

SNOWSHOE 101 FROM REDFEATHER: HOW TO FIT AND USE SNOWSHOES

Nearly everyone is a little nervous or intimidated when trying out a new sport. Snowshoeing, however, is a sport that you can enjoy your first time out. Before you go on your first trip take a few minutes to become familiar with your snowshoes. The most important aspect is to become familiar with the binding.



Follow these simple steps to make sure you have the proper fit every time:

- Put the ball of your foot over the top of the hinge, centered on the snowshoe. Your toes should hang over the front of the foot bed.
- Tighten the front strap first, followed by the heel strap and finish by tightening the strap over your instep.
- The straps don't need to be overly tight. Just make sure they are snug.
- To walk in your snowshoes, you'll imitate your normal stride. Your feet should be a bit farther apart than usual, but not too much. Stride forward, putting your foot down heel to toe.
- Repeat as though you were walking or running on dry, firm ground.

We probably should have mentioned at the very beginning that you want to put your snowshoes on when you are OUTSIDE, not INSIDE, and do not snowshoe on sidewalks or driveways.

Now, pick a direction. Take a step. Take another. You are now a Redfeather Winter Person!

SNOWSHOE TECHNIQUES



A Few Tips On Getting Around On Your Snowshoes

The most important thing to remember is to keep your stride natural. Don't try to modify or exaggerate your gait. Walking or running should feel natural, and in either instance the terrain will dictate your stride. You will have the easiest time learning on gentle, flat, or rolling terrain, but the steeper and deeper the terrain gets, the

more challenging and intense your hike or run will get!

Another point to remember when beginning snowshoeing is that your snowshoes have a larger “footprint” on the snow than you are probably used to. You might feel awkward for a few hundred yards, but soon your slightly wider stance will feel natural. The solution is to simply concentrate on spreading your feet a bit further apart throughout your stride this helps you avoid knocking your snowshoe frames together and possibly tripping.

The following are some thoughts to keep in mind: remember to lift those knees, think about a wider stance, and avoid dragging or shuffling your feet to prevent the crampons from catching on firm snow. Using a set of poles when snowshoeing will make all of these things come together, all on their own.

Uphill/Downhill/Traversing

When you maneuver up steep slopes, a good technique involves aggressive use of the front crampons. Get your knees up and dig the front points of the crampons into the snow. Remember, the fastest way to the top is straight up – but a more practical method is to cross the slope diagonally.

When you are traveling downhill, avoid leaning backwards onto the tails of the snowshoes whenever possible. Try to keep your weight upright and over the center of the snowshoe, and let the front crampons (located under the ball of your foot) grip the snow to prevent sliding. When you are traversing slopes, stay upright and lean into the hill with each step. Keep your weight forward and your crampons beneath you. Short, even strides, as well as traveling with a set of poles, will help avoid slipping and ensure safety.

Deep Snow

Lift your knees and shorten your stride. Your snowshoes are not designed to completely float above the snow, so you will find that you sink a little bit with each step. If you are traveling most often in deep drifts or light, fluffy powder, you may find that getting the next largest size snowshoe will improve your floatation. When in deep snow it is important to tread lightly and pace yourself.

Intensity

The intensity level of snowshoeing is infinitely variable. From a slow walk you can increase intensity by going faster, running, using poles, going uphill, and/or by going through deeper and softer snow. The ease with which you can change the intensity level of snowshoeing is one of the keys to its great value in having fun and as a fitness option. At a minimum, snowshoeing will be a bit more intense than walking or running at any given pace or level due to the cold, weight of the snowshoes, resistance of the snow, etc.

SNOWSHOE SAFETY

Winter Can Be Unforgiving. So Be Safe.

Snowshoeing is an extremely safe sport. It is also one of the only winter-specific sports that do not depend upon sliding or speed. The manageable and maneuverable nature of modern snowshoes and the soft forgiving nature of snow combine to make the risk of

injury while snowshoeing very low. Snowshoeing involves a natural motion similar to walking, to which the body is accustomed, and is very low impact due to the cushioning of snow.



However, any wintertime outdoor activity has its risks and snowshoeing is no exception. Take care to avoid the following hazards:

- **Go With A Friend:** The “buddy system” works, especially if one of you gets in trouble. And nature was meant to be shared.
- **Thin ice:** Do not walk over frozen water unless you are sure of its safety. Even after a long freeze, a body of water may have thin spots. Be careful!
- **Hidden obstacles:** Beware of barbed wire fences, holes, or uneven terrain under the snow. Tread lightly!
- **Getting lost:** You can usually follow your tracks out but beware of storms and wind that can cover them up. Always let someone know where you are and when you expect to return.
- **Wildlife:** Please keep your distance and respect their environment. The critters out there in winter have a rough enough time as it is!
- **Frost bite:** Protect all exposed appendages, especially as the temperature drops or the wind increases. Insulated gloves or mittens and thick hiking socks will keep those digits toasty, and a mask or balaclava can keep your nose from growing icicles.
- **Hypothermia:** Staying warm means keeping your body dry inside of your clothes and out. Dress properly for your time outside. Wearing a damp, sweaty, cotton t-shirt outside in the winter time can be just as chilly as falling in open water. Know your limits, stay hydrated, and bring extra layers on long outings in isolated areas.