

Themed workshop (25 April 2026): Spice up your summer ski training

(Ros Brown-Grant)

When you're out training at one of the UCLan open track events or on a cycle track/car park local to you this summer, here are some ideas for things that you can do to make your rollerski training session a little bit more interesting. These exercises will help you to:

- a) work your agility, balance and coordination
- b) isolate particular parts of a technique
- c) find out if one arm or leg is weaker than the other
- d) test your stamina
- e) test your ability to synchronise with another skier.

1. Vary the direction of travel (particularly at the start of a session as a kind of warm-up)

- Try chalking or coning out an area on which to practise figure of 8s, using step or skate turns.
- Try skiing backwards on skate skis or stepping backwards on classic skis for short distances at a time.
- Try brisk sideways stepping on either skate or classic skis for short distances at a time.
- Try 'serpentine' across the track, e.g. by linking lots of step or skate turns from side to side; see if you can work up to completing a reasonable distance like this, e.g. 1 km.

2. Vary the number of skis or poles being used

- Try 'serpentine' across the track on just one skate or classic ski at a time, e.g. for 3 or 4 double pole plants, then change direction and use the other ski in a similar fashion; see if you can work up to doing 1 km like this.
- Try free skating without poles or using legs only on classic skis; see how long you can keep this going; alternate this for c. 100m with the full technique, e.g. with skate 2 or with diagonal stride, respectively.
- Try locking the legs in diagonal stride and just use your arms in an alternating fashion (NB if you find this hard on the first attempt, try doing it down a slight incline); try the same thing doing 10 pole plants on one side only, then 10 on the other side only; see how long you can keep this going; alternate between doing full diagonal stride with both poles, alternating poles, one pole at a time, etc; see if you can keep up the same pace whatever poling action you are doing.
- Try doing double pole kick using one pole only at a time to do 10 pole plants on one leg, then switch to doing 10 on the other leg, then switch poles to doing the same on one leg before switching to the other leg. This alternates between poling and kicking on the same side of the body and doing a cross-body arm-leg action; this stresses your core and makes

you work harder to stabilise the body; see if you can keep up the same pace whichever side you are poling and kicking on.

- In skate 1, try alternating for several strides between using both poles, using the pull pole (i.e. the same one as the leg you're leading on) only or using the push pole (i.e. the opposite one to the leg you're leading on) only; see if you can keep up the same pace whatever poling action you are doing.

3. Use downhill as productively as you can

- Try free skating downhill rather than just schussing, step-snowploughing or grass-stopping.
- Try classic downhill (no poles) lifting one ski at a time very slightly so as to practise shifting weight from ski to ski.
- Try skate turning (on skate skis) or step turning (on classic skis) all the way down a hill, going across the slope.

4. Use uphill as an opportunity for interval training

- Choose 2 or 3 different techniques in either skate (e.g. skate 1 and skate 2) or classic (e.g. diagonal stride, double pole kick, double pole) and try to sprint in each technique in turn up a hill, recovering your breath/heart rate on the descent each time; see if you can do 2 or 3 sets of these in a session.

5. Practise pelotoning with a friend (or two)

- When aiming to ski at a continuous rate (= steady state training) round a track, try taking it in turns to ski behind a friend who skis at a similar speed to you and synchronise with their pace/tempo; agree a rough distance (e.g. 100m) after which the front skier will drop to the side and go behind the back skier; the erstwhile back skier now goes in front and skis for another 100m whilst the erstwhile front skier synchronises with them; keep repeating this for as long as you wish. It's a great technique for skiing longer distances or several laps at a time as it really takes your mind off the physical effort you're putting in; it also adds efficiency from the slip-streaming effect that actually benefits both the front and the back skier(s) ...

Enjoy!