

# SKILLSQUEST TOURNAMENT

## Skiing Skills Assessment

### Operating Procedures



## OVERVIEW

The [SkillsQuest Skiing Skills Assessment](#) consists of a series of skiing exercises that are evaluated by a panel of evaluators. The assessment is intended to evaluate and reward a skier's skill development separate from traditional racing events. It is designed such that it can be held simultaneously with a race, or as a stand-alone event. There are five phases of exercises in the skiing assessment. The phase used for an event should be determined by the event's relative level and age grouping (see chart below).

Competition level	U8	U10	U12	U14	U16	U18
Entry (BWL, YSL, Mitey Mite, etc)	<a href="#">Phase 1</a>	<a href="#">Phase 1</a> or <a href="#">Phase 2</a>	<a href="#">Phase 1</a> or <a href="#">Phase 2</a>	<a href="#">Phase 1</a> or <a href="#">Phase 2</a>	<a href="#">Phase 1</a> or <a href="#">Phase 2</a>	<a href="#">Phase 1</a> or <a href="#">Phase 2</a>
State, divisional, regional, championship	<a href="#">Phase 1</a>	<a href="#">Phase 2</a>	Phase <a href="#">2</a> or <a href="#">3</a>	<a href="#">Phase 3</a>	<a href="#">Phase 4</a>	Phase <a href="#">4</a> or <a href="#">5</a>

Table 1: Recommended assessment phases by age and level

In the case of multiple age groups participating, the organizers should make sure that the youngest age groups are accommodated.

The first step for the event organizer is to determine whether there will be a stand-alone SkillsQuest day, or whether the SkillsQuest assessment will be incorporated in with a race on the same day.

## STAND-ALONE SKILLSQUEST TOURNAMENT DAY

There will be four exercises that make up the [SkillsQuest skiing assessment](#) based on the phase above. The program should allow for all four exercises to be evaluated over the course of the day. Choose the exercises based on the table above. If the appropriate terrain is not available for the exercise in one phase, an exercise from a lower phase may be substituted.

It is recommended that the organizer set up practice stations and other skills-based activities for the athletes to do in addition to the SkillsQuest assessment exercise stations. Task coaches to lead groups of athletes through the different stations and activities throughout the day, with the scored SkillsQuest assessments interspersed. Target no more than one coach per ten skiers.

Groups, or teams, may be assigned times to be at certain stations so that during other times they can practice and do other activities. Lengthy wait times must be avoided. Groups of skiers may be set up by club, or the organizer may elect to mix athletes from different clubs and appoint the coaches to the groups. Pre-registration of both athletes and coaches is necessary

for this approach to work well, but it can be an excellent experience for both athlete and coach. If coaches simply work with their own athletes, smaller clubs may be partnered together.

Depending on the terrain and evaluators available, all four assessment stations may be set up at one time, or two stations may be set up in the morning and the other two in the afternoon. Station setup will be outlined in the DAY-OF EVENT ORGANIZATION section.

Activities that can be set up for groups to do in between testing at a SkillsQuest assessment station include, but are not limited to:

- Scavenger hunt that requires skiing a variety of terrain and gives groups a variety of skiing tasks
- Obstacle course (timed, untimed, or dual)
- Short dual courses with brushes, stubbies or panel gates where athletes must race a partner with different tasks, appropriate for skill level (for example, ski without poles, ski with arms crossed over chest, ski on one ski, etc.)
- Corridor drills of varying shapes
- Synchronized skiing competition
- NASTAR
- Coach-directed freeskiing

These activities should encourage competition and challenge skills. The organizer must consider the set up and maintenance requirements for any such activities and plan accordingly.

### **INTEGRATED SKILLQUEST ASSESSMENT ON SAME DAY AS A RACE**

In this case, the SkillsQuest assessment may be set up to be run at the same time as a regular race, or the SkillsQuest assessment would be in one half of the day and a race in the other half. Since new children's race rules require shorter courses, some venues may have free space above the new start within the arena that could be used for a SkillsQuest station. In other cases, the SkillsQuest assessment may occur on a separate trail.

Depending on time and available resources, the organizer may not do all four assessments. The exercises may be assigned by the division, state or council so that over the course of the season, all four exercises in the designated phase will be used. No one SkillsQuest exercise is ranked as more important than another in determining which to use.

SkillsQuest assessment stations should be given start and finish times, with athletes required to go to the stations during that window. The stations should typically be open by the end of course inspection for the race so that skiers may do their SkillsQuest assessment prior to or following their race run. Athletes may run in any order. Consider the additional demands for volunteers and data entry that a race day brings. Typically, it is best if the SkillsQuest stations run in the morning to give ample time for data entry of results in the afternoon before awards.

Think of the SkillsQuest assessment as a separate event in terms of staff and volunteer support. The SkillsQuest Tournament Director should not have responsibilities with the race or be an evaluator so they are free to assist with the SkillsQuest side of the event throughout the day.

## PRE-EVENT ORGANIZATION

**Event fact sheet:** The fact sheet should list the SkillsQuest exercises that will be assessed. It should also direct competitors and coaches to the videos on the SkillsQuest webpage. (Visit [www.ussa.org](http://www.ussa.org) and search SkillsQuest or <http://alpine.usskiteam.com/alpine-programs/athletes/development/skillsquest>)

**Entry Fee:** An entry fee may or may not be charged for the event. The entry fee should be minimal but enough to cover the Organizers expenses. SkillsQuest tournaments should not be a profit making activity. The entry fee should be the same or less than a non-scored race entry fee. The entry fee must be listed on the event fact sheet.

**USSA Sanction Agreement:** The USSA sanction agreement must be filled out online and then printed out and signed by the appropriate persons. There is a \$40 sanction fee per event. If a SkillsQuest tournament is in conjunction with an event a sanction fee may not be charged. Sanction agreements and fees (fees can be paid online) are sent to [J.J. Ehlers](mailto:J.J.Ehlers@ussa.org), Nationals Rankings Coordinator, PO Box 100, Park City, UT 84060

**Appoint SkillsQuest Tournament Director:** Generally the race director or the club's lead coach will oversee the on-snow operation of the event and work directly with the SkillsQuest evaluators.

**Assign SkillsQuest Administrator:** Should be separate from the race administrator if SkillsQuest is run on the same day as a race. This person will manage data entry and results processing in addition to managing registrations. Athletes should be given bibs and should be entered into Split Second race software to generate start lists and to make sure all are USSA members. Athlete info can then be imported into the SkillsQuest Excel scoring spreadsheet. This person sends results to USSA (email to [skillsquest@ussa.org](mailto:skillsquest@ussa.org)). File copies of evaluator's score sheets for backup.

**Evaluators:** While the organizer does not need to arrange for a technical delegate or race jury for the SkillsQuest event, they do need to arrange for accredited evaluators that will score the athletes in the exercises. A [list of accredited evaluators](#) is available from the USSA SkillsQuest Coordinator (email [skillsquest@ussa.org](mailto:skillsquest@ussa.org)). Each SkillsQuest station must have two evaluators (if more than two are available, up to five may be used). Accredited evaluators will have gone through a one day training session on the SkillsQuest scoring system and evaluator roles, and are either Level 300 or higher USSA certified coaches or PSIA National Team members or examiners. For YSL/BWL/entry-level events, a minimum of one accredited evaluator to direct and oversee the scoring is required. For other events, one accredited evaluator per station is highly recommended. For championship level events, one accredited evaluator per station is required. A lead evaluator shall be assigned to all events that will help organize the other evaluators and work with the organizing committee to ensure that the terrain is adequate and

that the equipment and volunteers are available. See more on evaluators under day-of operations below.

Evaluators should be compensated for their time and expertise. The Event Organizer should negotiate the fee individually with the evaluators. USSA clinic instructors make \$200/day, PSIA Evaluators make \$250/day, USSA TD's make \$50, FIS TD's make \$100/day. Expenses should be covered as well. Contact your Regional or Divisional Office for help in securing evaluators in your area.

**Terrain selection:** The organizer should identify the trail(s) and locations on the trail that will be used for the SkillsQuest stations meeting the slope requirements identified in the SkillsQuest exercise descriptions. Verify with the lead evaluator prior to event.

**SkillsQuest awards:** Pre-order SkillsQuest awards stickers. Stickers are \$.20 per sticker and are ordered through the SkillsQuest coordinator. Call 435.647.2622 or email [skillsquest@ussa.org](mailto:skillsquest@ussa.org). Allow at least seven days for shipping. See details on awards under day-of operations below. Each racer should get a sticker. Stickers are colored white, bronze, silver or gold and awarded based on performance. Organizer is also encouraged to award medals and/or ribbons to the top scorers (if top ten per age class are typically awarded at a race, do awards to top ten by class for SkillsQuest).

**SkillsQuest banners and posters:** USSA will provide large SkillsQuest gate panels that can be used to mark the start and finish of stations. These must be returned to USSA following the event (USSA will provide a pre-paid shipping label). Organizer can also request SkillsQuest posters to use to promote the event in the lodge and registration areas (no cost to organizer). Contact the SkillsQuest coordinator 435.647.2622 or email [skillsquest@ussa.org](mailto:skillsquest@ussa.org).

**Volunteers:** The number of volunteers needed depends on the number of stations based on the volunteer roles below.

- Station volunteers
  - Starter and assistant starter for each station
    - Starter communicates with lead evaluator, sends next athlete when clear and ready, and tracks order of skiers leaving the gate
    - Assistant starter organizes athletes into bib order where required and reads the athletes the task descriptions
  - Managed by the lead evaluator at the station
- General volunteers
  - Slippers in case of snowfall/deterioration, if there is a pole jumper course will maintain poles
  - Score sheet runner(s)
    - Collect score sheets from evaluators and bring them to the data entry personnel
  - Data entry

- Assists SkillsQuest Administrator with data entry from evaluators' scoresheets into computer
  - Managed by the SkillsQuest Tournament Director
- Group leader
  - Assigned to coaches (organizer must confirm USSA membership is current)
  - Group leaders will be assigned a group of skiers for the day
    - Provide order to the day
    - Will do a group warm up
    - Keep the group moving, if a station has a line, then the group leader should take the group to one of the alternate stations or events
    - Should ski with ski poles so they can properly demonstrate the skills
    - Ensure skiers get through all assessments

## DAY-OF OPERATION

Materials needed:

- Scoresheets, clipboards, pencils for evaluators and starters
  - One full-size clipboard for each evaluator and station starter
  - Scoresheets available for download at SkillsQuest website under the [Resources tab](#)
    - Note: there are spots for 30 scores on each score sheet and starter sheet with the exception of exercises scored for right and left trials (15 scores per sheet). Make enough copies for each person.
- Radios for stations
  - Two radios on their own frequency for each station is best, used for starter to call down bib numbers to evaluators and evaluators to call for next skier
- Markings for start/finish area
  - Obtain gate panels from USSA (see above) – these are downhill panels that are hung on two bamboo poles, static plastic gates or flex gates
- Race bibs for athletes
  - Bibs are necessary to identify athletes for accurate results and tracking
- Athlete lists
  - A start list from Split Second should be generated so that coaches and station volunteers can verify athletes and bib numbers

Morning coaches meeting:

- Each tournament should have a morning meeting to review the station locations, start times and additional skill activities (this meeting may also be held the evening before).
- This meeting should be led by the SkillsQuest Tournament Director and the head evaluator

Station setup:

- The SkillsQuest Tournament Director will be in charge of SkillsQuest station locations, materials and volunteer assignments
- The SkillsQuest evaluators will work with the SkillsQuest Tournament Director to get materials and set up their stations. The volunteers for each station should check in with the evaluator.
- The SkillsQuest evaluators will confirm that the slope and snow conditions meet the requirements as outlined in the SkillsQuest exercise descriptions and that the area is adequately sectioned off with all fall zones, including the stopping area at the end of the exercise, accounted for. Safety installations such as B-netting will be used if necessary and must be made available by race organizer if requested.
- The start and finish areas should be marked for each station. Unless the exercise description states differently, the athlete will be evaluated from the start to the finish line.

#### Site inspection/safety:

- Venue should be closed to public
- Helmets are required for all athletes
- Terrain and snow conditions must be appropriate for the exercise as described under **Slope**
- There should be adequate stopping area at end of each station that is kept clear at all times
- Fall zones must be adequately protected
- Wave track must be of the proper dimensions, shape, and slope
- The lead evaluator will check items on site inspection report

#### Organizer requirements:

- Provide roster of athletes by bib number
- Provide appropriate terrain for testing phases

#### Flow through stations:

- Athletes should be grouped and given start times for each station to minimize waiting time
  - Groupings may be by club, by age class, or athletes from different clubs may be mixed at random and assigned coaches to encourage socialization and meeting new people
    - NOTE: Tournament organizer must verify that all coaches are current USSA members in good standing
  - Group size should not be larger than 15 athletes. Target 10 athletes per coach or less.
  - Stations do not need to be run through in any particular order – for example, some groups could start with the pressure skill station while others start at the edging skill station
  - In between the stations, athletes should have other activities set up

## Testing at a station:

- Assistant starter organizes athletes at the start
- When new group arrives, assistant starter reads the athletes the test description and criteria for perfect execution from the SkillsQuest description sheet.
  - For phase 2 and 3 athletes, use the kid-friendly instructions instead
- Bib order is preferred, but if tournament is running simultaneously with a race a first come, first served order may be used
- Starter announces the bib number of the athlete in start to the evaluators
- Lead evaluator gives clear to go
- Starter sends athlete upon clear
- Evaluators individually record their scores on the scoresheet after watching the skier
  - The athlete's final score is an average of each evaluator's score
- Evaluators signal for the next athlete once they have recorded their score
- Evaluators should make their score recording as efficiently as possible to minimize the athletes' wait at the start
- Finish volunteer, if available, directs skiers to the next station or activity after their run and makes sure that the stopping area is kept clear
- In the case of a large field and a stand-alone SkillsQuest event with four stations, a "shot-gun" start order is recommended where the first 25% start at station one, the next 25% start at station two, and so on.
- In the case of a small field, or where skiers are in a group and go station to station, the run order should be changed at each station so that the same skier does not always go first. An example order in the case of ten athletes is below:
  - Station 1: 1-10
  - Station 2: 6-10, 1-5
  - Station 3: 5-1, 10-6
  - Station 4: 10-1

The scoring decisions of the evaluators are final.

## Entry of scoring data

- Two people should be available right after the event starts to enter the scoring data into an Excel spreadsheet (Excel scoring template available from [skillsquest@ussa.org](mailto:skillsquest@ussa.org))
- Enter header data on Event info tab
- To enter athlete info on Athlete info tab, do an export from the Split Second timing software of the following fields in order: bib number, athlete name (combined), USSA number, gender, club, class. Open in a blank spreadsheet, then copy all data and paste into cell A4 in Athlete info tab
- A score sheet runner should bring evaluator score sheets into data entry team as event is going on
- Enter scores on the tabs for Pressure, Edging, Rotary or Balance

- Be sure to enter the evaluator names in row 2 (judges), and be consist with entering the scores from judge #1 in the score #1 column, and so on
- It is recommended that one person read bib number and scores to the person entering scores, and check off each box as score is entered
- Reader should have score sheets from each evaluator in the order the show on the spreadsheet, and read the scores from all evaluators for each skier before going to the next skier
- After scores are entered, review each tab to ensure no scores are missing, cross-check with scoresheets as needed
- Results will automatically populate in the RESULTS tab along with the SkillsQuest medal level achieved
  - Medal level is based off of the average score of the assessments completed
  - Skiers that did not complete all assessments should be removed from rankings
  - To create a rankings list, organizer may create a copy of the RESULTS spreadsheet onto a new sheet, and use data sorts or ranking functions in Excel to rank based on age

#### Reporting/posting of scores and awards:

- Results of the scoring should be made available to the athletes and coaches after the event
  - Scores are entered into an Excel spreadsheet (Excel scoring template available from [skillsquest@ussa.org](mailto:skillsquest@ussa.org))
  - Results printout may be in alpha order, bib order or rank order
  - Results printout should show total score for station (not individual judges)
  - Rankings may be based on composite score for all tests (preferred)
- SkillsQuest Skiing Skills Assessment awards presentation
  - Top ranked scorers may be recognized by place (composite and/or by exercise)
  - All athletes should be awarded SkillsQuest stickers (bronze, silver, gold or white) based on composite or best score
  - Stickers available from USSA at \$.20 each, contact [skillsquest@ussa.org](mailto:skillsquest@ussa.org)
- Results and photos should be sent to [skillsquest@ussa.org](mailto:skillsquest@ussa.org)

**No USSA head tax is collected for SkillsQuest tournaments.**

#### HOW TO CONDUCT:

- Single-skill station to full event
  - Recommend that try to complete at least three skill areas over course of an event or event series
  - Common method would be to have 1 or 2 assessment stations running concurrent with a traditional GS, SL, Kombi, etc.
  - Examples
    - State league has four races over the season. Will do **pressure** assessment at race 1, **edging** assessment at race 2, **rotary** assessment



at race 3 and **balance** assessment at race 4. At end of series, SkillsQuest awards are given based on the compiled season-long results; or SkillsQuest awards can be given per skill on the day of the event.

- Junior Championships has three race days. Do one skill area assessment per day (if not enough time for four, **balance** assessment is omitted)
  - Two-day race weekend modified into a skills/race weekend. One day is racing (duals to get more runs). Other day is skills. Skiers ski the mountain in groups while coming to SkillsQuest assessment stations at prescribed times (such that wait times are minimized). Other activities, such as supporting skill exercises, guided free skiing, NASTAR, obstacle course, etc included between SkillsQuest stations.
  - One-day SkillsQuest Tournament. All four assessments in a phase are completed in one day. It is recommended to assign start times by groups for each station to minimize standing around. During the time between assessments, encourage skiing the mountain and practicing the skill areas, generally with a coach.
- Venue
    - New USSA guidelines for children's course setting call for shorter courses. At some venues, the area above the new lower start may be used for the SkillsQuest station.
    - If the SkillsQuest is concurrent with a race event, the SkillsQuest station should be nearby the race event whenever possible, ideally accessible from the same chairlift.
    - If possible, factor spectator access. Appropriateness of terrain and snow conditions for the exercise come first, but proximity and viewability are also considerations.

## POST-EVENT DETAILS

- Return SkillsQuest banners and unused stickers to USSA Sport Education, 1 Victory Ln, Park City, UT 84060. (If sending via USPS, send to PO Box 100.)
- Email results to [skillsquest@ussa.org](mailto:skillsquest@ussa.org).

## SAMPLE EVENT TIMELINE

### HALF DAY

8:00 AM	Registration/Groups/Bibs/Information/Maps (Set up crew should be organizing stations)
9:00 AM – 9:30 AM	Warm-up
10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	SkillsQuest Evaluation
2:00 PM	Awards

FULL DAY

8:00 AM Registration/Groups/Bibs/Information/Maps

(Set up crew should be organizing stations)

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM Warm-up

10:00 AM – 3:00 PM SkillsQuest Evaluation and other activities with lunch break

3:30 PM Awards