

A guide to alpine skiing

Alpine skiing features five types of competition in two designations: speed and technical.

SPEED

Downhill

The downhill race features the longest course and the highest speeds. Each skier makes one run, and the fastest time determines the winner.



Slalom

The slalom—Norwegian for “sloping track”—features a shorter course and the quickest turns. Each skier makes two runs down two different courses, the times are added together, and the fastest time determines the winner.



TECHNICAL

Giant slalom

The giant slalom has wider, smoother, and fewer turns and a middle-range course length. The rules are the same as slalom, with two runs down two courses and a final combined time.



Super giant slalom (super-G)

A blend of the speed of downhill with the more precise turns of the giant slalom, the super-G comprises one run and the fastest time determines the winner.



BOTH

Super combined

The original Alpine Skiing event at the 1936 Olympic Winter Games, the super combined tallies the times of a shortened downhill run and a one-run slalom, merging the speed and skill needed for both types of courses.



Course length
2.9 kilometers

Athlete's speed
90–140 kilometers/hour

Distance between gates
~67 meters

Course length
0.6 kilometers

Athlete's speed
40 kilometers/hour

Distance between gates
6–9 meters

Course length
1.3 kilometers

Athlete's speed
40 kilometers/hour

Distance between gates
~15 meters

Course length
1.9 kilometers

Athlete's speed
40 kilometers/hour

Distance between gates
~24 meters