



CANADIAN OLYMPIC ACTIVITY CHALLENGE



SPEED SKATING

People in Europe have been lacing up skates and racing on rivers and lakes for centuries. These races became more organized at the end of the 1800s. By then, competitions were held around tracks to make the races easier for fans to watch. Speed skaters in Europe tended to race in separate lanes, while speed skaters in North America usually raced together. Long track speed skating made its Olympic debut at the 1924 Chamonix Winter Olympic Games, and has been included in every Winter Games since.

In long track competition, skaters race in pairs on two lanes of a 400-metre oval track. The outside lane is a bit longer, so the skaters change lanes every lap so that they each cover the same distance. The skaters are timed, and the fastest skaters out of all the pairs are awarded gold, silver and bronze. This means that a skater has to wait for all the pairs to finish before he or she finds out who won. At most competitions, women race 500, 1,500, 3,000 and 5,000 metres, and men race 500, 1,500, 5,000 and 10,000 metres.

Speed skaters work very hard on their technique, learning to crouch over to reduce air resistance. They wear full body suits with hoods, and klap skates. These special skates have long blades with hinges on the front. This means the heel of the boot can lift off the blade, allowing the skater to make a longer stroke. Tactics are also very important in speed skating. Long track skaters try to race each lap in an equal time, so that they don't run out of energy.

To learn more about Speed Skating or to find a local club please visit www.speedskating.ca



FEATURED COUNTRY

NETHERLANDS



Every February, millions of Dutch people eagerly hope for cold weather. They want to see the Elfstedentocht, a 200-kilometre skating race that will only happen if the ice on the rivers and canals is frozen. The race, which first took place in 1909, follows a route through 11 cities. About 16,000 skaters participate, starting early in the morning and finishing by midnight. Thousands of spectators come out in every city, and the entire country celebrates.

The Elfstedentocht shows how much the Dutch people love skating. They started putting steel blades on boots in the 13th Century, and since then they have used their rivers and canals for transportation, competition and fun. The Dutch have also excelled at long track speed skating. Throughout Olympic history Dutch skaters have done well, but the best performances came at the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games. There, Dutch skaters won a total of 23 medals, including at least one medal in all 12 events. The Netherlands was the first country in Olympic history to achieve a sweep (gold, silver and bronze) in four events. The winning events were the men's 500, 5,000 and 10,000 metres, and the women's 1500 metres.

FEATURED ATHLETE



GILMORE JUNIO

OLYMPIAN, SOCHI 2014

Gilmore Junio is known as much for his sportsmanship as he is for his speed skating. At the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games, Junio gave up his spot in the 1000m so that his teammate Denny Morrison could race. Denny had fallen at the Canadian trials, and didn't make the team for that event. Morrison went on to win silver. Junio had finished 10th in the 500m earlier in the Games.

To learn more about Gilmore please visit www.olympic.ca

SPEED SKATING


ACTIVITIES


Described below are speed skating daily physical activities that can be used in the classroom and gym. Have fun!

STRAIGHTWAYS & CORNERS

Speed skaters move down the straightaways transferring their weight by pushing side to side. They build speed in the corners, and maintain it in the straightaways. To the best of their ability, skaters assume an aerodynamic tucked body position. This position allows for long, strong pushes allowing skaters to be as fast as possible. This activity will strengthen your legs (quadriceps, hamstrings and gluteal muscles).

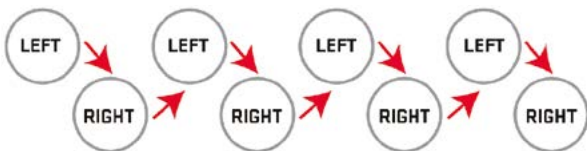
 **Participants:** Groups of 4-6

 **Space:** Classroom or hallway

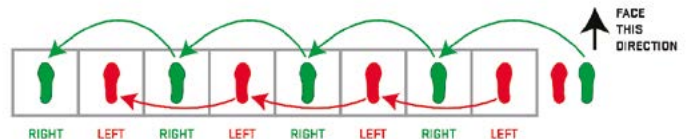
 **Equipment:** 6-8 hula hoops per group, 1 agility ladder or 6-8 hockey sticks per group. With limited access to equipment or space, use tape instead.

SET-UP:

Straightaway - Place 6-8 hula hoops in a zig-zag pattern for each speed skating straightaway like in the diagram.



Corners - Place an agility ladder or 6-8 hockey sticks parallel to one another on the floor for each speed skating "corner". Line up sideways, with your left side at the start of the equipment.



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Straightaway Stride on Straights

- Line up behind the start of the hula hoops, and stand on your right foot.
- Hop diagonally into the first hoop, landing on the left foot.
- Repeat the sequence back and forth alternating feet through the hoops.
- Upon completion, proceed to end of line and repeat the activity.

Crossover Stride on Corners

- Step your left foot into the first square on your left.
- Keeping your left foot planted in the first square, cross your right foot over your left leg, planting your right foot in the second square.
- Continue this pattern by stepping your left foot into the third empty square and then crossing over with your right foot into the fourth square. Repeat this sequence until the end.
- Proceed to the end of the line to repeat the activity. Reverse the process to move to the right.

ACTIVITY EXTENSIONS:

- Set up multiple straightaways or corners and participate in a relay race.
- With limited space, use tape on the floor to replace the required equipment. Mark an "x" on the floor to replace the hula hoops and straight lines to replace the agility ladders.

MINI OLYMPIC OVAL

Speed skating races are individual events with the exception of the Short Track Relay which is a team event. In this event, the focus is on teamwork, communication and cooperation. It's one of speed skating's most exciting events as there are 4 teams on the ice at once. The speed skaters are exchanging with their teammates every 1.5 to 2 laps until they complete 3000m (women) or 5000m (men).

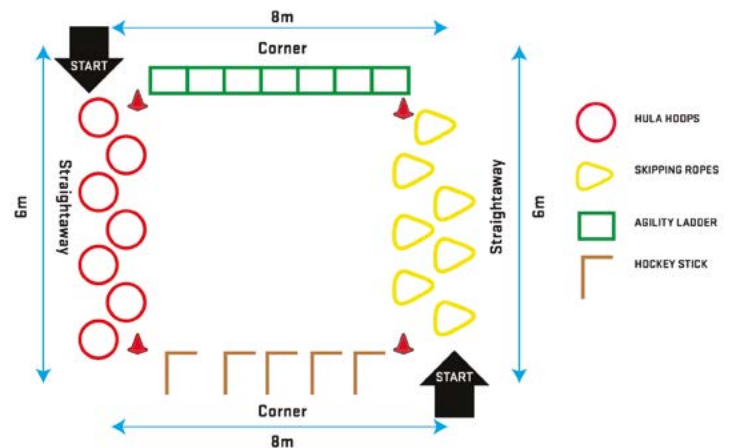
Participants: Two groups of 3-4 students per oval

Space: Gym or large space

Equipment: 6 metre x 8 metre space per group, 4 pylons, 12 to 16 hula hoops and/or skipping ropes, 2 agility ladders/12 to 16 floor hockey sticks, and 1 whistle

SETUP:

- Set up 4 pylons to mark a 4m x 6m inner square of the Mini Olympic Oval.
- Place 6-8 hula hoops or looped skipping ropes in a zig-zag pattern for each speed skating straightaway. Position the straightaways on opposite sides of the Mini Olympic Oval.
- Place an agility ladder or 6-8 hockey sticks, parallel to one another on the floor, for each speed skating "corner". Position the "corners" on opposite sides of the Mini Olympic Oval.
- Position 2 groups of 3-4 students per Mini Olympic Oval.
- Start each group at the start of opposite straightaways.



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- Decide how many laps are in the race. When the whistle blows to start the race, the first athlete starts 'skating' straightaways and corners in a clockwise direction all the way around the oval.
- When done, they tag the hand of next person in line to go.
- The two opposing teams start at either side of the oval, and try to catch the other team. This is called "pursuit".
- Groups are finished the race once they are all seated in a straight line at their starting position.
- The team that finishes first is the winner.

ACTIVITY EXTENSIONS:

Experience Long Track Speed Skating's Team Pursuit! Have two teams of three students race against one another for a set number of laps. Each team of three students will move together, in unison, around the oval. Start the teams at the beginning of opposite straightaways. Teams show they are finished skating by sitting down in a straight line behind their starting position. First team to be seated wins!

KANGAROO TAG

Speed skaters will skate thousands of laps over their career in the pursuit of skating personal best times. Personal best times may lead them to a podium finish at the Olympic Games, but they must be technically perfect to do so. Practice and repetition of perfect technique is critical in their pursuit of individual excellence.

Participants: Groups of 4 students per oval

Space: Gym or large space

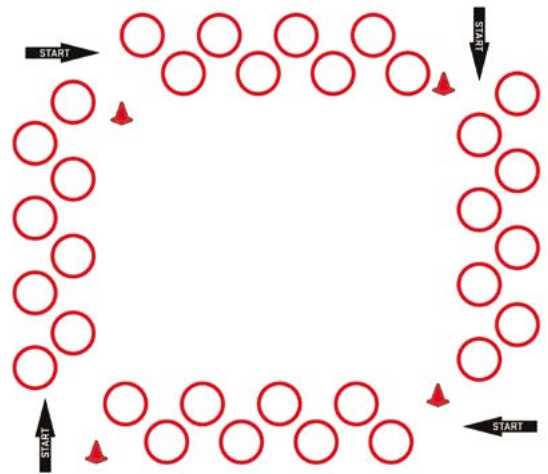
Equipment: 8 metre x 8 metre space per group, 4 pylons per oval, 24 to 32 hula hoops and/or skipping ropes per oval, 1 whistle

SET-UP:

- Set up the Mini Olympic Oval as per the diagram.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- One student should line up at each pylon. The object is to catch up to each of the other skaters. If you tag one of your competitors, they must leave the race.
- You can only have one foot in a hula hoop at a time.
- The race ends when only one skater is left or when the remaining two skaters are exhausted!



ACTIVITY EXTENSIONS:

How fast can you go around the oval for one lap or 5 laps?

Have a classmate time you, and then try to beat your time.

BRINGING IT TO THE CLASSROOM

Hundreds of years ago, people in the Netherlands began skating on the frozen rivers and canals as a means of transportation and fun. The earliest speed skating competition was in 1676. Write a newspaper article from the time describing the event. Draw some pictures to show what it might have looked like.

INSTANT ACTIVITY:

Only have a minute of classroom time to get up and be active? This activity will get the heart pumping. Skater squats work the quadriceps or muscles at the front of your legs.

Stand about 20cm back from the edge of a desk or whiteboard. Hold onto the edge with your hands to give you some stability, and stand on your right foot. Extend your left leg behind you, coming into a squat with your right leg. As you slowly squat forward, move your right knee over your right foot. Keep your heel on the ground and your knee moving in a straight line. Try 10 on each leg.