

Snowshoeing Activity Standard - Basic Snowshoe Trips

Activity Description

Snowshoeing activities are defined as day trips on foot using snowshoes to travel across snow-covered terrain. These activities focus on non-technical winter travel in various mountain environments from foothills to alpine zones, with participants carrying day packs containing essential winter gear, food, and water. Snowshoeing may involve travel on established trails, breaking trail through fresh snow, or traversing open terrain while managing winter-specific hazards.

Definitions

Classification	Description	Prerequisites
Beginner Snowshoeing	Terrain is flat or gentle. Does not enter avalanche terrain or put participants into avalanche risk (Avoids slopes over 25 degrees). Limited to Easy and Moderate difficulty rating	Open to all properly equipped members and guests. Trip Leaders must have ATA
Basic Snowshoeing	No exposure to steep terrain that would require use of an ice axe or additional gear. Does not enter avalanche terrain or put participants into avalanche risk (Avoids slopes over 25 degrees). Route can be of any strenuousness level	Preferred that participants have experience snowshoeing or took Basic Snowshoeing Course. Trip Leaders must have ATA.
Intermediate Snowshoeing (NOTE: this activity standard does not	Terrain may enter areas with slopes greater than 25 degrees, or exposure to terrain that poses avalanche risk. Terrain may require additional	Participants must have prior experience snowshoeing and proper equipment.

meet the qualifications for this classification yet)	equipment or ice axe and/or the use and knowledge of avalanche tools. Route can be of any strenuous level.	Trip Leader <i>must have</i> AIARE or higher.
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Difficulty Ratings

Rating	Distance	Elevation Gain	Description
Easy	Up to 5 miles	Up to 600 ft	Gentle terrain, packed trails
Moderate	5-8 miles	600-1200 ft	Moderate terrain, some trail breaking
Challenging	8-10 miles	1200-1500 ft	More difficult terrain, significant trail breaking
Difficult	10+ miles	2500+ ft	Could include technical terrain, deep snow, long distances

Pace Ratings

"Pace is dependent on snow pack conditions"

Rating	Description
Casual	1-1.5 miles per hour on clear, frozen snow
Brisk	1.5-2 miles per hour on clear, frozen snow
Moderate	>2 miles per hour on clear frozen snow OR <2 miles per hour on nonpacked snow or difficult terrain

Terrain Ratings

Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale (ATES)

Rating	Description
Non-Avalanche	Non-avalanche prone terrain means terrain with stable snowpack; slope angles not in the 25-50 degree range; that does not include terrain traps (e.g., stream beds, gullies, steep road cuts) or snow pillows, roll-overs, cornices and subtle micro-terrain features; and that does not have avalanche prone terrain above the selected route.
Simple	Exposure to low angle or primarily forested terrain. Some forest openings may involve the runout zones of infrequent avalanches. Isolated steep sections have many options to reduce or eliminate exposure. No glacier travel. Does not enter avalanche terrain.
Basic Snowshoeing Trips do not go beyond "Simple" on the ATES ratings	

Route Descriptions:

Rating	Description
Packed Trail	Established winter trails, well-traveled and compacted
Fresh Snow	Requires trail breaking through uncompacted snow
Rolling	Varied terrain with moderate ups and downs
Steep	Significant elevation changes requiring advanced technique
Alpine	Open terrain above treeline, subject to wind, exposure

Equipment Recommendations:

For All Participants include:

1. Snowshoes with or without built-in crampons depending on terrain
2. Ski/hiking poles
3. 10 Essentials
4. Extra insulating clothing layers

5. Extra food
6. Insulated water containers and extra water
7. Chemical warmers, heated gloves/socks, or extra pair of gloves/socks

Leader's Essential Winter Equipment

1. First aid supplies appropriate for winter conditions
 - a. Consider a group emergency shelter
2. Other speciality winter gear as required by trip classification and duration
 - a. Shovel, beacon, probe
 - b. Stove and fire starter
 - c. Insulated pad

Recommended Skills

- Leaders and participants should consider taking Winter Camping School, Winter Wilderness Survival School, or a similar course to develop winter wilderness skills
- Winter travel safety (included in Avalanche Terrain Avoidance or higher) including but not limited to:
 - Identification of avalanche hazards
 - Proper route selection
 - Group management associated with decision making in avalanche terrain
 - Emergency preparedness for winter conditions

Leadership Requirements

Snowshoeing Trip Leaders must meet all standard CMC Trip Leader requirements:

Basic Requirements:

1. Be a Colorado Mountain Club member, at least 18 years old
2. Current Wilderness First Aid
3. Current CMC Trip Leader
4. Avalanche Terrain Avoidance (ATA) training (minimum)

Note - no "Snowshoe Trip Leader" Badge required

Continuing Requirements:

- Maintain CMC membership
- **Lead at least 1 snowshoe trip per winter season**
- Maintain Wilderness First Aid certification
- ATA refresher every 5 years

Notes and Special Considerations

If entering terrain with slopes greater than 25 degrees, or that puts participants into avalanche risk, leaders must be trained in avalanche assessment AIARE 1 or above.

Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	6/9/2025	Graham Ottley	Initial document
2.0	9/23/2025	Volunteer Committee	Added suggestions and reviewed initial document. Added comments to Feedback R1: Snowshoeing as well.
3.0	10/21/2025 - 10/30/2025	Volunteer Committee and revisions by Ashley Kramer	Elimated all requirements not related to Basic Snowshoeing. Added Classification table for clarification. Comments remaining: Linda Lawson - Terrain Ratings: As discussed last evening ATES scale is not a "known" measurement available in all mapping software. CMC would need to educate leaders and members on the scale

			<p>and identify such with photos of locations where snowshoeing trips are led.</p> <p>Linda Lawson - Leader Requirements: Suggest - if multi-day trip consider carrying group emergency shelter</p> <p>Somewhere in the standards there should be a statement that given higher risk of winter trips, a smaller group size of X - X should be considered.</p> <p>When leaders/sections rent huts for winter travel the huts reserved can sleep anywhere from 8 to 20. Due to costs involved a leader/section may attempt to have a group of 9-20 snowshoe in to the hut. A group this size is subject to multiple winter risks. You may want to add a caveat about if there are more than X leaders and participants traveling then larger groups should be separated with a leader for each separate group.</p>
3.0	1/5/2026	State Council	State Council approved document

