

Safe Winter Sports and Activities

American Academy of Pediatrics

Winter Sports and Activities

Set reasonable time limits on outdoor play to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Have children come inside periodically to warm up.

Using alcohol or drugs before any winter activity, like snowmobiling or skiing, is dangerous and should not be permitted in any situation.

Ice Skating

- Allow children to skate only on approved surfaces. Check for signs posted by local police or recreation departments, or call your local police department to find out which areas have been approved.
- Advise your child to:
 - Skate in the same direction as the crowd
 - Avoid darting across the ice
 - Never skate alone
 - Not chew gum or eat candy while skating
 - Consider having your child wear a helmet, knee pads and elbow pads, especially while learning to [skate](#) to keep them safe.

Sledding

- Keep sledders away from motor vehicles.
- Children should be supervised while sledding.
- Keep young children separated from older children.
- Sledding feet first or sitting up, instead of lying down head-first, may prevent head injuries.
- Consider having your child wear a helmet while sledding.
- Use steerable sleds, not snow disks or inner tubes.
- Sleds should be structurally sound and free of sharp edges and splinters, and the steering mechanism should be well lubricated.
- Sled slopes should be free of obstructions like trees or fences, be covered in snow (not ice), not be too steep (slope of less than 30°), and end with a flat runoff.

- Avoid sledding in crowded areas.

Snow Skiing and Snowboarding

- Children should be taught to [ski or snowboard](#) by a qualified instructor in a program designed for children.
- Never ski or snowboard alone.
- Young children should always be supervised by an adult.
- Older children's need for adult supervision depends on their maturity and skill. If older children are not with an adult, they should always at least be accompanied by a friend.
- All skiers and snowboarders should wear helmets. Ski facilities should require helmet use, but if they do not, parents should enforce the requirement for their children.
- Equipment should fit the child. Skiers should wear safety bindings that are adjusted at least every year.
- Snowboarders should wear gloves with built-in wrist guards. Eye protection or goggles should also be used.
- Slopes should fit the ability and experience of the skier or snowboarder. Avoid crowded slopes.
- Avoid skiing in areas with trees and other obstacles.

Snowmobiling

- The AAP recommends that children under age 16 not operate snowmobiles and that children under age 6 never ride on snowmobiles.
- Do not use a snowmobile to pull a sled or skiers.
- Wear goggles and a safety helmet approved for use on motorized vehicles like motorcycles.
- Travel at safe speeds.
- Never snowmobile alone or at night.
- Stay on marked trails, away from roads, water, railroads and pedestrians.