

# SNOWSPORT ENGLAND

## A Guide to Cross-Country Skiing

You'll probably already be aware of Alpine skiing and what that looks like. Alpine skiers stand on 2 skis that remain side by side and skiers slide down the mountain usually doing turns on the way. There are different sorts of races and there are also terrain parks where the skier goes over kickers and jumps but they all involve the same basic technique described above and they ski on similar equipment.

Cross-Country skiing covers a wide range of activities on an even wider range of equipment but it all has one thing in common; the boots all have a free heel and they are only attached to the skis towards the toe. The free heel means that cross-country skiers can go *uphill* as well as down so that they are not tied to ski resorts or ski lifts.

### How is it Different?

At one extreme are the racing skis. These are sometimes known as "skinny skis", are only about 3 fingers wide and are incredibly light. If you've seen cross-country skiing at the Winter Olympics you'll know that the skiers can propel themselves along and uphill very quickly. The top racers will do a marathon distance (with hills) in about 1½ hours compared to running where the world record is over 2 hours.

At the other extreme are Telemark skis. These are indistinguishable from Alpine skis. The Telemark turn was invented in Norway in the 19th century as a way of turning long wooden skis. Since then the equipment has evolved into something more like Alpine equipment except that the heel is free to lift. Telemarkers doing downhill turns have the option to use either Alpine turns in the same way as the Alpine skiers or they can use Telemark turns which are very graceful turns with the skier appearing to kneel down on one knee alternately on each turn.



In between skinny skis and Telemark skis there are cross-country skis of varying widths and with different constructions, some with metal edges, but made specially to suit such activities as recreational skiing in tracks, touring in the forest and touring in the mountains.

## Traction

Cross-country skiers propel themselves forward and uphill with one of two techniques.

The oldest technique is the "Classic" technique. The skis remain side by side in grooved tracks as the skier moves along and It looks like this - [graphics-cross-country-skiing-042822](#)

As the skier puts her weight on the ski, the middle part of it grips the snow either mechanically or with special wax so that the skier can push forward and then glide on the other ski. As with the skating technique, the skier uses poles to help push herself forward.



The skating technique is very similar to the way ice skaters propel themselves forward except that cross-country skiers use poles to add an extra push.

## Alternative



In England the snowfall is too unreliable for cross-country skiers to practice regularly or to improve their technique. Instead, the cross-country ski clubs practice on roller skis which is the best replication yet found of skiing on snow. Both cross-country skiing techniques can be used and roller skis also have the same bindings and boots as found on cross-country snow skis. Poles are used for additional propulsion in the same way as on snow.

