

Jackrabbit Level One Skills

Age 6-7 years old. Master fundamental movement skills, develop overall motor skills. Acquire basic cross-country ski skills (both classic and skating techniques); equal use of techniques; develop downhill abilities. Focus on balance, agility and rhythm.

Ready Position

This technique should be practised and assessed on flat terrain.

- The skier stands with arms and hands slightly for ward and to the side for balance
- Skis are kept parallel
- Body is upright, but relaxed
- Knees and ankles are relaxed and slightly bent
- The skier remains in this position for several seconds

This is important later for uneven terrain or downhills. Cues for success are bent knees, relaxed arms, breathe easy.



Falling and Rising on uneven ground

This technique should be practised on a gentle slope that is packed but not too hard or icy.

- The skier glides down the hill without poles, and falls to the **side and back** in a sitting motion
- Skis and legs are kept together
- Skis are brought together, side by side and under the body, on the downhill side of the body and perpendicular to the fall line (the path a ball would take if it rolled down the hill)
- The skier moves on to hands and knees
- The skier edges skis and stands up without assistance
- Once the skier can accomplish the skill effectively without poles, poles should be used. Poles need to be moved parallel to the skis as

the skier prepares to rise

Falling safely is an athletic skill. Falling onto a hip or your bottom is much safer than an extended arm or face-forward. Learning at a young age at no or very slow speed is much better than at older age at speed.



Side Stepping

This technique should be practised on a gentle slope. Poles could be used, but may make this exercise more complicated.

- The skier stands on the flat at the start of a gentle slope, with skis perpendicular to the fall line
- Arms and hands are forward and to the side for balance
- The skier places his/her weight on the downhill ski and then lifts the uphill ski, placing it 10 to 20 cm uphill from the original position
- The downhill ski is then placed beside the uphill ski
- Skis are kept parallel
- Repeat for five repetitions
- The skier should also practise going down the slope using five side steps



Star Turn

This technique should be practised on flat terrain.

- Stand in Ready Position with skis parallel and arms away from the body for balance
- The skier places his/her weight on the left ski
- The skier then lifts up the right knee and places the right ski back down with the tips about 20-30 cm apart, keeping the tails together. The skis form a "pizza slice"
- The left ski is then moved parallel to the right ski
- This is repeated until a full circle is completed
- Repeat in opposite direction



Tracking

This technique should be practised on flat terrain with several metres of clear-cut, set classic tracks. No poles are used.

- The skier moves forward down the track and steps sideways out of the tracks, without breaking the tracks
- The skier is able to get out of both sides of the track and come back into it easily while moving forward



Diagonal Stride

In the progression of the Diagonal Stride this is the “running step”. This technique is practised on flat terrain with set tracks. *Start without poles*

- The skier slides his/her skis down the track
- The skier “walks” down the track on the balls of the feet with some ankle and knee bend
- There is some glide onto the forward ski as the skier pushes off
- There is a “jogging-like” action on the balls of the feet, with glide onto the forward ski
- After the skier’s weight is shifted to the gliding ski, the pushing ski momentarily comes off the snow at the end of the push
- Arms swing comfortably (somewhat in opposite time to the leg’s stride)

Coaching cues need to emphasize pushing off back foot and moving weight onto the new glide leg – it’s not a fast shuffle!



Herringbone

This technique should be practised on a gentle slope, starting without poles...

- The skier steps up a gentle slope, alternating arms and legs
- He/she maintains the tips quite wide apart (in a “V” shape)
- Arms swing comfortably
- The skier completes five steps with each leg



Free Glide

This technique should be practised on a gentle slope (like trail 1 at map location C or trail 6c). *Typically try without poles until skier is competent (so that a pole doesn’t hit skier in face).*

- The skier starts at the top of the hill in the Ready Position (the body is generally upright, knees and ankles are relaxed and slightly bent)
- Hands are kept forward
- Skis are kept parallel
- Skiers are able to glide three metres down the slope maintaining the Ready Position



Snowplow Braking

After the skier can demonstrate a stable Ready Position moving down a gentle slope, he/she can advance to Snowplow Braking on a similar slope. *Begin without poles.*

- The skier makes a wedge, by spreading the tails of the skis apart (the tips come together)
- The skier controls his/her speed by adjusting the size of the wedge and edging his/her skis. *Edging can be shown in advance on flat ground by pushing snow sideways with the inside edge of the ski*
- The pressure (braking) on each ski is fairly equal with minimal turning to one side
- The skier maintains the upper body in the Ready Position



Other Skills:

- Scooters. Take off one ski. Using flat-ish terrain, but not tracks, push off with the boot and glide on the ski. This is often used for games like tag, scooter soccer, or balance exercises like seeing how far down a downhill track the skier can go without touching.
- Distraction skiing. Use something like a large soft ball (beach ball, soft volleyball or soccer ball) and ski while throwing it in the air and catching it. Throw to a partner and back as you both ski in a parallel track.
- Balance. Try to ski down an easy slope on one leg. Aim for distance.
- Ski playground. Navigating the obstacles improves balance and coordination in unplanned but fun ways.

Ski Exercises

These activities are designed to improve the balance, agility, coordination, rhythm and confidence on skis that will establish the foundation on which ski technique skills can be developed. The exercises are generally listed in order of difficulty. Some are appropriate for children under six while others are more suitable for older novice skiers. When practising these exercises the skier should be stationary and without poles.

Soldiers. At a command to stand at “attention”, the skiers stand tall with locked knees and straight backs. At a command to stand “at ease”, they relax their knees and let their upper body slouch. You can make this more difficult by introducing the commands while skiing in tracks.

Tippy Toes. The skiers roll onto the balls of their feet until the heels of their feet are about to lift off the ground. They then roll onto their heels until their toes lift against the inside of their boots. Next they do the “Teeter-Totter”, rocking back and forth from the balls of their feet to their heels.

Reach for the Sky. The skiers reach for the sky, first going up on their tiptoes, and then settling back on both feet at the same time.

Touch Your Tongue. The skiers press their shins against the tongues of their ski boots, experimenting with the use of both slight and strong pressure as they squat down. This exercise teaches them the difference between a knee and an ankle bend. When skiers have mastered this activity, they can try it using one leg/ski at a time.

Flea Leaps. The skiers jump into the air (on their skis) and land softly in a balanced position.

Stork Stance. The skiers practice standing on one leg while remaining balanced. They are allowed to extend their hands sideways to steady themselves. Alternate legs. Definitely no poles.

Rubber Leg. The skiers first stand tall on one leg/ski, and then relax it, letting it slump into a flexed position at the ankle and knee. Alternate legs.

One-Legged Pops. The skiers pop/spring off one leg, which is bent, and then land on the same ski. Alternate legs

Jackrabbit. Each letter represents an activity. Have the participants guess the next letter and activity:

J Jump and reach for the sky 3x

A Angle forward as far as you can without tipping or slipping, 3x

C Crouch down as far as you can and stand back up 5X

K Kick each leg out slowly to the front and back, 3X each side.

R Reach to the left and right extending far enough to pull your opposite leg off the ground – 5X each side.

A Achilles tendon stretch – slide your right ski forward and bend your knee parallel to the ground. Keep your left leg straight with your ankle locked. Repeat with the other leg.

B Bounce on your toes 10X

B Balance on one ski. Then alternate. Hold as long as you can!

I Itch – scratch each shoulder.

T Tips - touch the tips of your skis with your hands.

Back Leg Lifts. The skiers extend one leg/ski rearward and off the snow while bending forward at the waist. They then move the same leg/ski forward, without weighting it, and return their upper body to an upright position. Repeat with the opposite leg.

Poison Peanut Butter. The skiers lift one ski and then the other off the snow so that the “poison peanut butter” (i.e. the snow), doesn’t stick to their skis. The coach encourages the skiers to keep moving by saying “quick, don’t let the peanut butter stick!”

Stepping Movements. These movements are the basis of the Side Step and Star Turn. They follow on from the “Poison Peanut Butter” exercise above. This exercise should be introduced on packed snow, but it can also be practised in deeper snow when the skiers are ready for the challenge.

To begin with, have the ski poles lying on each side of the skier, parallel to their skis. The skiers step over the poles going first in one direction, and then the other. As the skiers gain competence, several poles can be lined up for them to step over, or they can be placed farther apart to require a longer step. The skiers can also try to jump over the poles with both feet.

Pushaways. Two skiers (partners) face each other, standing on their skis with their feet wide apart for solid balance. One ski is placed between the partner’s skis, with the tips reaching behind the partners’ heels. The skiers can improve their balance and agility skills by trying to push their partner off balance.

Snakes. Skiers form a line, one after the other, with about two metres between each. The skier at the end of the line weaves between the other skiers until he/she comes to the front of the line and then becomes the new leader. For advanced skiers, this exercise can be practised with all the skiers moving slowly forward while the skier from the end of the line is trying to weave forward to the front of the group. Variations can be done on the flat, on a slight downhill, or by skiing around other skiers or other objects.

Rubber Knees. The skiers descend a slight incline using rubber knees and ankles to help absorb bumps.

Tip and Tail Touch. While skiing down a gentle slope, the skiers alternate between touching the tips and tails of their skis with their hands.

Slide Tall and Slide Small. The skiers descend a slight slope, exerting pressure on the tongues of their boots by bending their legs slightly. *Easy* - they alternate between putting a lot of pressure on the tongues (slide small) and a little pressure (slide tall). *Novice* - Challenge the skiers to touch the ground and lift their arms in the air while coming down the hill. *Medium* - Ask them to throw their mitts in the air and catch them while coming down the hill. *Harder* - ask them to catch a glove and throw it back to you (the coach) when they get to the bottom of the hill.

Hinge Hop. While skiing down a gentle slope, the skiers hop, lifting their ski tails and leaving their tips on the snow.

Luge. While skiing down a gentle slope, the skiers first lie back on their skis. Next they practise squatting on their skis until they almost touch the snow with the seat of their pants.

Terrain Leap. Using their poles, the skiers practise a small upward and forward jump, tucking their knees up towards their chest.