

CROSS COUNTRY SKI: SKATING

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HISTORY OF CROSS COUNTRY SKATING SKI

- *Few sports have changed as rapidly and dramatically as did cross-country skiing in the 1980s. For more than a hundred years cross-country competitors had universally raced with the ancient diagonal stride, alternately kicking and gliding. In retrospect, it was remarkable that no one saw how much faster a skier could move if he propelled himself by skating with his skis, in the manner of an ice skater. America's Bill Koch first observed the skate step at a Swedish marathon, then applied it to win the 1982 World Cup of Cross Country skiing. Immediately the sport was engulfed in controversy over the new technique. Within five years, World Championship and Olympic cross-country skiing was utterly transformed. Now there were as many medals for Freestyle, in which skating is permitted, as would be awarded for Classic, in which skating was prohibited. And in three more years, the freestyle revolution was so powerful that it led to the Pursuit competition, with a totally new way of starting racers and climaxing in a telegenic finish. No one was better situated to observe the revolution than Bengt Erik Bengtsson, Chief of the Nordic Office of the Swiss-based International Ski Federation (FIS) from 1984 to 2004.*

- The use of a skating technique to ski across snow is hardly new. In the 1930s, when bindings were adaptable to both downhill and cross-country, skiers commonly skated across flat areas, in the style of an ice skater. For a long time cross-country ski racers skated in order to take advantage of terrain or to combat poor wax, although it was difficult to do over grooved tracks and in a narrow corridor.

- In the 1960s, participants in the relatively new sport of ski orienteering – I was one of them – commonly skated. In orienteering we use a map and compass to travel between designated points as fast as possible. The shortest route isn't necessarily the fastest -- for example, if it's a bushwhack. If a road is available, the competitor can switch from traditional kick and glide skiing to propelling himself like an ice skater, going from ski to ski. Some participants even mounted thin steel edges on their skis to get a better bite on the hard snow and go faster.



SKATING STYLE

- Skating guarantees you fun and speed! The **skating trails** don't offer such guidance like in classic cross country skiing, and this is part of the reason why skating is also called "free technique". The key to the skating technique is the **v-style**: you create speed by pressing the edge of your ski into the snow, pushing hard against it. Then you transfer your body weight onto the other ski for **gliding**, like you can see perfectly in the picture below. The glide part is, what makes skate skiing so fast and fun. On the wide skating trails, it's possible to reach up to 30km/h with good technique and **light ski equipment**. Even steep uphill sections or sharp turns on the trail won't be a problem for you anymore. The skating technique is a bit more complex, but once learned you want to spend every free minute out in the snow ... and you'll get a **perfect training** for your entire body during the winter season! Check out our [Cross Country Skiing Guide Skating: Which Equipment do you need for Skating](#) to get an overview of what you need for having maximum fun in the skating track.



The equipment of cross-country ski: skating

- Skate skiing equipment differs from traditional classic gear in several ways:
- Like classic skis, skate skis have a bow-like shape. If you stand them up with the bases facing each other, there should be a gap in the middle between the skis. But unlike classic skis, there is no grip zone.
- The flex in a skate ski is stiffer. The flex, which is called the camber, improves glide by reducing friction. It also acts like a spring and helps make the skate push more powerful. It's important that skate skis are professionally fitted so the flex matches the skier's weight, ability and the local snow conditions.
- Skate skis are shorter than classic skis and the tips have a less pronounced shovel shape.
- Skate poles are longer than classic poles.
- Skate boots are stiffer and have a high cuff.

