



COURSE NOTES
FOR
SNOWSPORT ENGLAND LEVEL 1
ROLLER SKI INSTRUCTORS

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1) Introduction

These Course Notes are intended for anyone wishing to qualify, or already working, as a Snowsport England (SE) Level 1 roller ski instructor. They cover and expand on all of the non-technique requirements of the Level 1 award, such as: safety, introducing and advising about roller skiing equipment, choosing the right venue and terrain, group organisation and control, awareness of group capabilities, coping with bad weather, motivating the group, progression and monitoring progress. For each requirement, they give guidance and explain what is needed by instructors at Level 1 and, therefore, what a Tutor will be looking for during an assessment.

These Notes cover technique instruction at a general level, but they do not cover the specific technical requirements of a Level 1 instructor, and nor do they give exercises, drills or tips which you as instructor are expected to know. These latter are covered in a separate document prepared by SE.

These Course Notes are limited to the SE Level 1 roller ski instructor award. While much of the content can also be used by on-snow instructors, they do not cover the specific requirements of the on-snow instructors' qualification. Finally, although these Notes make reference to the requirements of a Level 1 instructor, they do not repeat the full content of the Award document. All Level 1 instructors and candidate instructors are expected to be familiar with the Award requirements, which can be found on the SE website at [Nordic Disciplines - Snowsport England](#) and also in the [Coaching Resource Bank - Snowsport England](#).

2) The training/assessment course

To qualify as a Level 1 instructor, you will need to attend a training and assessment course lasting a minimum of 2 days or 12 hours. The structure of the course depends to a certain extent on the Tutor running it, but it will contain at least the following elements:

- 10-minute presentation on a roller ski related subject chosen for you. This is intended to assess both your knowledge and your ability to present information to your group of skiers;
- technique coaching. This is intended to correct any faults in your technique, and to ensure that your skiing technique is up to date. Both classic and skate techniques will be covered. Any technical issues will be addressed during this part of the course, but you are not being formally assessed during it. You should, however, try to ensure that throughout the course you are skiing at least at the equivalent of the SE Proficiency Award Level 3*;
- 20-minute example lesson. You will be given the subject for your example lesson in advance. During the lesson itself, you will be assessed on the content and progress of the lesson, on the adequacy of your demonstrations, and on how you 'manage' your group;
- technical assessment. During this part of the course, you will be formally assessed on your skiing abilities, as required for the equivalent of Level 3*. The Tutor may assess the whole group of candidate instructors together, or they may ask individual candidates to demonstrate one or more specific skills. The main aim of this part of the course is for you to demonstrate that you consistently ski at 3* level but if, for whatever reason, you give a poor demonstration and you are aware of this, you should mention this to your Tutor, who will usually allow you to attempt the demonstration again.

The actual content and format of the course will also depend, to a certain extent, on the skiing ability of the candidates. Where the whole group is clearly skiing at or above 3* level, the technical coaching part of the course may well be shortened and other parts of the course extended (for example to discuss how to instruct skiers). To minimise any problems, therefore, you should consider checking that you are able to ski consistently at 3* before you apply for the Instructors' course.

Three outcomes of a Level 1 Instructors' course are possible:

- pass, in which case no further assessment is required until the 3-yearly reassessment,
- deferred pass, in which case the Tutor will tell you which aspect(s) you need to improve and, once these have been improved, you can request a reassessment. You will receive an Action Plan from the Tutor for a deferred pass,
- fail, in which case the reasons for the failure, together with an Action Plan to improve them, will be sent to you.

3) Who will be instructed?

In the rest of these Notes, it is assumed that you will be working with a group of skiers (this should not be more than ten and ideally about six) and that, fundamentally, you will be asking all skiers in the group to be doing the same exercises. This does not exclude the possibility of you working with just one skier, asking different skiers in the group to do variations of the same exercise or to concentrate on a different aspect of the same exercise.

The Award Scheme document says that a Level 1 instructor will be working with “beginners and those in the early stages of their skiing careers (improvers/novices, here referred to as ‘novices’)”. In technical terms, a beginner or novice is defined as someone at SE Proficiency Award Level 1* or 2* (see <https://www.snowsportengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/SE-Nordic-Proficiency-Awards-2022.pdf>) or equivalent. It is recognised that some SE Level 1 instructors may be technically capable of instructing at higher levels than this but, because working with beginners and novices requires certain specific skills (see below), candidate instructors will be assessed on their ability to work with beginners and novices, not at a higher level.

A beginner or novice, or someone in the early stages of their career, is likely to be a person who has never been on roller skis before, or who has not spent much time on roller skis. Consequently, you are likely to need to select appropriate equipment for them (classic or skate roller skis, boots, correct length poles and suitable protective equipment). A Level 1 instructor is also expected to be able to advise on more general suitable clothing but, when meeting a group of beginner skiers for the first time, they are going to have to ski in what they turn up with. A beginner may need help with putting roller skis on and they are likely to be nervous about being on roller skis, they are unlikely to display much or any balance, and they may well know little or nothing about roller skiing or about the techniques involved (they may have Alpine skiing experience but this is not that useful for roller skiing).

In terms of instructing, there are clear differences between beginners/novices and more advanced skiers. Beginners are unlikely to know the techniques of skiing, so these techniques need to be explained to them at a level that they can understand. This is where demonstrations come in; it is far easier to demonstrate a technique than it is to describe it in words (which is why you must be able to demonstrate all techniques competently) and this can then be followed by ‘simple’ instructions, such as “I would like you to try walking on the roller skis”. More advanced notions, such as weight transfer and body position, are unlikely to be understood by beginners/novices and, therefore, as far as is possible, skiers should be given exercises or drills which ‘automatically’ progress their skiing, appropriate to their level, without extensive explanation.

Proficiency Level 1* requires “forward movement on flat terrain” (as well as other skills), so covers basic diagonal stride and skate. You can assume, therefore, that no weight transfer is expected at this level (although you should still demonstrate weight transfer if showing diagonal stride). At Level 2*, some weight transfer is required in both classic and skate techniques. A Level 1 instructor, therefore, is

expected only to be able to assist beginners and novices to progress to the level of basic weight transfer, not to fully-developed skiing levels.

A relevant question, more so for novices, is how long you should allow them to practice 'wrong' technique, which includes, for example, staying on four wheels at all times in classic skiing. Recognising that practicing 'bad technique' risks ingraining it, the correct approach as an instructor is to be always working towards good technique (and demonstrating it), while recognising that your skiers might not be able to achieve it. That said, a point may arise during any course when skiers are unable to absorb any more instruction; they might be confused or tired. In this situation, you should consider giving them a break and allowing them to 'just ski'.

In order to encourage new skiers to continue in the sport, you may consider giving them exercises (e.g. balance) which they can do on their own before their next roller ski session.

Beginners/novices are also defined as those who are at the early stages of their skiing career. This is important because there are some skiers who are very experienced but yet are still no further advanced, technically, than 1* or 2*. You might, nonetheless, be asked to instruct such skiers and should recognise that they may be either frustrated by their inability to progress or, equally likely, to have their technique very deeply ingrained. It should, though, always be your role to help such skiers improve.

Finally, you need to consider the 'motivation' of the skiers you are working with. It may be assumed that intermediate and advanced skiers are largely self-motivated, whereas this is not always the case with beginners/novices, who could be trying roller skiing for the very first time. It should be a fundamental objective of any instructor, therefore, to ensure that all skiers, irrespective of any technical improvement, enjoy the time they spend with you, leave with a feeling of achievement and are likely to want to continue roller skiing. It has to be accepted that some people, after the first experience, will decide that roller skiing is not for them; these should, though, be willing to recommend it to others.

4) Range of operation

As a Level 1 instructor, your instructor's licence authorises you to instruct beginners and novices on roller skis (but not on snow), up to 2* proficiency level or equivalent, in a club or equivalent setting. In a club setting, you may well be able to rely on the club to select a suitable venue for beginners/novices but, otherwise, you have to be able select a suitable venue. This is covered in detail in 6.3) below.

As a part of your Level 1 assessment, you may well be asked to demonstrate your knowledge and ability to select safe venues and how to minimise risks.

5) Background knowledge

5.1) Introduction

In addition to the ability to demonstrate, describe and teach the various skills appropriate for a Level 1 instructor, you must also "demonstrate a solid foundation of information and experience", covered in this section, and "a basic understanding of how to manage the learning environment", i.e. preparations prior to starting any instruction, which is covered in Section 6. "Managing groups of different sizes and ages and fitness levels", i.e. instructing itself, is covered in general terms in Section 7.

To demonstrate a solid foundation of information and experience, candidate Level 1 instructors are asked to "make a short informal presentation to a small group. The subject will be one of the non-skiing elements of the Nordic Proficiency Awards, e.g. waxing, clothing or equipment". You must also be able

to “describe equipment needs for novice skiers (including safety equipment)”. Each of these is set out in the following sub-sections and they may be the subject of the 10-minute presentation you will be asked to deliver as part of your Level 1 assessment.

5.2) Roller skis

Beginners and novices should be discouraged from buying their own roller skis until it is clear that they intend to stay in the sport. In any case, buying equipment is not needed, because roller skis are often available from clubs or from other sources. Nonetheless, Level 1 instructors should have a reasonable knowledge of the different types of roller skis so that they are able to allow skiers to choose appropriately.

No specific advice needs to be given on makes or models, but you must clearly understand the differences between classic and skate rollers, and the possibilities offered by combi rollers. You should know the differences between the two main wheel materials (rubber and urethane) and what effects these have on roller ski speed and wheel wear. You should also understand the differences between wheel width (narrow and wide), wheel shape (rounded or flat) and other factors affecting the stability of roller skis (of which the main one is that rollers where the bar is below the level of the axle will be more stable than rollers where it is in line or above).

You should be able to suggest appropriate roller skis to the skiers you are working with, choosing where possible slow, stable models. For classic skiing, this is likely to mean wide, rubber wheels and long rollers. The choice for skate skis is greater, because some rollers with narrow wheels can be stable because of their design (the bar being lower than the axle), but you should advise beginners and novices not to try skiing on fast, racing roller skis. Finally, you should have a rough idea about the price of roller skis and where they can be obtained.

The sort of information required can be obtained by talking to other skiers and roller ski suppliers, looking at the different skis other people are using or which are offered by suppliers, or looking at manufacturers' websites and other information. If asked to give a presentation about roller skis as part of an assessment, making this a visual presentation, showing different types and makes of rollers (if they are available), is an effective and simple way of showing what is available.

There are other types of roller ski, in particular off-road, 'alternatives' such as Skikes and even roller blades. A Level 1 Instructor should be aware of these but, because they are not normally used on roller ski courses, an in-depth knowledge is not necessary.

5.3) Boots, poles and bindings

Level 1 Instructors should know the two main binding types (Salomon and NNN, that the Salomon Prolink binding provides compatibility with NNN, that not all Salomon bindings (e.g. Profil and Pilot) are compatible, etc.) and have some knowledge of which boots are available for each. You should understand the differences between skate boots, combi boots and classic 'shoes' and, although the latter are not widely available, you should ensure that beginners use boots which provide enough stability for roller skiing, which generally excludes classic shoes. You should also be able to advise on the correct size of boots (firm but not tight) and check that boots are properly done up. Because beginners will not have been on roller skis before, you should also know how to attach and detach boots to and from rollers.

For poles, the main knowledge required is the correct height (armpit height for classic, chin height for skating), how skiers use the straps correctly and how they hold the poles. Where straps are adjustable, you should know how to adjust them and make sure that they are correctly adjusted, which usually means that, with the hand outstretched behind the body, the pole can be held off the ground using the strap alone, without gripping it with the hand. Where adjustable-length poles are available, you should know how to adjust these and, in particular, to ensure that the tips are correctly aligned after adjustment.

You should aim to ensure that skiers use the straps and do not grip the poles too tightly; getting them to pole using only the straps without gripping the handle with the hand may well work for this. You should also be aware that poles can, if used improperly, hinder rather than aid skiing, so you should be willing to suggest that skiers use poles up to 10 cm shorter than the recommended length until they get used to them, or even to work without poles.

5.4) Protective equipment

The five main types of protective equipment which a Level 1 Instructor should know about are helmets, gloves, knee and elbow protection, eye protection and, recently, padded shorts have started to appear. Advising skiers on suitable equipment, usually in advance of any course or instruction session, is covered in Section 6.

The use of helmets is compulsory on SE courses; you must always wear one and ensure that skiers being instructed also wear one. Without a helmet, SE's insurance may be compromised and you could be held at least partially responsible for injury to a skier caused by them not wearing one (failure of the general 'duty of care'). Modern, hard shell cycling helmets are best, and you should know how to adjust these to ensure that they are worn correctly, adjusted for the right size and are worn done up.

You should wear gloves and ensure that they are suitable for roller skiing; these can then be used to show what suitable gloves look like. You should also understand which sorts of gloves are likely to be suitable (lightweight and flexible, while providing a degree of protection) and which are likely to be unsuitable. Alpine skiing gloves are generally too bulky and inflexible, as are some working gloves and normal cold weather gloves, while thin 'fashion' gloves do not usually provide enough protection. Suitable gloves are, of course, those designed specifically for skiing or roller skiing, although other gloves, such as goalkeepers' gloves and some kinds of gardening gloves, may provide an acceptable alternative.

Elbow and knee pads can provide a degree of protection against the most usual forms of roller ski accident. If they are available, you may encourage their use (and should then be able to advise people on how to put them on). They are not, however, compulsory, and if someone prefers to ski without them, they should be allowed to do so.

Padded shorts are designed, in particular, to ensure that, in the event of a fall, there are no broken bones, and if participants bring them to a course, they are free to wear them. Whether it gives the impression of 'safety' if you decide to wear knee and elbow pads and/or padded shorts yourself is best left to you to judge.

Finally, eye protection is not compulsory on a normal roller ski course, although it is usually required in 'formal' races (but whether beginners or novices should be competing in such races is debatable). If skiers wish to wear eye protection, you should be able to help advise them on what is suitable.

5.5) General clothing

Common sense and pragmatism are probably the best guides for clothing in general, with a few general principles, although among skiers coming from within an existing ski club there is likely to be less variation in what people consider to be suitable for roller skiing than there is among the wider public who might be trying it for the very first time. The first general principle is that the same clothing as used for outdoor running or cycling, appropriately adapted to the weather, is likely to be suitable for roller skiing. The same ideas of layering and waterproofing also apply, but if a course will last for some time in bad weather, participants should be encouraged to bring one or several changes of clothing.

One difference from running/cycling, more relevant for beginners or novices than for more advanced skiers, is the question of wearing high performance, and therefore expensive, clothing. Because of the risk that this might be damaged in the event of an accident, participants may be better advised to wear older clothing which they would not mind much getting damaged or dirty. You should also be conscious of clothing which, because of its size or bagginess, might cause problems for participants (particularly baggy trousers or large coats, which might cause snagging of poles) and, if possible, should advise your skiers accordingly.

You yourself should be appropriately dressed. Where arm and leg movements and positions will need to be shown (more relevant for novices than beginners), baggy clothing should be avoided because this might hide limbs and joint movements. You should also, generally, be dressed so that you are able to continue throughout the lesson without the need to stop and change clothing.

If asked to give a short talk about general clothing (or protective equipment) as part of an assessment, you might decide to use people in the group as examples, highlighting examples of appropriate clothing and allowing for general discussion. This may be more appealing and informative than simply talking about clothing abstractly for the 10 minutes or so of the talk.

5.6) Waxing

Detailed knowledge of ski waxing is not a prerequisite for a roller ski Instructor! A Level 1 Instructor should, though, know enough about how snow skis for classic and skate skiing 'work' in terms of providing forward movement so that you are able to explain the difference between skate rollers (without ratchets) and classic rollers (with ratchets) and how, in particular, the ratchets on classic rollers simulate wax, fish scales, skins or other grip system on classic snow skis. The simulated technique of 'compression' on roller skis, to bring the grip system into contact with the snow, is likely to be too advanced for beginners and would be introduced only at the more experienced end of novice skiing.

5.7) Fitness for skiing

Again, there is no requirement for a Level 1 Instructor to have specific knowledge of the training needs for skiing. It is something that beginners and novices will often ask about, however, so it is advantageous if you can give some general advice. It is sometimes the case, too, that beginners and novices have come to a roller ski course because they have signed up to ski a loppet, such as the 42 km of the Engadin or the 90 km of the Vasaloppet, without having any real idea of what this will involve (they may be doing it for charity).

The general advice (for adults at least) is that training for skiing should be much the same as training for any other endurance activity, such as running a marathon or taking part in a long-distance cycle event. Most beginners and novices should be encouraged to practice balance, as well as developing fitness, and they should be advised to do some work to strengthen their core and upper bodies, such as Pilates and swimming.

It is well beyond the scope of this Guide to give more specific guidance than this, other than to say that anyone attempting a loppet and who is not training about three times a week for a total of roughly 5 hours is likely to struggle. As an Instructor, your main task will be in helping them to move efficiently and relaxed on roller skis, to minimise their energy usage.

You should also understand how to warm up at the beginning of a lesson, and be aware of a range of balance exercises and techniques, which might be used as a part of a lesson. If you have equipment, such as a balance board or cushion, this may be used as part of the lesson.

General fitness, warming up and balance exercises are all possible subjects on which candidate Level 1 Instructors might be asked to talk during their 10-minute presentations. During these presentations you will be assessed on a combination of your knowledge, your skills as a presenter, and the way in which the subject is put across. Speaking for about 10 minutes can actually be quite challenging; it is long enough to require you to develop the subject in some detail, but it is not long enough to fully develop it. Common problems with candidate Instructors are, though, that they reach the end after 5-6 minutes, or they appear as if they are never going to reach the end at all!

The general principle for all presentations, however, also applies to ski instructing. You tell the group what you are going to present to them, you present it, and then you conclude by answering the "So what?" question, i.e. what will your group be able to do with the knowledge which you have just given them. You may well find it helpful to have 'props' (e.g. if talking about roller skis, having two or three pairs to show), and to practice your presentation before coming to the instructors' course.

6) Pre-skiing actions

6.1) General introduction

This section covers various actions which may be required of a Level 1 Instructor prior to you meeting the people you will be working with. Often these actions will be done by your club (especially selection of venue and recruitment of participants), but you should, nonetheless, be aware of them.

6.2) Pre-course contact with and briefing of skiers

Participants should, if possible, be contacted some time before a course. This is when they should be told about suitable clothing and protective equipment, and also asked for details of their heights and foot sizes, necessary for the selection of hired poles and boots, if needed. It can also be used to give general advice and course timings. The first meeting between Instructor and participants is in the vast majority of cases planned some time in advance, and it gives the opportunity to brief participants about the course, and to distribute hire equipment. Clubs may well have stocks of 'middle sized' equipment (i.e. boots between about 36 to 46 (sizes 3 to 11), and poles for people between 1m 50 (5' 0") and 1m 80 (6' 0"), but people outside these sizes may be difficult to equip. A lot of time and effort can be wasted, though, if the equipment needed by all participants is not available right at the start of the course.

6.3) Selection of a suitable venue

In many cases the venue for a training course will already have been selected by, for example, the organising club, but this does not exclude the possibility that you will need to select your own venue. In either case, though, a Level 1 Instructor must be able to make a safe selection or, if the selection has already been made, be able to choose the most appropriate areas of the venue in which to do their instruction. It should be recognised that most venues can be safe or more dangerous depending upon how they are used and what precautions are taken.

There are two issues you need to be aware of: the ability of your skiers and the behaviour of others using the same venue (if any). Your skiers may find it difficult to stop or turn, and they may be prone to falling unexpectedly. Other users of the venue (pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, roller bladers, etc.) might behave unexpectedly or unreasonably, and they probably won't understand or anticipate the actions of your skiers.

In order of decreasing safety (the safest coming first), suitable venues are likely to be: booked or reserved areas with unique access, such as a cycle circuit or school playground with no other users. This is followed by the same areas with access for other users, which may include other groups of (more experienced) skiers, cyclists, pedestrians or horses. Third on the list come public parks without vehicular access (although more care is needed as the park becomes busier), private roads (as long as access has been granted) with limited vehicular access and wide, asphalt pavements. Supermarket car parks may be suitable after closing time, although their surfaces are not always smooth or continuous. Beginners and novices should never be taken onto public roads.

Particular care is required with venues shared with others (such as a park or cycle path) and where a track runs alongside a public road or crosses the road, e.g. via a zebra crossing. For the latter, you are allowed to use such a track/crossing only where you are certain that none of your skiers can fall onto the road and therefore into the path of a vehicle, or that they cannot roll out of control onto the road. Further challenges can be presented by speed reduction devices such as speed bumps and rumble strips, which can be particularly challenging for beginners and novices. You should be aware of where such devices exist, and ensure that your skiers do not approach them at speed.

Venues with no other users or low numbers of other users will generally be safest. Where this is not possible, venues with good visibility and wide enough areas for skiing should be selected. It should be recognised that some beginners may not be able to stop, even from low speeds or when going down modest hills, and nor may they be able to take avoiding action. A venue where any coming together of skiers and other users can be avoided has to be preferred, but if this is not possible then other users should be warned, e.g. by cones or other signs.

In addition to the issue of other users, the condition of the road or pavement surface needs to be taken into account. Wherever practicable, surfaces should be smooth and even, allowing for controlled and easy roller skiing. You should bear in mind that roller skiing, at beginner's speed, on rough or broken surfaces, or surfaces with gaps or joints, may be challenging to beginners and novices, as is the presence of debris, such as stones, twigs and leaves. What a 3* level skier (Level 1 Instructor) can ski over easily, such as a small crack, might cause a beginner at slow speed to stop dead.

A further factor is the state of the surface, especially when it is made slippery by rain or moisture, moss or algae, mud or leaves. It may not always be possible to avoid slippery surfaces, but you should be aware of this, advise your skiers accordingly, and avoid exercises or drills where the chances of slipping are raised. In slippery conditions, classic skiing on wide, rubber wheeled rollers may be safer than skating.

Slopes and hills need special care, and this includes even minor slopes such as that from the centre of a road to its edges. For some skiers, especially beginners, the point at which roller skis start to run on their own is intimidating, and some skiers may even sit down or fall backwards (a particularly unpleasant type of crash) when they feel their rollers start to roll. Beginners should, therefore, always be started on roller skis on a flat area where rolling will not occur on its own, and then only moved onto slopes or hills when it is clear that they can handle them or when they are being used to help skiers gain confidence in rolling. A precautionary approach is always preferred and, as explained below, it is often best, early in a skier's career, to teach them how to stop safely before teaching them how to go!

Whatever the venue, you are required to apply knowledge and sound principles to eliminate or minimise all risks, especially of collisions between skiers and other users. You should ensure that your skiers are able to stop and turn, you should explain the possible risks to them, and you should take particular care if working anywhere near young children, whose movements are often random, and horses, who are often spooked by roller skiers (actually their poles).

Some venues may require a formal, short, written risk assessment, where the main hazards and what will be done to avoid or limit them are described, and a Level 1 Instructor should be able to prepare such an assessment. Even if a formal assessment is not needed, you should always be informally assessing a venue and its conditions, remembering that you are assessing its safety and suitability not for yourself but for your participants, who are beginners or novices.

6.4) Lesson planning

There are no defined 'rules' or requirements on what should be included in any lesson, nor how much or how little should be covered, and this is usually up to you to decide. In addition, for complete beginners, any detailed lesson planning may be unrealistic until the abilities of the skiers in the group have been

assessed. For some beginners, being able to move slowly but continuously forwards by walking on classic roller skis after an hour's practice might represent good progress, whereas others will be able to achieve more, more quickly (the question of the 'pace' of a lesson, i.e. when and how quickly to move from one exercise to the next, is discussed in Section 7). The most important thing with any lesson is that the pupils feel that they have achieved something, in an enjoyable way.

Instead of 'detailed' planning of a lesson for a group of beginners, therefore, it may be better for you to take an 'open' approach where exercises and drills are adjusted to suit the skiers and their levels of ability and progress. You should have a wide range of possible exercises and drills in your mind, and also understand which exercises follow on from others to form a logical progression. You should avoid giving the impression that you have run out of ideas, and you should also be aware that it is always possible to return to an earlier exercise in a series, where this is likely to be beneficial. If any 'planning' is used, it might be best to limit this to broad 'themes', such as "Starting to move in diagonal stride", "Improving balance" and "Double poling"; for longer lessons, of a day or more, such themes will enable the lesson to move forward easily, although always with the option of adjustment.

As skiers move from beginner to novice, more 'planning' may be appropriate, especially if the abilities of the group are already better known. Even in these cases, however, you should be willing to listen to your group and adjust the lesson appropriately. You may decide in advance what you want to cover or you may ask your group what the group would like to concentrate on. In the latter case, of course, you must either have enough exercises available to be able to respond to what the group wants, or be able to incorporate what the group wants into your own lesson plans. While taking a 'flexible' approach to lesson planning requires experience and confidence, you may find that this is actually easier than trying to follow a rigorously defined lesson plan.

6.5) Equipping the group

You should not underestimate the time it takes to fully equip a group of skiers. This should be easier with novices than beginners, because novices will have used equipment before. With beginners, however, even if good stocks of equipment exist, there will inevitably be mistakes, wrong sized boots and so on. At least 15 minutes should be allowed for this, and you should decide what, if anything, to do with those who are kitted out quickly, while others are still sorting themselves out.

6.6) Terminology

SE has agreed the terminology to be used by all its coaching personnel. In particular, the Skate 1, Skate 2, Skate 3 system is preferred (see Annex 1). While using other terminology will not result in failure, candidate Level 1 instructors should know the SE system and the equivalence with other systems.

7) Instruction

7.1) General introduction

This, final, section covers the various stages of any lesson. It includes some general advice on 'handling' the group and teaching, and then covers the various stages of a typical lesson, starting from putting on equipment, the teaching itself, motivating and feedback and concluding with end-of-lesson debriefing. This section also covers the example lesson which all candidate Level 1 instructors have to give. It does not, however, cover specific exercises or drills, and nor does it cover how these exercises can be put together to make a lesson. A separate document from SE covers such exercises and drills.

7.2) Group management and teaching

Perhaps the best way to view a group of skiers, from the Instructor's point of view, is as friends, who can be talked to as such. Some people adopt a 'formal' teaching 'language' and style which can, in some cases, come across as unnatural and uncertain. If you are always thinking about 'how' to say things instead of what to say, then the real message may get lost.

It is good to start any first meeting between Instructor and participants with introductions, of you and then of each member of the group. This helps to break the ice and, if participants are asked about why they are there and what they want out of the lesson, this can help identify people who are not going to be very confident on roller skis. It can also help identify any injuries or other issues; quite a few people taking to cross country skiing have had an accident or injury in another sport such as alpine skiing.

You should be able to remember all the names of everyone in your group, so that you are able to give individual feedback, and you should be willing to write names down if necessary.

As far as group management is concerned, perhaps the main rule is to keep the group reasonably well together and where you can see and remain in contact with everyone (a beginner going out of sight around a corner could get into difficulty). You should also be wary of getting too far ahead of the group, recognising that beginners might be moving very slowly. If you appear confident at first, and give clear instructions, the group will also feel confident and is likely to pay attention. Rigid discipline is hardly needed, although perhaps more so with children, but you should be watching for lack of attention and participants talking amongst themselves, especially if they are giving each other advice'. In such cases, you should politely intervene, ask what is being discussed and correct, if necessary, any wrong advice which has been shared.

When giving demonstrations, you should ideally ski towards or just past the group. A common mistake is to try to explain a technique while skiing away from the group, when most people are unlikely to be able to hear. Demonstrations should be technically acceptable (at 3* level), but if you are aware that a poor demonstration has been given or, worse, you fall, it is enough to apologise and repeat the demonstration. This is more important when being assessed than when actually teaching, because it can be assumed that beginners and novices will not spot technical mistakes in detail, as the assessing Tutor is required to do. If you make a mistake in a demonstration, you will be judged not on having made the mistake but on how you deal with it.

If beginners are asked to circle up and down an area, it is important that they are taught how to turn. Step turns are obvious for you but not always so obvious for a group of beginners.

For beginners, different ski techniques do not usually need to be 'described' in long technical detail, especially because the description may not mean much to them (more description is needed towards the advanced end of novice). It should be enough to give one or two demonstrations, including demonstrating what you want your skiers to do, and then simply ask them to copy. Instructions can be given once people have started practicing what they have been asked to do. Another frequent mistake made by Level 1 Instructors is to try to describe a technique at length in words, and then getting tied up in the explanation; this is usually cured as practice of instructing increases. Instructions can be short, concentrating on the main thing you want people to do, and is most effective if the instruction is given during a demonstration, such as "I want you to walk on skis like this" or "Step round in a circle like this". You can demonstrate the difference between what someone is currently doing and what you would like them to do, but be careful of demonstrating 'wrong' technique, because this can be confusing.

7.3) 'Introduction' to skiing and roller skiing

With the group kitted out properly, the instruction can start! This sub-section looks at the first session with a group of beginners; the situation with novices would be somewhat different. Before getting the group moving, however, it is worth explaining to them how to put the roller skis and poles on properly,

and also how to take them off again (usually the most problematic bindings are the step-in/push-to-release ones). The stage of putting the second roller ski on can be problematic, and skiers should be holding their poles, if only for support, at this stage. Some people may want some physical support when they first put on their rollers and you, as Instructor, are allowed to provide this in an appropriate way. While putting the rollers skis on, you can check that everyone's boots are correctly done up.

Beginners will possibly not have any idea of what skiing involves, so before getting the group moving, you should give a demonstration. If the lesson involves diagonal stride, you might actually consider two demonstrations: one of fully correct, extended diagonal stride, so that the group knows what to aim for, and a second, walking on rollers, demonstration where you explain that this is what you want the group to do. The same can apply to basic skate, although you will need to decide whether you want people to be starting straight away with some sort of skating or whether you will use a series of 'stepping' drills to work up towards skating.

Having given the demonstration, you can now get the group moving. There are no 'rules' about whether this is done on asphalt or on grass but, unless the group is looking extremely nervous, starting them on asphalt to give them the feeling of moving properly may be best initially. Beginners may be both tense and upright, so a useful first stage is to get them gently bouncing up and down on their rollers. There is little point, at this stage, in explaining the techniques in any detail but, instead, you can give a very simple instruction such as "Just walk on the skis" or "Copy what I have just shown you". As long as the surface is flat, the group should be able to move forward at a pace and using a technique which suits them.

How long you have the group moving in this way is covered below but, if this is their first session on rollers, they should be given plenty of time to get used to the sensation of moving forward. It is common, though, that some people will go more quickly than others, so you should ensure that the group stays reasonably together, at least within an area where you can see everyone. If, having skied a certain distance, you expect skiers to turn around and ski back again, you may have to teach them to turn, because this might not be obvious to them all.

Once the group has spent some time moving, it is up to you to decide what to move on to, and this can be whatever you judge to be appropriate: balance exercises without skis, simulation drills without skis on grass or on asphalt, scooting exercises, star turn, step turns, etc. For many beginners, a critical stage may well be when they feel the skis start to roll of their own accord, and this can be when painful, backward falls happen which could put people off for good. The 1* proficiency award requires "Glide/run straight down a gentle slope", and it may be best, if possible, to find such a slope to practice specifically running down it in a stable position. Beginners should not, however, be allowed to move onto any sort of downhill slope without them having been prepared for this.

Finally, if you are asking your skiers to do a more 'challenging' exercise, you should reassure them that they only need to do it to a level with which they are comfortable. This is particularly true if someone in the group has an injury.

7.4) Learning to stop

Having got a group of beginners moving, however slowly, on roller skis, possibly the next stage is to teach them to stop! This is certainly true for a group where skiers are already starting to allow rollers to roll and, if they are not, the stopping exercises might actually help them to roll. The answer given to the question "How do I stop roller skis?" is often "You can't!" but, in fact, there are three active ways and one passive way in which they can be stopped, and all of these should be introduced early.

Passive stopping is where skiers are encouraged to allow the rollers to start rolling freely, and then glide to a stop. This can best be achieved on a very gentle slope with a safe, flat run out, and you should take people no further up the slope than they are willing or able to run back down. If there is any doubt, it is

better if beginners stop before they get to the bottom of the slope than that they get up too much speed for their own comfort and fall. Prior to this exercise, you should introduce the stable downhill position, emphasising flexed ankles and hands well forward; this can be practiced both on and off rollers.

The active stopping actions are: step turns (in this case stepping away from the hill, a 2* requirement but can be taught at any level), roller ski snowplough and rolling onto the grass. All of these should be practiced on a gentle slope to allow skiers to build confidence. Before attempting step turns, though, skiers can practice star turns and step turns without moving. When introducing the roller ski snowplough, it may be better to get skiers to start in the wide snowplough position first, before they start moving.

You should, of course, demonstrate each technique before asking the others to do it. Some care should be taken with stopping by skiing onto the grass because, at slow speeds, this may lead to the rollers stopping dead, and people should be warned of this.

7.5) 'Pace' and breaking-up of a lesson

The expectations of beginners and novices, in terms of what they do on a course or in a lesson, are somewhat different from those of more advanced skiers. Many more advanced skiers will want detailed technical analysis (possibly using videos) and then a series of exercises to improve their technique. Beginners and novices need this as well, to a certain extent, but their main interests are likely to be just getting moving, learning to roll gently and covering the different actions of classic skiing and basic skate. Balance exercises and off-roller simulation exercises can form part of any course.

For short courses or lessons, of one to a few hours, which exercises and drills to include is relatively simple. Getting skiers moving in the different techniques and actions and doing some balance exercises, before finishing with a return to the techniques and actions, will usually fill the time available. For longer courses, of one or more days, the number and type of exercises will need to be increased while keeping them at the beginner/novice level. It should be remembered that very few skiers will progress from beginner/novice to intermediate during just one course.

There is no set 'speed' at which you should progress through exercises, and no set time which should be spent on each exercise. You should be watching the group and looking for direct or indirect evidence that people are continuing to enjoy the exercise or if they have become bored or uninterested and that, therefore, the lesson should move on.

When doing balance exercises, you should explain that balance can only be learned through practice and, therefore, that it is worth spending some time (15 minutes or more) on the same balance exercise until skiers start to feel an improvement. The same basic exercise can be modified in order to provide variety so that, for example, one-legged scooting becomes the number of scoots between two points (which also introduces an element of 'competition').

Beginners and novices should probably not continue with exercises for more than about one and a half hours at a time without at least a 'formal' break, for coffee or lunch. In this way a day's course is divided into four such periods. But even the one and a half hours can be broken, with a break for a general chat or, if skiers are struggling with a particular exercise, with a break during which they simply 'ski', with no instruction on what they should do or how they should be skiing. Such breaks add variation and help maintain confidence, and they may help remove a 'blockage' if skiers are struggling with a particular drill or a particular exercise.

During the course of a longer lesson, it is always acceptable to return to an earlier exercise, where the instruction would be that skiers should, having practiced more difficult things, be able to perform an earlier exercise better. If they do, this may give them a very good sense of achievement. A sequence going

from balance on the grass onto one leg scooting on roller skis to alternate scooting on roller skis to 'diagonal stride' could easily return to one leg scooting and build up again.

Ultimately a roller ski lesson or course, especially for adults, is not like a 'school'; there is no 'national curriculum' of things which must be covered and learned, there is no expectation of success in all exercises and there is no "pass" or "fail" levels (except if assessing for a proficiency award). Your overall aim is to ensure that skiers are enjoying themselves, being stimulated and feeling that they are making progress. With experience, you will learn to know when it is time to move on, or back, by signals coming from the group: talking amongst themselves, stopping doing the exercise, looking at the ground instead of at you, and so on.

7.6) Fault analysis and correction

Detailed 'fault analysis' is something which is relevant more at the level of intermediate or advanced skiers, where individual issues for each skier are identified and corrected. Beginners and novices will not be skiing 'correctly' by the standards of 3* proficiency or above (they will very likely be skiing on two feet all the time, there will be no real weight transfer, and poles may well be used incorrectly or not at all). You should be wary of seeing these as 'faults' which need immediate correction but, rather they should be aspects which can be improved through the exercises suggested, recognising that 'correct' skiing will emerge only after significant practice and experience.

Problems with poling, however, can usually be relatively easily corrected, compared with problems with balance and leg action (see the advice above about using shorter poles than normal), as long as the skier is confident to do this. Very wide poling, straight extended arms or poles going forward of vertical can usually be corrected with a demonstration and simple verbal instructions, but be careful of advising someone to bring their poles in too much until they are confident to do so.

For some people, especially if they are scared of being on rollers, it may be difficult for them to correct much when they are actually on their rollers. This is where simulation exercises, without rollers or on grass with rollers, can help. If simulation exercises are to be beneficial, however, they should represent a 'correct' ski position, so you should ensure that you look at everyone in the group individually, give any correction instructions individually and ensure that everyone in the group has achieved the desired position or action before moving on. This is one reason why SE puts emphasis on its Level 1 instructors being able to ski well and to give good demonstrations. Asking people to copy what you are doing can save a lot of explanation in words, but what you demonstrate must, of course, be correct.

When doing fault correction, it is best to concentrate on just one point at a time (although you may be asking different people in the group to concentrate on a different point), even if this means that something else goes uncorrected for a while. If you ask someone to correct more than one thing at a time, it is unlikely that they will succeed. Moreover, a common 'fault' among aspirant instructors is talking too much rather than getting skiers moving. If you concentrate on one point at a time, the instructions can be kept short and simple. You do not, either, always have to explain why you are wanting a change, it is often enough to give a simple instruction, such as "Look up (and smile)".

As explained above, and especially when working with beginners and novices, it is often best to give them exercises or drills which encourage them to make a technical improvement 'automatically', without having to explain what is required or why. Because you should be wary of working beginners too much, though, if you have been through a series of drills giving individual tips and feedback, you can pause and summarise what they've been doing, and then discuss with them whether they found it helpful.

7.7) Motivation and feedback

All skiers on an SE course are entitled to expect that it will be enjoyable (unless, of course, they decide for themselves that they do not like roller skiing at all), and they are also entitled to receive individual feedback and encouragement during and at the end of the course. In fact, one of the main 'complaints' received by SE from course members is "I felt that I was not given enough feedback"!

The sort of feedback given to beginners and novices is somewhat different from that given to more advanced skiers. In many cases it is enough, with groups of beginners/novices simply to 'recognise' what they are doing, along the lines of "Yes, that looks good". Beginners do not really want or need 'technical' feedback, as one might say "Bend the ankles more" to an intermediate skier, because they may well not understand why they are being asked to do this. Points such as this can, therefore, where appropriate, be included in the instructions for the next exercise, rather than as feedback.

Some care needs to be taken with giving feedback to the group as a whole, especially if one or two members of the group feel that the feedback does not apply to them. An example of this would be the feedback, at the end of an exercise, along the lines of “None of you are balancing well enough”, which is not particularly motivating or complementary. This can easily be ‘converted’ into something more positive, along the lines of “I think that we can all benefit from improving our balance, whatever level of skier we are, and now we’re going to do a series of exercises for this”.

Individual feedback during any exercise is preferable. The instructions at the beginning of any exercise can be addressed to the group as a whole, but then individual tips or recognition given to each individual skier will show that they are being paid attention. In many cases, it can be better to ask an individual skier for their own feedback, along the lines of “How did that feel?”, because the response can be used to guide the next exercise. If the feedback is “I felt horribly unbalanced”, for example, you can reply by saying “Then we have several balance exercises we can do to address this”.

7.8) Use of video

Using a video camera (or more likely a mobile phone) is an effective way of allowing skiers to see how they are progressing. Cameras can be used at any level from beginner to expert but, if used at beginner/novice level, they should be aimed mainly at giving an overall ‘impression’ rather than for detailed technical analysis. With more advanced skiers, it is common to give “Before” and “After” video analysis, identifying aspects to be improved in the “Before” and then checking that those aspects have been improved in the “After” analysis. For beginners and novices, however, just one video session may be enough.

You should be fully aware, if using a video camera, of, firstly, how to operate it and then how to play clips back, especially if doing this to a projector or laptop. A lot of time can be wasted by not knowing how to use the equipment properly, and this can detract from the benefits of using it in the first place.

7.9) End of the lesson

Irrespective of the amount of feedback and discussion given during a lesson, it is good to have a ‘formal’ end where you summarise what has been covered and why, ask the group whether there are any questions or comments, thank them for participating, encourage them to go away and practice, and hope that they return for another lesson! Be wary of giving individual feedback during this summary, unless you are able to say something positive about everyone in the group (someone who gets no feedback at the end might feel that they have not achieved anything or that they have been overlooked). It is appropriate, however, to suggest things which each person could practice to help them improve.

7.10) The ‘example’ lesson

All candidate Level 1 instructors are required to give a short, example lesson, usually of about 20 minutes if attending a course with several other candidates, on a technique or topic which will have been given to them some time in advance (if there are not many candidates on the course, the lesson may be extended). The techniques will be one or more of those required of skiers at 1* or 2* proficiency level, and candidates will be assessed on their coaching skills, the ‘progression’ through the lesson, the demonstrations they give and the encouragement and feedback provided. Typical subjects for these lessons include:

- building up to getting onto roller skis (i.e. exercises on the ground prior to but including putting on roller skis),
- safe stopping, cornering and down-hilling,
- an introduction to basic skate,
- an introduction to diagonal striding,

- balance exercises for classic skiing,
- building confidence on downhills and turning techniques,
- double poling.

It is recognised that 20 minutes is an unreasonably short period of time to represent a typical lesson (it comes mainly from having to assess everyone in the space of a two-day course). In addition, although each lesson should be given at the level of beginners or novices, the 'pupils' are likely to be other candidate instructors and, therefore, they will not display the faults and problems typical of beginners.

When giving your lesson, you should start by 'positioning' it, such as if it is the first time ever on skis for your group. Have they been on skis a few times before? Are they part way through a longer course and, if so, what have they already covered? At the end of the lesson, you can explain what other exercises you would go on to cover.

During the lesson, you will be assessed on many of the aspects which have been covered in these Course Notes. These include things like introducing yourself and the lesson to your group, giving an initial demonstration, how quickly you get the group 'active', whether the lesson is pitched at the right level, the accuracy and conciseness of your instructions, and the quality of your feedback. There should be a sensible 'progression' through the lesson (although in order to make this progression, you are allowed to shorten some of the drills).

At the end of the lesson, everything that is included in the subject title should have been achieved. If your subject is, for example, building up to getting onto roller skis (i.e. exercises on the ground prior to but including putting on roller skis), at the end of the lesson the group should be on and moving on skis. If it is safe stopping, cornering and down-hilling, or an introduction to basic skate, at the end the group should have covered stopping, cornering and down-hilling, or should be demonstrating something resembling basic skate. There is, however, no right or wrong set of exercises or drills to cover in the lesson; this is up to you to decide.

If you have any comments or questions related to these Course Notes, please address them to SE's Nordic Coaching Panel, Nordic@snowsportengland.org.uk.

Annex 1 – SE preferred terminology

This annex covers mainly only techniques where different terminology is known to exist; it does not cover all the techniques required.

SKATING TERMINOLOGY		
Reference	Alternatives	Meaning
Basic skate		An unrefined entry-level skate step, with or without poling
Skate 1	1 Skate, V1, Paddling, Paddle dance	An offset double pole once every two skating steps, with poles planted at the same time as the down-set of the incoming ski
Skate 2	2 Skate, V2, Double dance	A double pole twice for every two skates (i.e. for every skate there must be a double pole with it)
Skate 3	3 Skate, V2 alternate, Single dance	Only one double-pole for every two skates as in Skate 1 but the timing differs from Skate 1 in that the poling takes place before the down-set of the incoming ski
Free skate	Field skate	Skating without using the arms, which may be tucked or open
Herringbone skate	Diagonal V1, Diagonal dance, Diagonal skate, Teddy bearing, Lady skate	A gliding herringbone, with a distinct step forward, with single-arm poling on the opposite side to the skating leg
Double poling	Double sticking	Propulsion using only the poles, which are both planted at the same time
Marathon skate	Siitonen step/skate	Double poling with a push from an angled or skating ski while the other ski remains pointing straight forward (usually within a cut track if on snow)

CLASSIC TERMINOLOGY		
Reference	Alternatives	Meaning
Diagonal stride	Diagonal gait	Propulsion involving an alternate leg kick on each side with single arm poling on the opposite side
Kick-double-pole	Double-pole-kick	A double pole followed by a leg kick as the poles come forward
Double poling	Double sticking	Propulsion using only the poles, which are both planted at the same time