

SKIING

- skiing was originally a form of transportation in the mountains of Europe, well before it became a sport.
- there are many **types** of skiing for athletes of all ages to enjoy. Besides **alpine skiing**, which takes place on steep hills, competitions also take place in **cross-country skiing**, the **biathlon**, and **freestyle**. Cross-country skiing is a race on a long, flatter course. The biathlon is a competition made up of two events — cross-country skiing and target shooting. Freestyle skiing is also made up of two events — skiing over moguls, which has competitors race down a run covered with bumps, and aerials, where competitors ski up a ramp and do twists and turns in the air.
- Alpine skiing was first introduced to the Olympics in 1936. Germany's Franz Pfürer won the first men's gold medal in the alpine combined competition.
- After World War II, alpine skiing in the Olympics really took off as men and women competed in the downhill, the slalom, and the alpine combined. The giant slalom was added four years later.
- Austrian Hermann Maier (the “Herminator”) not only won two gold medals at the 1998 Olympics in Nagano (who can forget his spectacular crash?), but he also was the 1998 World Cup champion. He's been World Cup champ four times.
- Cross-country skiing has actually been an Olympic event since the first Winter Olympics took place in 1924. There were two races, one 15 kilometers and one 50 kilometers. Thorleif Haug of Norway won gold in both of them.
- Cross-country skiing in the 1990's was dominated by another Norwegian, Bjorn Dählie. He is the winningest Winter Olympian of all time with 12 medals, including eight golds.
- For the first time in Olympic history, **snowboarding** became an official Olympic event for both men and women at Nagano in 1998. There are two snowboarding competitions in the Olympics — a **halfpipe** and the **giant** slalom. The U.S. took three gold medals home in 2006: Shaun White in men's halfpipe, Hannah Teter in women's halfpipe, and Seth Wescott in men's snowboard cross.
- One Olympic event that men compete in but women do not is **ski jumping**. There are two different jumps that are used — one is **90** meters and one is **120** meters. These are the events held in most present-day alpine competitions:

Downhill features the longest course and is the fastest of the alpine events. Skiers can reach speeds of more than 90 miles per hour as they race down the slope. Downhill racing includes turns, jumps and gliding stages.

In the **slalom**, the shortest race, single poles, called gates, are placed closely together on the course. It's the most technically challenging event as skiers speed down the hill making quick, sharp turns through the gates.

On a **giant slalom** course, gates span the length of the run. They are spaced more widely apart than the slalom gates. This makes for a faster run with wider turns than slalom. Each gate is made of two poles connected by a piece of fabric.

Super Giant Slalom, the newest Alpine event, was introduced into competitions in 1987. It has a much longer course than either the slalom or giant slalom and the gates are the most

widely spaced of the slaloms. Super-GS skiers “tuck” into a low, scrunched position to get the most speed from their run.

History of Snowboarding

The history of snowboarding is much easier to trace than that of skiing. Sherman Poppen is generally considered to be the inventor of the snowboard. In 1965, he fastened two skis together so his daughter could “surf” down a snow-covered slope near their Michigan home. He called the sport “snurfing,” a combination of snow and surfing. Snowboarding didn’t reach a fever pitch until the mid 1980s. Early snowboarders, mostly male teenagers, were often viewed as rebels and risk-takers. Now, males and females of all ages are seen cruising down the slopes on snowboards.

Snowboarding debuted as an Olympic sport in 1998. Men and women compete in halfpipe and the giant slalom events. The halfpipe is a U-shaped course carved into a mountain. Competitors are scored for their technique. In the parallel giant slalom, snowboarders race against each other on separate slalom courses.