



Cochran's Ski Club Primer

Mission: Cochran's ski club provides families with a supportive community dedicated to the affordable pursuit of alpine ski racing and a lifelong love of skiing.

Club kids should demonstrate an outward interest in ski racing and have at least advanced beginner ski skills. Parent participation is expected both in supporting and preparing their racers for training and races and in carrying out Club functions. Racers who train with Cochran's Ski Club may represent the Ski Club at regional races. In addition to training and competition, the Club engages in a wide variety of related social activities that can be enjoyed by the whole family.

We encourage every child to participate in some races, regardless of their ski racing ability. We strive to give Club kids a sense of accomplishment through improvement in their skiing skills in the context of ski racing. In reaching these objectives we never overlook the fact that the purpose of ski racing or of any competitive sport is to have fun! Our philosophy is "[The Cochran Way.](#)"

Responsibilities of the Ski Club racer:

Ski Club racers are expected to follow the coaches' guidelines, help in set up and take down of gates each training day, ski respectfully on the lift and trails as other public skiers and riders will be using the area, cheer on their Club teammates at racing events, and exhibit good sportsmanship and a downright fun and positive attitude.

Responsibilities of the Ski Club family:

Club parents and children of each family agree to work together to support the Ski Club's activities. Parents, especially, are expected to work at the Cochran's Ski and Ride sale, participate in fall trail and Ski Area maintenance, and volunteer at ski races hosted by Cochran's. The Ski Sale is a three-day event held on the first weekend in November. Fall maintenance, usually coinciding with dryland training for racers on Sundays in September and October, includes trail and equipment preparation and repair. During the ski season, the Club hosts at least four races for which there are a number of race-day jobs. These activities often bring families together in a shared experience that fosters a healthy Club spirit and friendships.

Cochran's Ski Club is a member of U.S. Ski & Snowboard (USSS) and Vermont Alpine Race Association (VARA). Everyone participating in training, racing and coaching with Cochran's Ski Club must join USSS. Cochran's Ski Club's liability insurance is provided by USSS's CLIP program, which requires club members be current USSS members. Everyone participating in council races must also join VARA.

Relationship with Cochran's Ski Area:

Cochran's Ski Club and Cochran's Ski Area are both non-profit organizations. Each has a separate board of directors, budget and mission, and each organization is dependent on the other. The Ski Area puts in a lot of extra work and grooming to support our training and racing, sometimes inconveniencing the general public at the Area. Ski Club shares race revenue with the Area, and supports the Area through volunteer work and other fundraising activities. Most of our racers start their ski careers at Cochran's, and we are grateful for the opportunity to help other kids and families feel at home at Cochran's too.

Cochran's Ski Club Board of Directors:

The Board of Directors is the governing body of Cochran's Ski Club. The Board is guided by our mission statement and by-laws, and members perform key roles in perpetuating the objectives of



Cochran's Ski Club. New board members may be nominated and selected by the current board. The Board meets about once a month, and minutes are made available to Ski Club members. The Board is always interested in feedback, ideas, new initiatives and concerns.

Age Groups:

U8 and U10 Program (ages 9 and under)

Much of the Cochran's spirit is defined by the genuine experience of the U8 and U10 racers. These rippers make Cochran's their home and playground more fully and effectively than anyone. For these skiers the transition of Cochran's as a place they learn to ski with their family, to being part of their first team, getting to know a group of people and being a part of the community, is usually a powerful experience. Racers must be able to ride the T-Bar unassisted by a parent or coach, and put on their own equipment. They will use the racers' rope tow during training, too. The Vermont Alpine Racing Association makes a schedule of roughly 5 races throughout Northern Vermont. Participation is optional, and encouraged. The VARA races require VARA & USSS competitor licenses. The Head Coach will assign U8-U10 racers certain days on which practice will cater to their needs, courses, instruction, etc. This will be roughly 2 afternoons a week and certain times during the weekend. During school vacations it will be more often.

U12 Program (ages 10 - 11)

At this point skiers are starting to adapt their skiing towards the two disciplines, slalom and GS. Families have the option of having one pair of skis for both events or splurging for GS and SL skis and equipment. We encourage you to talk to the coaches about what type of equipment is best for your racer. U12 still focuses on skiing fundamentals and becoming a well-rounded skier who can bring these abilities into a race course. U12 is not too late to start racing, in fact this is a great age to begin, as a youngster's body is stronger and more able to handle the forces of skiing.

U14 Program (ages 12 - 13)

Described by many as the heart and soul of ski racing, U14 racers have often reached a level of skiing and maturity where they begin to push themselves and improve at fast rates. While Cochran's maintains a laidback and fun atmosphere at all times, U14 is the first ski racing age group where athletes get ranked within their region and have the ability to advance to the State Championships and onward. Although the VARA platform is more intense at this age, fun and skills development are Cochran's top objectives. It should also be noted that many of the nation's top skiers were not highly ranked or accomplished skiers at this age. Hard work is more important than success at the U14 age.

U16+ Programs (U16, U18, U21, ages 14 and up)

Because the U16 racer will be racing among older ages, with their high school team and/or in the ranks of VARA/USSS state races, we have combined the training activities of the U16, U18 and U21 age groups to prepare these racers to ski, train and race (and inspire each other!) together as the "U16+". The level of competition for these age groups is bound to be a "bump up" from the younger years, and yet racing goals for this group can span those whose sights are set strictly on high school team racing to those that have aspirations for competing at the national level. Please look for a more detailed description of the [current U16+ program](#) on our website, or ask a board member for a copy.



Competitive Inter-Club Racing:

Northern Vermont Council

U14, U12, and U10 (ages 7-9) racers compete in races within the Northern Vermont Council (NVC). The NVC includes Cochran's Ski Club, Smuggler's Notch Ski Club, Mount Mansfield Ski Club & Academy, Burke Mountain Academy, Mad River Ski Club, Green Mountain Valley School, and Jay Peak Ski Club. Each season, the NVC schedules 5-6 council races for each age group, including all seven clubs. The races generally happen on Sundays in January, February, and March, and are hosted at the home mountains of the various clubs. Here are a few notes on what to expect if your family is new to ski racing:

- At least a week prior to their first NVC race, make sure that your racer has the required USSS and VARA memberships. They must have a **competitor** membership from USSS to race.
- **Register** for the race on Adminkiracing.com. The NVC has transitioned to online payments for all races. Racers will not appear on the start list unless they have registered in advance for the race.
- Check the VARA calendar (<https://www.vara.org/calendar.php>) the week before the race to find the location of the race and a Race Announcement that gives the race day schedule as well as other important information. Usually your racer's coach will also share this with you.
- Make sure you know whether the race is a slalom or a GS (giant slalom). If your racer has different gear for the different disciplines, be sure to pack the correct gear.
- Plan to arrive early. Your coach will let you know where and when to meet. Most races start at 9:30 am. Racers will need to meet their coach to get bibs, ride the lift together, and inspect the course. Typical meeting time is an hour and a half before the start.
- Plan to spend the whole day. Racers get two runs. The first run happens in the morning, and usually girls run first, followed by the boys. Depending on the number of racers and any potential delays, the first run may take up to two hours to complete. There is typically an hour break between runs, so that the second run starts around 12:30 or 1:00 pm. There is usually an awards ceremony following the completion of the second run. Depending on the age group, medals are given for the top ten finish times for each run or the top ten combined times.
- Fuel up. While many race venues have snack bars or cafeterias, many parents like to bring lunch and snacks so that food is accessible to racers whenever they need it.
- To ski or not to ski? Parents who are avid skiers often enjoy the opportunity to ski at a new mountain on race day. Just don't forget about your racer. Parents on skis can help get kids to the start, carry coats to the finish, take kids out for free runs in between race runs, and many other tasks. Parents who are not skiing can help by taking video or photos, cheering from the side of the course or the finish, helping kids to find their gear/food/friends/coaches in the lodge, and corralling kids to head out and meet the coach.

VARA Scored Races

U16, U18, and U21 athletes compete in **scored** races, which are sanctioned by the USSS. Results from these races determine a racer's **USSS points**. Racers compete not just to place well in each race, but also to lower their overall points. The start order for the race is determined by each racer's points. The second run start order is determined by the first run finish time. Scored races occur at many different venues around Vermont. Coaches will typically suggest a schedule of races that they believe will work well for the group. Racers need to be registered for each race they plan to attend. Registration/payment is on Adminkiracing.com. Some races fill up quickly, so it is best to register well in advance of the race. Most of the tips listed above also apply to attending scored races, but naturally the older athletes take on more responsibility and will help each other as well.