered to and if not available a risk assessment must be completed by the visit leader prior to commencement of the activity.

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OFF PISTE AND CROSS COUNTRY SKIING

Off-piste and ski touring, undertaken in Britain, is an activity licensable under the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations. See the AALA website at www.aals.org.uk.

For further information on Leader Qualifications see [Appendix A: Summary of Leader Qualifications for Skiing and Snow Sports](#).

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CONTRACTUAL ISSUES

Visit leaders may leave themselves personally exposed to litigation if they personally sign a contractual agreement with the tour operator. In summary, any such agreement must be signed by the Head Teacher or delegated person, on behalf of the school/establishment, thereby making the school the contracting party.

For further information please see Appendix A: Using an External Provider or Tour Operator and the Requirements of Form EV4 on page 17 of the document **Overseas Expeditions** available from the [Specialised Guidance](#) section of the [Outdoor Education and External Visits](#) website.

The subject of 'free' inspection visits for staff is a sensitive one for some parents/carers and governors/senior managers. It is, however, important that the visit leader undertakes research, which can most effectively be done through personal knowledge of the resort in question.

Such visits should:

- be kept to a minimum;
- involve the visit leader/s only;
- have findings recorded in writing, made available at parental briefings if required, and retained;
- be appreciative that the company is trying to sell the trip/package and may provide a setting/conditions that may not be replicated when working with a large group of young people.

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CONSIDERATIONS WHEN COMPILING A GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT FOR SKIING AND SNOW SPORTS

Dry Slope Skiing

ACTIVITY	DRY SLOPE SKIING
HAZARDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls, collisions • Ski tow • Hand and thumb injuries
RATIOS	1:10-12 (risk assess to confirm)
QUALIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artificial Ski Slope Instructor/Snowsport England Level 1 Instructor
CONTROL MEASURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before commencement of the session, participants must be reminded of the safety precautions to be followed. • Group members should warm up before skiing. • The use of mittens or gloves and long-sleeved clothing to cover arms is essential. • Standard operating procedures of the English Ski Council or Snowsport England apply.
NOTES	<p>Group members who have some skiing experience may overestimate their skiing ability and thus should not head straight for the top of the slope at the start of the session.</p> <p>A generic Artificial/Dry Ski slopes risk assessment can be found on the EEC Health and safety website. Schools/establishments should complete this risk assessment if they are supervising a group before this activity takes place.</p>

Piste Skiing

ACTIVITY	PISTE SKIING
HAZARDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls, collisions • Cold-related injuries • Avalanches • Getting lost • Snow blindness • Sun burn • Effects of altitude • Inappropriate contact with strangers
QUALIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ski Course Organiser (SCO): Minimum for at least one of the Party Leaders • Alpine Ski Course Leader: Recommended for Party Leader • BASI III (Minimum) or Instructor approved by the Local Ski School at the resort for teaching skiing
CONTROL MEASURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before commencement of the session, it is recommended that participants should 'warm up'. • Before commencement of the session, young people must be reminded of the safety precautions to be followed. • The use of mittens or gloves, long-sleeved protective clothing and eye protection is essential. • Wearing of helmets is strongly recommended - a mandatory requirement in many resorts/ski-schools and a legal requirement in many countries. • Group members must not be allowed to ski unsupervised. • Only qualified ski technicians may adjust bindings. • Young people should be made familiar with the 'Skiway Code'. • Use of slopes appropriate to the ability of the skiers
NOTES	<p>At least one of the leaders must hold the SCO Award part 1 and have 5 years of experience. Visit leaders are strongly advised to hold the Alpine Ski Leaders Award (formerly the SCO II). Ski tour companies may offer attendance on these courses in place of inspection visits. SCO II holders can upgrade to ASLA: details from Snowsport England on 01509 232323.</p> <p>Visit leaders are advised to opt for full instructional provision of 4 or 5 hours per day.</p> <p>Accidents on skiing visits often happen outside of skiing activities. Tobogganing, sledging, 'poly bagging' and ice skating all have their own associated safety issues which should be carefully considered before inclusion in a programme.</p> <p>Serious accidents and fatalities have occurred as a result of misuse of hotel balconies. Balconies also present possible unauthorised entry and exit points for group members and/or unwelcome visitors.</p> <p>Consider completing a ski based risk assessment from the EEC Health and Safety website when planning a ski trip/activity aboard.</p>

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TIPS FOR THE PRE AND APRÈS SKI

These have been gathered by staff from previous trips working with a variety of groups. Some points may not fit with your specific group but other points may be useful.

Getting Up

- Delegate this responsibility to your staff, deciding on the gender of staff waking up different students.
- Turn the lights on, make a noise. Ensure that they go back after 10 minutes to check again!
- Keep count at breakfast time and identify missing students.
- Send the member of staff up again.

Breakfast

- This is the most important meal of the day on a ski trip and it can be difficult to get teenagers to eat anything.
- Usually there is one member of staff who is very good at persuasion and cajoling; utilise their skills.
- Group members may need advice on what to wear down to breakfast!

Getting to Lessons/Setting Off

- Divide the party up into small groups to ease management.
- Allocate a member of staff to each group.
- If you are the visit leader and can organise it, aim to not allocate yourself a group. This gives flexibility and enables you to stand back and watch the overall process and to be able to step in where required.
- Each member of staff is responsible for doing a check before the group leaves the accommodation for the slopes. A simple 5 point checklist would suffice:
 - Goggles
 - Lift Pass
 - Sun cream
 - Hat
 - Gloves (with wrist guards if boarding)
- A laminated check list of these items can be put onto the back of each door.
- It is advisable to always take a bag of spare gloves, goggles, hats.
- Double-check items all the way to the slopes!

Checking Equipment

- Most ski schools have skis and boots with numbers on. At the ski fit, have a blank list of group members and fill in the equipment identification numbers.
- Issue staff with a copy of this list to refer to during the duration of the visit.
- Duct tape (or 'duck' tape) sticks best to skis and can be written on with permanent pen (check with the ski hire if they are okay with this before you go ahead).

Walking to the Slopes

- Some resorts have hotels close enough to walk to the slopes. It is the responsibility of the member of staff to go with his/her allocated group members. They should safely manage the group and any road crossings etc.
- Staff should agree in advance both a place and a method of road crossing and make this clear to the group members.
- If the group members need to carry skis /boards/boots, you should seriously consider depot hire at the lift station to avoid the problems and potential dangers of walking along the road carrying ski/boarding equipment.

Using a Gondola/Lift

- In many resorts the first gondola or cable car up the mountain can be busy and stressful but after that the crowds disperse. If you have group members who are booked into ski school in some resorts this will give them priority to the early lifts.
- Be sure to count the group members onto the lift with clear instructions concerning which station to get off (If there is a choice).
- On the first morning, you might choose to go up first and stand near the exit so they see a familiar face and know to get off.
- There should be a member of staff at the back of the groups to act as a sweeper.

Waiting for Lessons

- Try to arrange with the ski school that you have a sign with your group name on (or another easily distinguishable landmark/feature) so the group members know where to congregate.
- Make sure group members know that they should not put skis or boards on until told to do so by their instructor.

Non-Skiers

- These group members should be effectively supervised throughout the day. What you exactly do with these individuals and how you supervise them will depend on the resort, the hotel and, where appropriate, the extent of their injury or illness.
- Consider whether a staff rota can be set up so that each day at least one staff member is available to supervise non-skiers - some staff may welcome a day or half day off.

Lunchtimes

- What are your arrangements? Make sure all your staff, group members and instructors know.
- Will the instructors be supervising the group members over lunch?
- Experience suggests that it is better if all group members meet back for lunch at the same place.
- Allocate 2 (or more with larger groups) staff to be at the meeting point on a rota basis.
- Give the group members clear guidelines about their behaviour. In particular, give clear instructions not to put skis or boards on without their instructor's clear direction.

End of Day

- Each group should meet at a designated meeting point and be counted off the mountain by their member of staff.
- This is a very important part of the day and requires you to be taking charge!
- Ensure that rubbish, rucksacks and other belongings are taken off the mountain.

Between Skiing and Evening Meal

- This is a chance for group to unwind and shower etc. Have clear guidelines about whether they can leave the hotel or not.
- Experience may well suggest that allowing students to leave the accommodation is NOT a good idea!
- Should you choose to allow students to go out because there is a supermarket nearby, allow them to go out in small buddy-groups but station yourself near the entrance of the hotel to see them out and back in.
- Ensure you include this on your parental consent form and have a separate risk assessment. Send a member of staff down to the same supermarket or out into the village to wander round and keep an eye out on the group members and what they are getting up to.
- Advice? Choose a hotel with a games area or sports hall to give the group members something to do in this 'down time'.
- Having later starting lessons reduces this time and allows students and staff to have a more relaxed morning.

Supper

- As with breakfast!
- After supper always hold a clear and brief meeting to celebrate the day, clarify the arrangements for the following day and give out notices/administration points. Clearly explain the plan for the evening.

Evening Activities

- Try to include some activities that involve going out and some that stay in.
- Time them so that when you get back you can put them straight to bed.
- Take loads of games so that you can have a games night or a quiz night.
- Has the hotel got a video/DVD player?
- Make activities compulsory to help with organisation, staffing and to make worthwhile the time spent in planning.
- Very careful consideration should be given to high-risk activities such as tobogganing/skating unless you are sure about the equipment and facilities. Check you have parental consent, your insurance covers these activities and you have completed a risk assessment.

Bedtime

- Times should be clear and adhered to.
- Do not threaten what you are not prepared to enforce and police.
- One or two staff can go up and put them into rooms and settle them down.
- When it's 'lights out', all staff go up and spend time on the corridor and in doorways. The group members will go to sleep much more quickly when they know there will be no more fun and games and nothing to be gained by staying awake!

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Appendix A: Summary of Qualifications for Leading & Instructing on Skiing and Snow Sports

Glossary of Terms

SNSC	Scottish National Ski Council
BASI	British Association of Ski Instructors
SCOW	Ski Council of Wales
SSE	Snowsport England
SCO	Ski Course Organiser
ASSI	Artificial Ski Slope Instructor
BMG	British Mountain Guide
ASCL	Alpine Ski Course Leader

PISTE SKIING AND SNOWBOARDING

Hazard Level/ Technical Difficulty	Minimum Leader Qualifications	Minimum Technical Adviser Qualifications	Staff:Young Person Ratios - Typical Range <i>NB: actual ratios must be determined by a process of risk assessment</i>
Piste Skiing and Snowboarding - <i>instruction</i>	BASI III or Instructor approved by the Local Ski School at the resort for teaching/instructing skiing or snowboarding	BASI 1/Trainer or head of local ski school	1:12-1:15
Leading Piste Skiing and Snowboarding - <i>no ski instruction</i>	Snowsport England/Wales Alpine Ski Course Leader Also Ski Party Leader Award (Snowsport Scotland) (permits limited teaching also, in Scotland only)	Snowsport England/Wales Alpine Ski Course Leader Snowsport England/Wales Coach/Tutor/Assessor <i>NB: The SCO II has now been superseded by the ASCL. SCO II is effectively out of date.</i> Snowsport Scotland Coach/Tutor	1:8-1:12
Ski or Snowboard trip organisation - <i>not skiing</i>	Snowsport England/Wales Ski Course Organiser (SCO) training: for at least one Party Leader	Snowsport England/Wales appointed SCO Coach/Tutor	N/A
Artificial Slope Skiing or Snowboarding - <i>instruction</i>	Club Instructor or Artificial Slope Ski or Snowboard Instructor	Snowsport England/Wales/ Scotland Club Instructor Tutor or Assessor, or ASSI Tutor or Assessor	1:10-1:15
Other	Various skiing/ snowboarding qualifications from other countries exist	If any doubt occurs as to currency of qualifications please refer to the relevant UK governing body	N/A

OFF-PISTE SKIING AND SNOWBOARDING

The qualifications below relate to Nordic and Alpine skiing. Nordic and Alpine refer to particular ski disciplines, not to geographical settings.

Hazard Level/ Technical Difficulty	Minimum Leader Qualifications	Minimum Technical Adviser Qualifications	Staff:Young Person Ratios - Typical Range <i>NB: actual ratios must be determined by a process of risk assessment</i>
Ski-Mountaineering	British Mountain Guide (BMG) Carnet holder or international equivalent	BMG Carnet holder	1:6-1:8
Alpine Skiing and Snowboarding and Telemark Skiing - Europe off-piste away from marked/ serviced areas (back-country)	British Mountain Guide (BMG) Carnet holder or international equivalent	BMG Carnet holder	1:6-1:8
Alpine Skiing and Snowboarding and Telemark Skiing - Europe off-piste but within the recognised boundary or serviced areas shown on piste map	As above, or BASI I Ski Teacher or Snowsport England/Wales Coach when delivering ASCL training	BASI I Ski Teacher or Tutor - ASCL	1:8-1:10
Alpine Skiing and Snowboarding and Nordic Skiing (Langlauf) - UK off-piste	British Mountain Guide (BMG) Carnet holder or international equivalent o Winter ML and one of: BASI II relevant to discipline, or SNSC Nordic Ski Leader, SCOW/ESC Coach of relevant discipline	BASI II Nordic Ski Teacher or SNSC Mountain Ski Leader or Winter ML and SCOW/ESC Nordic Coach (Touring)	1:8-1:12

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