

Skiing: a brief history and its varieties

Secondary School

TAGS: Winter sports, skiing, skis

Let's hit the slopes this weekend! Yeah, all right, but which type of skiing and what type of snow will we find? Skiing is not just going down a slope as fast as you can. Want to know more? Read on and have a look at the ready-made worksheets.

Skiing originated around 8000 years ago in northern Scandinavia and were used by a people known as the Sami. Most probably, skis were first used to get around on the snow and ice purely for practicality rather than for entertainment. It is not until much later that people thought about skiing for fun. Did you know that the world's oldest skis were found in Russia in a place called Lake Sindor that date back to around 6300 BC? However not until 1809 was skiing considered a leisure time activity. In fact, the first known ski jumper was Olaf Rye, a Norwegian-Danish military officer who made a jump in front of his fellow soldiers to entertain them. Competitive skiing didn't happen publically until 1843. Haven't we made progress since then?

Nowadays there are so many different ways of skiing: alpine also known as downhill, cross-country, Nordic, Mogul, freestyle, snowboarding, halfpipe, aerial, ski racing, backcountry (or off-piste) and telemark. There is also water skiing and kite skiing not to forget grass skiing! However, for now, let's stick to the winter sports ones. So, what are the differences between all these types? Have a look at the worksheets: one is for your students to match the description to the type of skiing and the other to match the picture to the different types. You decide which one to use.

Special clothing is used for skiing, mainly for protection from the cold and in case you fall. These items are ski goggles, warm, brightly coloured jackets and salopettes or trousers, gloves, a hat and really good boots. Different skis are used for different reasons; they may be really long, thick or thin and all of this depends on the sport, but most important are your height and weight. Sometimes maybe the colour will help you decide! There is no real 'rule'. One well-known piece of advice is that short skis are for beginners and not very experienced skiers whereas if you are a high-level skier then you can use longer skis.

Activities:

A - How many different styles of skiing on snow do your pupils know? Get them to match the description of the style of skiing to its name **Skiing Types by definition**

B – If you want a pictorial matching exercise where you pupils match the style of skiing to a photograph illustrating the varieties of skiing, then look at **Skiing Types by image**

C – Ask your pupils where it snows in their country. How often does it snow where they live, have they been skiing, what activities besides skiing can you do in snow: make a snow angel (lie down on soft snow and with out-stretched arms and legs, make an impression on the snow. Build a snowman, throw snowballs, etc.

D – Ask your pupils about the special materials and or clothing used for snow activities; wool is best for next to your body clothes, then something made out of fleece and on top polyester is the most common for outdoor clothing as it keeps you dry and can be windproof as well. It is all about layers! As for clothing, think about scarves, a hat, goggles or sunglasses if it is sunny, gloves, thick socks and boots or shoes with good soles. If you're out walking, remember to take water and energy snacks such as chocolate or nuts.