

U12 and Younger Equipment Rules - Background and Enforcement

U12 and younger athletes should limit skis based upon the recommendations in the Alpine Training System and the Course Setting matrix.

- U12 - two pairs (SL, GS), length ski/size appropriate. Can only use one pair per race (inspection and competition).
- U10 - one pair (multi-event), length ski/size appropriate.
- No waxing solution can be applied at a competition venue.
- The use of ski preparation benches is not allowed at a competition venue.

Further, each division was requested to host two races during the season where speed suits would not be allowed.

There have been questions on the implementation of and reasons behind the new rules for U12 and younger athletes noted above. These rules were suggested by the Alpine Athlete Representatives and approved by the Alpine Sport Committee during the 2019 Congress.

Following is some background from the athlete representatives on why they made these suggestions.

From our perspective, the direction of alpine skiing at young ages (U12 and younger) has been moving in the wrong direction. Having multiple pairs of skis, expensive wax, and generally more gear that might make an athlete faster, without improving their skills, takes away from the core value of youth racing; having fun while learning the fundamentals of the sport. Therefore, the athlete representatives of the Alpine Sport Committee came forward with these rule changes:

"Only allow one pair of skis per event day at race events." This is to make the sport less of an arms race and bring the focus back from "what you ski on" to "how well you ski on it". This rule applies only to runs taken within the race venue and as such only pertains to inspection and race runs.

"No fluorinated wax." Fluorinated waxes are expensive, they are hazardous to your health and the environment, and unnecessary at all age levels. Next season fluorinated wax will be banned from all FIS racing for similar reasons.

"No ski benches at the start venue." They clutter the start and make the environment unnecessarily stressful for athletes, coaches and parents alike.

Perform two "test races" where athletes wear normal ski clothes rather than race suits to allow kids to stay warmer and lower the pressure of racing.

We believe ski racing is hugely beneficial for personal growth and want to keep as many athletes racing for as long as possible. For this reason, we created these rules to level the playing field and lay out a clear direction in which the sport should be moving. The belief is, if you focus on the athlete's development and remove financial barriers more

kids will participate and raise the entire level of the sport. Let's make it about skiing and having fun so this next generation has the same opportunities in the sport as we did.

Warner Nickerson, Andrew Weibrecht, Breezy Johnson, and Jessica Kelly

There have been some questions on how to enforce these rules. During the discussions at Congress there was recognition that some may decide to flout the rules and ignore them, and that was understood. There is not a desire to create a marking system for the skis or to have someone tasked with enforcement. The desire is to educate our athletes, parents, and coaches on the purpose and achieve acceptance and buy-in through that education.

Certainly, if an official observes someone breaking a rule, they should not ignore it. Their first act should be to continue the education process and then if necessary, inform the Jury for further action.