

History

Cross-country or Nordic is the oldest form of skiing. There is evidence that primitive skis were used in Norway over 5,000 years ago. As early as the 10th century, cross-country skiing was basic transportation. Vikings in Northern Europe got around on skis when traversing relatively flat landscapes. Ski competitions started in Norway in the 19th century. Norway's famous Holmenkollen ski festival began in 1892. At first the main focus at Nordic festivals was the combined event of cross-country skiing and ski jumping. In 1900, a separate cross-country race was held at Homenkollen. Cross-country competition was added to the Winter Olympics at Chamonix in 1924 and has been part of competition since that time. The events held at the first cross-country competition were the 15km and the 50km. A women's cross-country event, the 10km, was added to the program in 1952.

Classical

In the classical technique, movement is smooth and efficient, using alternate movements of the arms and legs, as in walking, but with a more elongated stride. The equipment is lightweight with "skinny skis" and boots that look much like running shoes. In competitions, the skis remain parallel on flat ground. When going up hills, the skis are pointed outward in the shape of a "V". The bottom of the skis are waxed for better traction.

Freestyle

In freestyle competitions, the skier can choose any style. The most common technique is skating, which is faster, more dynamic, and more physically demanding than the classical technique. Skating also requires more strength. The skis for skating are shorter and the poles longer than those used in classical competitions. Skating requires a compact surface in order to glide.