



Skiing Skills Assessment

Evaluator Manual

Go to www.ussa.org, search SkillsQuest

Introduction

Welcome SkillsQuest evaluator! You play an important role in skiing skill development in the U.S. by helping to ensure quality scoring at SkillsQuest Tournaments such that athletes will receive accurate feedback regarding their skills in an environment outside the race course. This manual is intended to provide SkillsQuest evaluators a solid understanding of the philosophy of the SkillsQuest program, the tasks of the SkillsQuest Tournament organizer, and the role of the SkillsQuest evaluator at a skiing skill assessment.

In addition to having a keen eye for the performance measures for each exercise, it is essential that the SkillsQuest evaluator demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Willingness to support the event organizer beyond their scoring roles to host a successful event
- Always score skiers without prejudice or preference toward any athlete
- Act as a proponent of skill development and the role of SkillsQuest in developing foundational ski racing skills
- Be vigilant about athlete safety by monitoring snow conditions, appropriateness of terrain, skier flow, and identifying potential hazards on the venue and addressing them

SkillsQuest is a multifaceted instrument that is designed to motivate, evaluate, educate, and track skiers. It was designed by the coaches and staff of the U.S. Ski Team with the realization that in order to be a great ski racer, an athlete must first be a great skier. These ski coaches realize that great ski racing involves more than the repetitive skiing of training courses and that the acquisition and mastery of skiing skills is an important attribute at all levels of ski racing and essential for the ski racer to be competitive at the highest levels.

What is SkillsQuest?

SkillsQuest is a program created to fulfill a need in ski racing resulting from less than optimal skill development. This is especially evident at the younger ages where gates and the pursuit of excellence mimics World Cup athletes in many aspects of training. The concept of Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) reveals that specific training periods are essential for the athlete to make optimal gains in their development.

Why SkillsQuest?

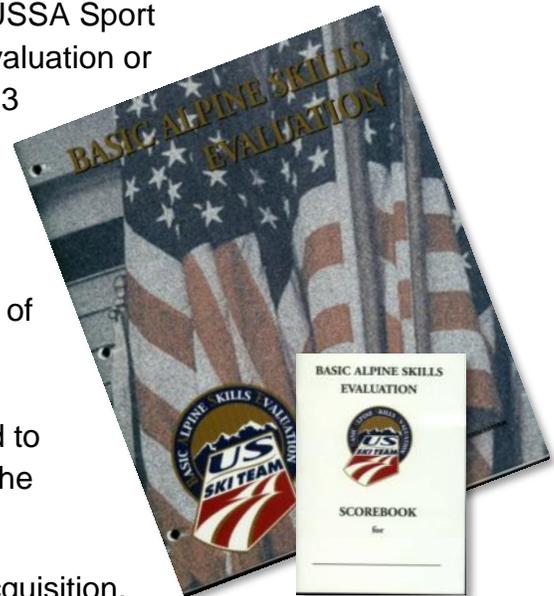
For many years, the National Team coaching staff has reported that skiers in spite of them making criteria for team selection, come with less than adequate skill



development. National Team coaches are then left with the task of trying to develop skills in these older athletes beyond their ideal windows of opportunity.

SkillsQuest or just a new BASE?

In 1999, the U.S. Ski Coaches Association (today USSA Sport Education) came out with the Basic Alpine Skills Evaluation or BASE. The BASE consisted of three stages of 11-13 tests. The stages were only delimiting by the degree of difficulty without regards to Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD). With a dozen tests within each stage, the BASE was difficult to administer and did not target actual skills, but more of a multitude of skiing drills. Ski racers did gain competency due to the number of exercises which ultimately did advance their skiing, although it failed to relay actual skill development or skill deficiency to the coach.



While the BASE was a shotgun approach to skill acquisition, SkillsQuest fires a single bullet, or exercise, at each of the three skiing skills and then wraps it up with an overall skiing evaluation. The coach is then able to identify and tease out specific skills and then structure training towards that skill for further acquisition and mastery. Furthermore, SkillsQuest is divided into phases based on an athlete's phase of development within the Alpine Training System (ATS). With four exercises or tests targeting specific skills, the test is more streamlined while relaying skill competency and deficiencies to the coach and skier.

The name “SkillsQuest”

The first thing to notice is that SkillsQuest refers to “skills”... not “technique”. This will become an important distinction. Second is that “skills” is plural, meaning that there is more than one skill. And lastly is that this is a quest, or a journey. A journey that is seeking out something difficult and worthwhile to become better at, and not necessarily a final destination.

Technique or skill?

Technique and *skill* are two terms that are tossed around frequently. With this recurrent and numerous usage we must make sure that we have a command of both terms. When we have an understanding of the meanings, we can begin to tease out the

nuances that are necessary if we are to better understand how each can contribute to making the ski racer faster in the race course.

What is technique?

Technique is what the ski racer ultimately does with his or her body while negotiating a race course. *Technique* could be regarded as the movements the ski racer performs with their body in which to balance and reorient the skis to accomplish the task of going around the gates. Examples of technique include; angulating, flexing at the ankles, and planting a ski pole. Technique can be efficient or it can be detrimental to the ski racers success.

What is skill?

Although “skill” has many connotations, skill can be seen as the end result of what the ski does with regards to its goal.

“Skill” by definition means to separate or divide (see sidebar). The ski can only move in three ways. Dividing these up we see that the ski can rotate in the horizontal plane, edge in the frontal plane, and be pressured in the sagittal plane. Each occur in their own unique cardinal plane in the three dimensional world.

Skills are the outcome of what the ski has done. The ski racer demonstrates “skills” by moving, putting, or placing the ski in the most advantageous position to accomplish the desired goal.



Etymology of “SKILL”

From Middle English skilen (also schillen), partly from Old English *scylian*, *scielian* (“to separate, part, divide off”); and partly from Old Norse *skilja* (“to divide, separate”); both from Proto-Germanic **skilōnan*, **skiljanan* (“to divide, limit”), from Proto-Indo-European **(s)kalə-*, **(s)kelə-* (“to split, cut”). Cognate with Danish *skille* (“to separate, discard”), Swedish *skilja* (“to distinguish, differentiate, part”), Icelandic *skilja* (“to understand”), Dutch *schelen* (“to make a difference”).

Skill or technique?

When someone says “that athlete is skillful” or even “athletic” or “gifted”, they are implying that the athlete is doing something superior or above and beyond the ordinary reaction in a difficult situation.

How the skier effects the ski’s interaction with the snow, its amount of rotation, degree of edging, and where it is pressured is skill. Skill therefore relates to how well the ski interacts with the snow. How the skier’s body moves to accomplish their task of moving the ski is their technique.

A dramatic recovery is usually regarded as skillful although it may not demonstrate “good” technique.

Levels of skillfulness

A skier can be less skilled or highly skilled. A skier that freezes multiple joints of their body together is seen as a low level skier, or as lacking skills. This can be seen when they rotate and/or tip their body as one entire unit. On the other end of the skill spectrum, the more skilled skier separates the appropriate body parts.

Consider the following scale. On the left is “less skillful” skiing and farther right “more skillful” skiing, with shades of gray between. Less skillful skiing is apparent with less separation of body parts while the more skillful skier has more separation or efficient combinations of body movements.



Less skillful skiers lock or freeze their body parts together because their body is not sure what to do with the abundant degrees of freedom their joints have afforded them. The more skillful skier has learned how to deal with these multitude degrees of freedom. Separation of body parts is what allows the ski to appear to perform independently of the body, making the skier look effortless in a demanding situation.

How are skills different from technique?

Skills could be viewed as the end result of what the tool or ski is doing. Did the ski rotate, is it tipped up on edge, is there pressure applied somewhere along its length? These are the only things a ski can do.

How the ski gets rotated, edged, and pressured is the skier's technique. Did the skier transfer their weight? Did they tip the ski up with whole body inclination or with just knee angulation? Were they pressuring with forward lean or extension of the legs? The body actions or movements of the skier constitute their technique.



It is possible for the skier to be demonstrating less than stellar technique while performing to a high skill level.

Technique is related but can be independent of skills

To rotate, edge, and pressure a ski involves a degree of skill. While being in the utmost “technically” proficient body position is important, and advantageous, it is not a limiting factor to performing the skill. Ski racers can have all the elements of good technique but not have the fastest time. Conversely we have seen many a ski racer on the edge of disaster while staying in the race course and maintaining a manageable line. While the body of the ski racer is flailing around, the skis are still performing their job of rotation, edging, and pressure. The skier would of course be in a “better” position to manage their skis if they were in a “technically” more efficient body attitude, but this does not totally preclude them from skillfully managing their skis.

How will SkillsQuest make the ski racer faster?

Discounting aerodynamics and line, it is the interaction of the ski with the snow that ultimately determines who is the fastest. We have already mentioned that the ski can only be rotated, edged, and pressured. These three skills define the interaction of the ski with the snow. A little over- or under-rotated creates excess friction, slowing the ski and skier down. For the ski to have purchase in the snow to go around a gate, the ski needs to have some sort of edge angle. Too little and the skier cannot maintain his or her line. Too much and the ski creates excess friction with the snow slowing him or her down. Lack of tip pressure during turn initiation will delay the ski tip edge from creating the needed groove in the snow for the rest of the ski to follow. This results in more skidding and slowing the skier down for their intended path. These are minute adjustments of rotating, edging, and pressuring. These actions are learned, albeit grossly, in a race course. Today the difference in winning or losing is tenths or even hundredths of a second which is the differences in a few degrees or rotation, a degree or two of edge angle and when the ski is pressured along its length. These are all very small and sometimes imperceptible amounts. SkillsQuest drills allow the skier to learn to make these minute adjustments unconsciously. Ultimately after practiced enough, and in many situations, they become part of the skier's repertoire and are then able to be utilized in the race course.

Will SkillsQuest make a better technique?

SkillsQuest drills do not to teach technique. Remember that technique is the actions of the body, while skills are the action(s) of the skis on the snow. In spite of this, the skills the skier acquires via SkillsQuest will indirectly enhance the ski racer's technique. This is because the SkillsQuest participant will have gained a greater separation of body parts that ultimately makes it easier for the ski racer to achieve a more advantageous and efficient technique.

How will the SkillsQuest drills make the ski racer more skillful?

Drills do not look like normal skiing. As such they require the skier to manipulate the skis while putting the body in exaggerated or even odd positions. By doing this the skis and the body create a separation and the action of the ski on the snow is less influenced by irrelevant movements up the skier's kinematic chain. In essence, the skier learns new ways, via the multiple degrees of freedom their joints afford, to solve the myriad of situations they will incur.

Why do athletes run so many gates?

There are several reasons athletes run so many gates:

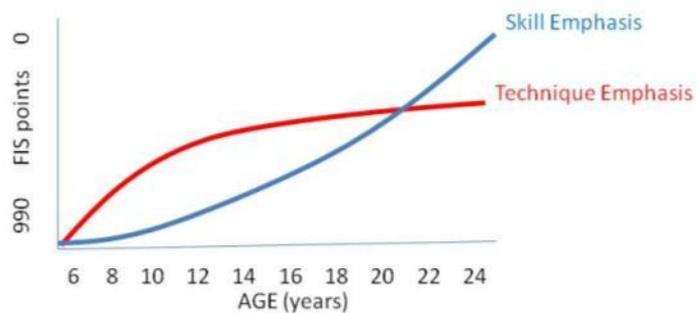
- Instant success
- Easy daily game plan for the coach
- Specialization
- Succumbing to parents' expectations
- Athletes do love to run gates

How do we sell "skills"?

We are under the assumption that the athlete's goals are in line with their coaches, and parents. That is to ski race fast and achieve the highest level possible. The method of practice will ultimately determine the level of ski racing attainment. Athletes

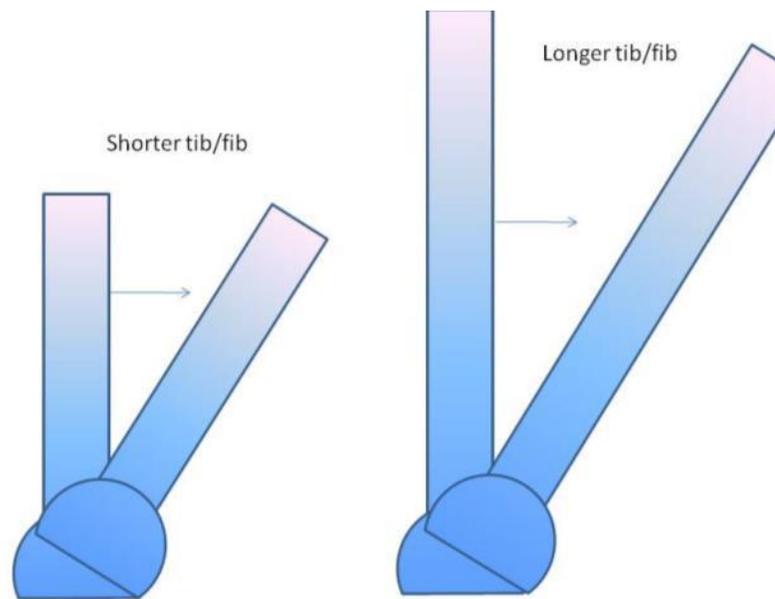
that only race will become fast quickly and dominate at the younger age classes.

Although they will hit a plateau because they do not have the requisite skills to advance to a higher level. When skills are emphasized at a younger age (see the ATS), the athlete will create a foundation at which a higher level of achievement may be attained.



Should all ski racers' technique look the same?

To imply that there is a correct technique would suggest that all ski racers look exactly the same. Looking around we can see that ski racers come in all shapes and sizes. Not just tall and short, but with limbs that longer or shorter when compared to a skier of the same height. Even the limbs



The skis edge the same amount, although the shorter tib/fib moves less dista

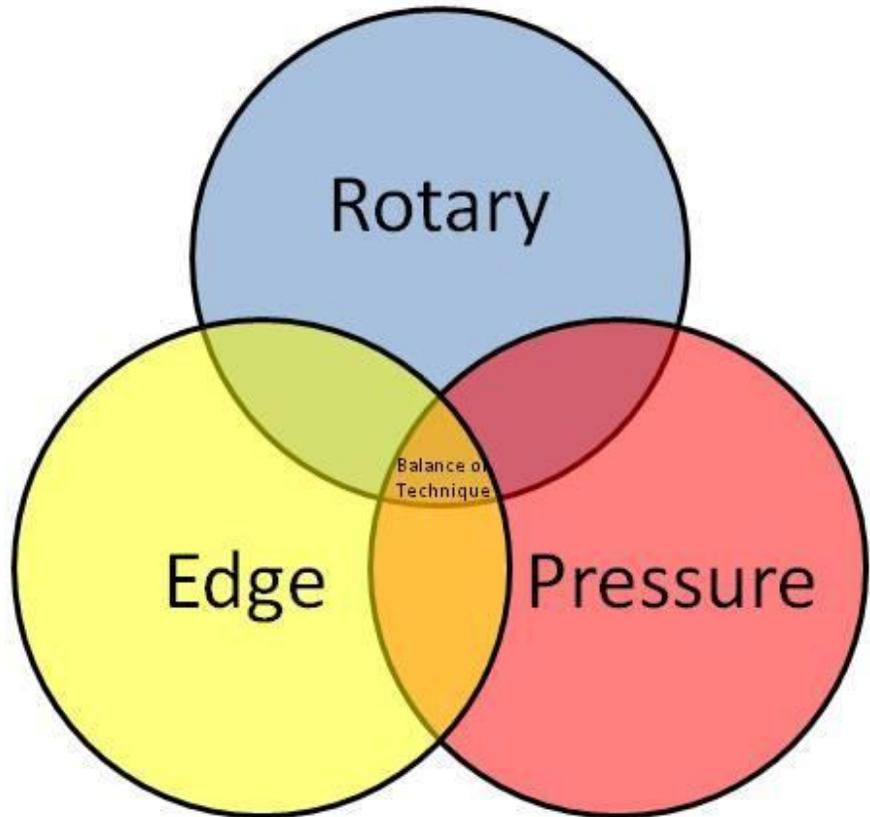
can have proportion differences. A longer, or shorter, tibia/fibula relative to the femur can also be found among skiers. These differences in body proportions change the ski racer's technique without altering what is happening to the ski. For example, a ski racer with a long tib/fib will need to move the knee inward a larger difference to achieve the equivalent edge angle of his shorter tib/fib counterpart. Therefore technique depends upon the specific personal body dimensions of each athlete.

Is there a correct technique?

Good ski technique is the coordinated movement of body parts with the goal of establishing the most optimal body arrangement(s) to balance on the ski(s) while establishing a ski orientation to achieve the desired race line and create the optimal ski(s) interface with the snow to maintain the desired line and minimize ski/snow friction.

Technique is composed of skills

Moving fore and aft on the ski, flexing and extending, rotating the ski, and creating edge angle on the ski are all skills. These are commonly referred to as pressure, rotation, and edging or some very similar terms. Phasing, tempo, and intensity are how these skills are blended. On a steeper icy race course the ski may need a higher edge angle than on flatter and softer snow. Moving the knee or hip inward will be a method of increasing this edging. Changing the amount of skill alters the technique that is used for a specific situation. It is the technique that is composed of skills, not the other way.



Creating efficient degrees of freedom

If the action(s) of the skis are viewed as the skills and the action(s) of the skier are the “technique”, then being able to separate them is an essential component for “skillful” skiing. Separation of body parts or “upper/lower body separation” is more than a skiing cliché. This is easily seen in low level ski racers that rotate or reach their entire body into the slalom gate in an attempt to clear. Separation at even just this one hinge allows the body to do an action with its tool (in this case the pole) and not affect the torso or rest of the body. This is why efficient skiing looks effortless and almost dance like.

Skills have coordinated “degrees of freedom”

Every joint in the body has a number of planes it can move through. The shoulder can move in three, the elbow one, the forearm one and the wrist two. Add these up, and the throwing of a ball (omitting the torso) would involve up to seven degrees of freedom. This indicates that there are multiple directions in which to perform the same result of a ball moving through the air.

Controlling or coordinating these degrees of freedom in a goal-oriented manner is what gives the performer the look of being “skillful” or the athlete performing “skillfully”.

What SkillsQuest exercises are used?

SkillsQuest is divided up into six phases:

Skill	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6
<i>Pressure</i>	Steps & jumps	Pole jumpers	Pole jumpers in tuck	Straight run in wave track	Linked turns in wave track	Camel jump in wave track
<i>Edging</i>	Basic outside ski turns	Outside ski turns	One ski skiing	One ski skiing with lane changes	One ski skiing without poles	One ski skiing hourglass
<i>Rotary</i>	Hockey stop	Straight run to sideslip with edge set	Pivot slips	Sideslip to straight run to sideslip	Hop turns	Vertical brush quickness course
<i>Balance</i>	Freeski with parallel skis	Freeski with pole usage	Freeski – lane changes	Freeski – hourglass	Freeski – varied terrain and snow conditions	Freeski – moguls in "V" shaped corridor

The six phases comes from the "Alpine Training System" (ATS) which based on "Long Term Athlete Development" (LTAD):



Alpine Training System

trainingsystem.usssa.org



Foundation Stage		Pre & Post Puberty			World Class Performance Full Maturation
PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5	PHASE 6
<p>Biological Age Pre Puberty</p> <p>Age 2-6 years old</p> <p>Play Age 1-4 years in sport</p> <p>Participation Ski around 1 day a week 20 days a year At least 95% free skiing Play many other sports - gymnastics or balance-based sports</p>	<p>Biological Age Pre Puberty</p> <p>Age 6-10 years old</p> <p>Training Age 1-4 years in sport</p> <p>Participation Ski 2-3 days a week 50 days a year At least 90% free skiing Fun races Play many other sports</p>	<p>Biological Age Pre Puberty</p> <p>(Before Growth Spurt)</p> <p>Age Girls: 10-13; J4 (J5-J3) Boys: 11-14; J4 (J4-J3)</p> <p>Training Age 4-8 years in sport</p> <p>Participation Ski 3-4 days a week 70 days/year At least 60% free skiing Competition Period: (Jan.-April) Number of race starts: 10-15 Ratio 1:6 (race:training) Play complementary sports</p>	<p>Biological Age Puberty</p> <p>(Growth Spurt)</p> <p>Age Girls: 11-14; J3 (J4-J3) Boys: 12-15; J3 (J4-J2)</p> <p>Training Age 5-9 years in sport</p> <p>Participation Ski 4-5 days a week 100 days/year At least 30-50% free-skiing Competition Period: (Dec.-April) Number of race starts: 15-30 Ratio 1:5 (race:training) Play complementary sports</p>	<p>Biological Age Post Puberty</p> <p>(After Growth Spurt)</p> <p>Age Girls: 12-16; J3 (J4-J2) Boys: 14-17; J2 (J3-J1)</p> <p>Training Age 6-11 years in sport</p> <p>Participation Ski 4-5 days a week 120-140 days/year At least 15% free skiing Competition Period: (Nov.-April) Number of race starts: 25-max 45 Ratio 1:4 (race:training) Play complementary sport</p>	<p>Biological Age Full Maturation</p> <p>Age Female: 16+ J2-J1 Male: 17+ J1</p> <p>Training Age Minimum 10+ years in sport</p> <p>Participation Ski 4-5 days a week 130-150+ days/year At least 10% free-skiing Competition Period: (Nov.-April) Number of race starts: 55* Ratio 1:3 (race:training) *based on the number of disciplines</p>



Competition

For competitions SkillsQuest can be further differentiated into "competition levels".

Competition level	U10	U12	U14	U16	U18
Entry (BWL, YSL, Mitey Mite, etc)	Phase 1 or 2				
State, divisional, regional, championship	Phase 2	Phase 2 or 3	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 4 or 5

For a competition where multiple age groups are participating, the organizers should make sure that the youngest age groups are accommodated. When two age groups are combined in a competition the lower phase should be used.

Slopes used

The phase then determines the tests to be performed. From the test explanations, a slope description is found. Examples are "beginner", "intermediate", "advanced", "groomed", "ungroomed", etc. From this, and knowledge of the ski area, construct a game plan that involves minimal lift rides and travel time from station to station.

Consider also:

- ✓ Places to stand for the athletes
- ✓ Places for the evaluators to observe
- ✓ Traffic flow
- ✓ Will it need to be roped off for athlete and public safety?

Some exercises require materials such as poles for the pole jumpers and some will require man made features such as the wave track. While poles are easily used, a wave track requires preplanning and participation by the ski area. In the event a wave track is unavailable for a Phase 4 test, the pole jumpers in a tuck can be substituted.

How many evaluators?

At a minimum, two evaluators per SkillsQuest exercise are needed.

The number of athletes, the number of evaluators available, and the terrain that is available should determine how the event should be run.

- ✓ If the number of athletes is small (under 12) then the group can stay together and move as a group
- ✓ If the number of athletes is large, and evaluators are available, then a "shotgun start" will work best. This is where a different groups of athletes start at a different stations then move to the next station as the flow is laid out.

It is important to keep the athletes moving during a SkillsQuest event.

Scoring SkillsQuest

A 10 point scale is used.

SCORE	SKILL	TASK	
10	Perfect	Flawless execution	Nothing to change
9	Outstanding	Smallest of change needed	Smallest of alteration desired
8	Excellent	Couple small changes needed	One turn or dimension may need slight refinement
7	Very Good	Skills are refined	Several turns or dimension may need slight tuning
6	Good	Skill level is above average	Task is performed above average
5	Average	Skill level is average for this level	Average performance of task
4	Fair	Adequate skills	No problem identifying the task although needs refinement
3	Mediocre	Substandard skills	Slight problem identifying the task although need improvement
2	Poor	Vague demonstration of skills	Task performance is vague
1	Very Poor	Grossly deficient skills	Task performance is difficult to distinguish
0	Inability	Nothing resembled the skills	Task is unrecognizable

SkillsQuest is scored on a 10 point scale. Coinciding with these numbers are subjective terms that are used to give global meaning to the numbers.

Scoring is reflective of the ATS Phase. For example, a Phase 3 athlete will be scored according to what the best 10 to 13 year old girl or 11 to 14 year old boy that has been in the sport four to eight years would be perceived to achieve. An athlete skiing up a phase or an athlete on a slower track would still be scored according to the phase the test has been designed for. The tests are designed such that the most skilled skiers in each phase should be capable of earning a perfect score of 10.

Based on their score, skiers may earn gold, silver or bronze designations. These allow the skiers to shoot for podium performance and earn special recognition.

A very comprehensive scoring deduction explanation is provided with each skiing exercise. This detailed explanation is not meant as a definitive way to score the test, but only to give the scorer a list of score-able faults and as an estimation of the seriousness of the differing deficiencies. For example, putting a foot down in the “One Ski Skiing” exercise; one point can be deducted as indicated on the test score sheet. However, there are differing degrees of setting a foot down. If the boot just skimmed the snow, it obviously is not as detrimental to the exercise as a boot that is driven into the snow for balance resulting in a disrupted flow of the turn. A boot that just glances the snow and has not really contributed to balance would not receive the entire deduction. The scorer does not need to put the boot touch under a microscope or count the occurrences, but they will know the relative deduction based upon the criteria in the scoring section.

Scoring the task

Ski racing is a very task orientated sport. The athlete must go around each gate. The same logic applies to SkillsQuest in that the athletes must be evaluated to the task. However SkillsQuest cannot be scored as black and white as ski racing. While going around gates is a “yes they did” or a “no they did not” type criteria, SkillsQuest has more of a sliding scale since there are levels of performance proficiency. Since every athlete cannot do the task perfectly, there will be levels of achievement reflected in the 1 to 10 scoring of the task.

For SkillsQuest the “task” and “skill” will each count towards fifty percent of the score. So if the athlete performed the task to an eight and the skills to a six they would receive a seven. In reality the better the skills the better they will usually perform the task, so the values will be very similar.

In scoring each exercise, the coach will be evaluating both the skill of the skier relative to the task, and the execution of the task itself. If the skier does not execute the task as

outlined, even if they demonstrate good skills, there should be a deduction. For example, in a skiing drill with lane changes, if the skier does not make distinct lane changes that are designed to disrupt their rhythm, it may mean that they either do not have the skill to be able to make the lane change, or they may simply have not executed the task very well. In either case, there must be a deduction. In the first case, by not doing the task properly their skill deficiency may not have been exposed, so deduction is warranted. In the second case, just like a mistake on the race course would lead to a slower time or even a DNF, a mistake in task execution should be penalized.

In every exercise, criteria for perfect execution must include execution of the task, not just the skills being evaluated.

If a skier falls during the exercise and does not complete the task, their score would be reduced based on the amount they did not complete. For example, if a skier fell after 50% of the exercise and did not continue, the highest score they could achieve would be a 5.

Scores do not need to be in whole numbers and should be recorded in decimal form. Final scores will be the average of the scores by the evaluators for each exercise. Final scores will be reported to the hundredth. There is no rounding for medals. 4.00-5.99 is bronze, 6.00-7.99 is silver and 8.00-10 is gold. In an assessment where all four exercises in a phase are evaluated, the skier's total score is the average of all four exercise scores.

Running the assessment

Familiarize yourself with the SkillsQuest Tournament Organizer handbook. As SkillsQuest Tournaments are a new event for everyone, it is important that evaluators show up ready to help the organizer in more than just their evaluating role. Organization or answering questions at registration, helping to set up the stations, helping orient volunteers, and helping with tear down are all tasks the evaluator should be willing to pitch in for. In addition, SkillsQuest evaluators serve as “skills ambassadors”, helping to share the philosophy and goals of the program to athletes, coaches and parents.

The exercises from the assessment should be chosen based on the age group and competitive level as outlined on page 12. There is no prescribed order to testing. The order of tests will be determined by the ease of terrain access and flow from test site to test site on the ski hill.

Each exercise being tested has specific terrain requirements. From the available terrain, the Tournament Director will figure out where is best to conduct each test with the help



of a head evaluator. The most efficient travel for skiers between stations should be identified. Proper terrain selection is essential for accurate SkillsQuest scoring. Refer to the specific test description under "Slope" for the appropriate terrain.

Athletes will typically move through stations in groups led by a coach. If the size of the group is less than 10, consider performing one test after another as an entire group. If the group is larger, and depending upon the number of scorers, consider starting in stations, similar to a shotgun start in golf tournaments. This way, the scorers will remain in position and the group will flow from one station to another. It is important to minimize standing around time for the athlete.

Three accredited evaluators are required for a USSA sanctioned¹ event. A club can perform the SkillsQuest assessment with any number of evaluators they desire. This can be a great "in-house" education event for the ski club, as the coach/evaluators can compare scores and notes at the end of the assessment.

A start is marked for each exercise. USSA has an inventory of SkillsQuest banners (printed on old downhill panels) that may be used to mark the start and finish. Evaluators will consider the skier's performance from start to finish. Skiers should be given the links to watch the exercises in advance (on Center of Excellence TV) and will be read the description and criteria for perfect execution at the start. If available, a demonstrator may be utilized to further assist the athletes' understanding of what is the desired execution. In a SkillsQuest Tournament consistency is important. If a visual example is shown to one group, it should be shown to all groups.

Set start orders, if used, should be mixed up such that the same skier does not always go near the beginning or the end. The recommended start order for a field of ten skiers for example would go 1-10, then 5-1 to 10-6, then 6-10 to 1-5, then 10-1. This allows the skiers to keep moving while modifying the order for fairness in scoring. The goal is to keep the skiers moving and minimize waiting as much as possible.

Ski helmets are required for SkillsQuest events.

Head evaluator: You may be assigned as a head evaluator for the event. This means that you will be the primary point of contact with the event organizer in making sure their venue will be appropriate and that a good plan is in place for the Tournament. Once on site, you will be responsible to evaluate the appropriateness of the terrain, and the snow conditions, flow from station to station, adequate stopping/finish space for each

¹ Scores from USSA sanctioned events will go to the USSA database and the organizer may use SkillsQuest stickers from USSA for awards.



exercise, and the set up of safety fencing where necessary. Each SkillsQuest event organizer should have an appointed SkillsQuest Tournament Director who will be the head evaluator's point of contact on the day of the event. The head evaluator must take a helpful approach and be solution-oriented in working with the organizers and volunteers.

The SkillsQuest Tournament Director is responsible for setting up the stations on the hill, however, in many cases the evaluators for each station may assist or set up their own station at the Director's discretion. Each evaluator is responsible to ensure their station is set up to the specifications in the exercise description, that the terrain matches the slope description, that there is sufficient room for stopping, that the area is clear of obstacles and if obstacles exist, fencing or padding is adequate, and that the trail width is sufficient with any potential fall zones protected. The head evaluator will fill out a **site evaluator report** to verify all stations meet these requirements.

Score sheets: All evaluators will keep track of their scores using SkillsQuest scoring sheets or the SkillsQuest scoring iOS mobile application on their iPad or iPhone. If using the scoring sheets, they should be provided by the event organizer with a clipboard and pencil. Double check that you have enough score sheets for the field size. Evaluators should always bring an extra pencil for backup. Print neatly and double check your scores.

Event organizers are encouraged to provide evaluators with radios to communicate with the start to get bib numbers. Where this is not an option, numbers may get called down or the evaluator will read the numbers from the bib. In events where boys and girls may be wearing the same bib numbers and are running intermixed, the scorer should write a 'M' or 'F' before the bib number to confirm the gender. If unknown, write a question mark. Depending on the event, skiers may come down in random order, don't assume that skiers will come down in bib order.

Volunteers: Once the station is set up, the evaluator should arrive at least fifteen minutes before the start time to meet the volunteer that will be at the start of the station. The start volunteer will organize the athletes and call down bib numbers by radio. The volunteer starter will read the exercise instructions (description and criteria for perfect execution) to the athletes as they arrive. Coordinate with the starter how you will indicate you are ready for the next skier (wave, looking up, call on radio, etc).

Other volunteers may include slippers, and score runners who will take completed score sheets down for entry into the scoring program.



Scoring position: There are certain positions to stand for evaluating that will give the evaluator a better view than others. When choosing your position, make sure of the following:

- You are not interfering with the athlete's line and are outside of their fall zone
- Work with the other evaluator(s) at your station to make sure all important angles are observed. In some cases, evaluators should not stand together.
 - For example, in pole jumpers an evaluator at the top or bottom looking up or down the line will have an easy view of whether the skier stays in the fall line and whether their stance-width is consistent. An evaluator stationed to the side can more readily see if any athletes touched a pole and did not have excess movement, particularly from the upper body, to clear the pole. Evaluators split up with one in each position
- Remain in the same position throughout the assessment as changing locations may cause the view to be different, causing inconsistencies in scoring across the full field
- If a starter is unavailable to assist with the station, one evaluator should stand at the start to give skiers directions and will score from that position

Speed of testing: The evaluators should be as efficient as possible in recording their score so as to minimize athlete waiting time at the start. Usually the evaluator's first instinct for scoring is the most accurate. Lead evaluator signals to starter once evaluators are ready to watch the next skier. At most SkillsQuest tournaments, there will not be time for the evaluator to provide feedback to the athlete based on their performance following their trial.

Following testing: Turn in any remaining score sheets to the data entry person. You may be asked to assist the data entry person by reading off scores to them as they enter them into the computer. If not, assist the event organizer with tear down, setting up for awards or other tasks.

Expenses and reimbursement: If working a sanctioned SkillsQuest Tournament, you may be entitled to reimbursement of expenses and/or a stipend. To host a successful SkillsQuest Tournament, evaluators are usually pulled from two pools: coaches who are attending the event with their club and evaluators who come specifically to score the event with no skiers involved in the competition. Coaches attending the event with their club will not typically receive reimbursement or a stipend. Evaluators contracted by the event organizer may be reimbursed and/or paid a stipend that varies based on the field size, entry fee, whether the event is a stand alone event or combined with a race, and other factors. This should be negotiated with the event organizer prior to the event.

FAQ's

Q: What if a skier falls?

A: Score what you saw. Something skill-wise led to the fall. Did the skier finish the task?

Q: Is there an order to the test battery?

A: No, it is terrain and flow dependent.

Q: What if a skier is obstructed?

A: An obstructed skier will get a second run if they were unable to complete their first run without distraction.

Q: Is there discussion or feedback during the SkillsQuest evaluation?

A: No.

Q: Can you discuss scores with the other evaluators during the SkillsQuest evaluation?

A: It depends. 1) No, if you are worried about influencing their outcome. 2) Yes, if you feel you need to get on the same scale.

Q: Can scores be protested by a coach or athlete?

A: No.