



### 4.1.3 Snow Play Goals

It is essential for children to have the opportunity for unstructured play-time on skis in addition to practice sessions if they are going to develop technical competence.

Although exposure to a variety of sports/activities is an important requirement of a child's physical development, coaches should keep in mind that the snow season is short in the context of year-round activity. Therefore, if children are going to develop competence in cross-country skiing, they may have to achieve it in a period as short as 10 to 12 weeks per year. This means that when snow is available, participation in cross-country skiing should be as frequent as four or five times per week, depending on the age of the skier. Generally speaking, children need to ski more than once a week to retain new skills, and four to five times a week if they wish to improve their skill level significantly.

Age	# Practice Sessions	# Play-time on Skis in Addition to Practice Sessions
6 years	16 on snow; 2 per week	minimum of 2x/wk over 3 months = 24
7 years	16 on snow; 2 per week	minimum of 2x/wk over 3 months = 24
8 years	30 on snow; 2 per week	minimum of 3x/wk over 3 months = 30
9 years	30 on snow; 2 per week	minimum of 3x/wk over 3 months = 30

For children six to nine years of age, the preferred setting for play-time on skis is a ski playground or terrain park. In addition to using a kid-friendly setting, coaches can improve the potential benefit from unstructured play-time on snow if they provide their skiers with some direction during the practice sessions. A well-prepared coach will give each child specific suggestions as to which skills to work on between sessions, and then follow up at the next practice.

To ensure play-time on skis is time well spent, the importance of kid-appropriate settings/activities and quality time on skis should be emphasized to parents, as they will have the most influence on their children's skill development outside of practice sessions. Parents should also be encouraged to coordinate transportation and ski playground supervision with other parents, and to give their children an opportunity to use head lamps if they live in a communities where a lit trail system is not accessible.

