



# CANADIAN OLYMPIC ACTIVITY CHALLENGE



## BOBSLEIGH AND SKELETON

Racing bobsleighs began in Switzerland in the 1800s as a tourist attraction for winter visitors. At first, it was done down icy local roads and laneways, but local pedestrians kept getting run over and hurt. The answer was to make a special ice track for racing.

The four-man bobsleigh was run in the first Olympic Winter Games in 1924, and the two-man was added in 1932. Women's bobsleigh was added in 2002.

Bobsleigh depends on a fast explosive start to get down the course as quickly as possible. There is a pilot to steer and a brakeman to control the speed. There are rules that limit the weight of the crew and sled. This makes it fair, because the heavier the object the faster it slides down the hill.

Bobsleigh has been one of Canada's strongest sports at the Olympic Winter Games. Canadians have won four golds, two silvers, and a bronze.

With a name like skeleton, you just know the sport is going to be scary. Athletes race head-first down an icy track, steering down the twisty track with slight shifts in their head and shoulders. The athletes push the sled with one hand, while sprinting to gain speed. They then jump on the small sled and race down the track.

Each athlete gets four runs, and their run times are added together. The fastest total time wins. Since the sport was added to the Olympic program in 2002, Canada has won two golds, a silver and a bronze.

To learn more about bobsleigh and skeleton, visit <http://www.bobsleighcanadaskelton.ca/en/>.



# BOBSLEIGH AND SKELETON TRIVIA

## HIGHLIGHTS



- Like tobogganing, the heavier the sled, the faster it will go. To make things fair for all teams, there are weight limits for the bobsleighs. The four-man can weigh 630kg, the two man can't be more than 390kg, and the women's two-man sled is limited to 340kg. Teams can add metal weights to increase their weight to the maximum amount.
- Canadian men have won the second most Olympic skeleton medals all-time. The USA has won the most.
- In bobsleigh, the athletes push the sled for about 50m before they enter the sled and race down the track. This demands speed, strength, and coordination. Many of the athletes come from other sports such as track and field or football.

## FEATURED ATHLETES



### HEATHER MOYSE ET KAILLIE HUMPHRIES

OLYMPIANS, SOCHI 2014

There is a battle brewing in the women's two-man bobsleigh. The double Olympic gold medal team of Heather Moyse and Kaillie Humphries will again be going for gold. Only this time, the two will be in different sleds. Moyse, now 39 years old, is coming out of retirement to help the young up-and-comer, Alisia Rissling learn what it takes to win gold. Alisia is a former basketball star at the University of Alberta. By the time she graduated from university, she was tired of basketball. She decided to try out for the bobsleigh team. Fast and powerful, she is a future star in the sport. Since this is her first Olympic Games, Heather's experience is exactly what she needs to win.

Learn more about these athletes at

<http://heathermoyse.com>

<http://www.bobteamhumphries.com>

[www.risslingbobsleigh.com](http://www.risslingbobsleigh.com)

# BOBSLEIGH AND SKELETON ACTIVITIES


Described below are daily bobsleigh and skeleton physical activities that can be used in the gym. Have fun!

## GYM BENCH BOBSLEIGH

Bobsleigh teams must work together at the start to push the sled to speed and then to jump in the sled as fast as possible. This activity simulates this start with equipment available in most gyms.

 **Participants:** teams of 4

 **Space:** gym

 **Equipment:** 2 gymnastics mats and a gym bench per team, 2 pylons

### SET UP:

Set up the gym according to this diagram:



Place the bench on top of 2 gym mats with the slippery side of the mats facing down. The Velcro strips should be facing upwards.

### ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- The teams line up behind the starting pylon. The front student (the pilot) is positioned on the left of the bench. The second student is on the right and the third is on the left. The last student (brakeman) is on the right.
- Student grip the edge of the bench and wait for the start.
- On “go” the students push the bench from start pylon to the finish pylon as fast as they can. When they reach the finish, they must sit on the bench in the order and sequence of their sled, starting with the pilot and ending with the brakeman.
- If the bench slides off the mats or they fail to sit in the order and sequence of their sled, the team is disqualified.

### ACTIVITY EXTENSION:

- Have the teams do 4 timed runs and add the times together like in a real competition.

# GET IN THE SLED

The start of the bobsleigh race is one of the most critical parts of the race. The athletes in the four man event push the sled to high speeds and then jump in to ride down the track. The first person to jump into the sled is the pilot, who steers the sled to hold a fast line around the corners. The next two athletes to jump into the sled are crew. The last person in the sled is the brakeman. The brakeman slows the sled to a stop at the bottom. Getting into the sled at high speeds is important for getting a fast start. In this activity, students practise sprinting with their group down the gym, then sitting on the floor in a specific sequence as described above.



**Participants:** groups of 4



**Space:** gym or playground



**Equipment:** 2 pylons per team to mark the start/finish and turn around point.

## SET UP:

- For each team, set out a pylon for the start/finish and a turn around point.

## ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- Designate a role for each person on each team (pilot, 2 crew, and brakeman).
- On “go” each team races to their pylon, turns around, and races back to the finish line.
- The teams then sit in the order of their sled (pilot, crew, crew, brakeman), with their legs wrapped around the waist of the person in front of them.
- The first team to “get in the sled” wins.


## ACTIVITY EXTENSION:


- Give each student a number between 1-4. As they are running the course, yell out the order that they must “get in the sled” (e.g., “2,4,1,3” or “4,2,3,1”).

# SKELETON SCOOTER BOARD RACE

Skeleton is a fast and exciting sport where the athletes race on small sleds head first. They must use their balance and body placement to steer down the track. In this activity, we will simulate the feeling of racing head first by riding towed scooter boards.

 **Participants:** pairs

 **Space:** gym

 **Equipment:** pairs to have a scooter board, a skipping rope, 2 pylons and a hockey or bike helmet.

## SET UP:

- Attach the skipping rope to one of the scooter board handles.
- Set out the pylons to mark the exchange at the other end of the gym. Ideally, there are multiple scooter boards, helmets, and skipping ropes, enabling more than one pair to race at a time.

## ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- One student puts on the helmet, and lies on the scooter board on their stomach. The other member of their team grabs the tow rope and stands in front of the scooter board.
- Remind the students to keep their chin up and eyes looking forward.
- On “go” the student is towed to the turn-around pylon at the far end of the gym.
- When they reach the pylon, the student who rode the scooter board takes off their helmet, and changes places with the towing student.

## ACTIVITY EXTENSION:

- Add pylons to the course to make some corners..

# BRINGING IT TO THE CLASSROOM

Skeleton and bobsleigh are dangerous sports, and the athletes wear helmets for protection. The skeleton helmets are often decorated with images or illustrations that are meaningful to the athletes. Designs from Sochi 2014 can be seen at <http://www.yellmagazine.com/pic-yell-this-braiiins-2014-sochi-olympics/78115/>.

Using the helmet handout, design your own skeleton helmet.

## INSTANT ACTIVITY:

Only have a minute of classroom time to get up and be active? This activity will get the heart pumping. Bobsleigh and Skeleton athletes need arm and shoulder strength to push their sleds to full speed. Chair Dips are an easy way to build this strength in a classroom.

Stand with your back to a chair (or bench). Reach behind you, and place your hands on the seat of the chair. Extend your legs forward so that most of your weight is supported by your arms and shoulders. Bend your elbows to lower yourself. Your elbows should form an angle close a bit less than 90 degrees. Now straighten your elbows. How many Chair Dips can you do in a minute?

# DESIGN YOUR OWN RACING HELMET

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