



CANADIAN OLYMPIC ACTIVITY CHALLENGE



BIATHLON

Starting in the 1700s, Norwegian army units held contests that combined rifle shooting and cross-country skiing. Over time, these contests became the modern sport of biathlon. The sport made its Olympic debut at the Squaw Valley 1960 Games.

After each lap of cross-country skiing, the biathlete stops to shoot at five targets. They alternate shooting positions between prone (lying down on the ground) and standing. The athletes shoot twenty targets in the longer distance races and 10 targets in the Sprint and Relay. In the Pursuit, the top 60 biathletes from the sprint start in their order of finish, and pursue or chase the Sprint gold medalist. In the Mass Start, the top 30 World Cup biathletes and the Olympic medal winners all start together.

Missing a target in the Individual race earns the athlete a 1 minute time penalty. In all the other races, they must ski a 150m penalty lap for each missed target. Depending on the event, the winner is the athlete with the best time or the first across the finish.

In PyeongChang, there will be 2 relay events: the Mixed Relay (2 men/2 women) and the Regular Relay for both men and women (4 athletes). Each athlete skis 3 laps and shoots twice. They then tag the next skier on their team who completes their portion of the race.

Myriam Bedard won Canada's only Olympic biathlon medals (2 golds and a bronze).

To learn more about biathlon, visit www.biathloncanada.ca.



BIATHLON TRIVIA

HIGHLIGHTS



Jean-Phillipe Le Guellec

- Biathletes shoot a small-bore rifle (.22LR). It weighs at least 3.5 kg, excluding the weight of the bullets. The shooting range is 50m long, and when shooting in a prone position the targets are only 45mm wide. That's almost like shooting a tennis ball from one end of an NHL hockey rink to the other.
- The European countries have dominated the Olympic Biathlon. At Sochi 2014, Jean-Phillipe Le Guellec placed 5th in the men's 10k sprint. This is the best-ever finish for a Canadian male biathlete. All three of Canada's biathlon medals were won in the 1990s by Myriam Bédard.
- Although Biathlon was added to the Olympic Winter Games in 1960, it wasn't until 1992 that women could compete.

FEATURED ATHLETES



NATHAN SMITH

OLYMPIANS, SOTCHI 2014

Nathan Smith started cross-country skiing when he was 10 years old. But the excitement of shooting and skiing got him to try his club's biathlon program. He had great success when he was young, winning a relay bronze at the 2005 World Junior Championships. His hard work moved him to the top ranks as a senior. In 2016, he took the World Championship silver in the 10k pursuit and won a World Cup competition. This was the first time a Canadian male biathlete had ever won a medal at this level. He is an accurate shooter who moves quickly from shooting back to skiing. Look for him to race well in PyeongChang.

Learn more about Nathan at www.olympic.ca.

BIATHLON

ACTIVITIES


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

PRONE SHOOTING RELAY

Biathletes must move quickly from skiing to shooting. When they are shooting in a prone position, they take the rifle off their back and lie in the prone position. This activity will simulate this rapid action.

 **Participants:** teams of 4

 **Space:** gym

 **Equipment:** 1 pylon, 2 bean bags and a target for each team. The targets can be empty pop bottles, aluminum cans, etc.

SET UP:

- Use one of the gym lines as the start/finish line.
- Set out pylons 8m from the opposite end of the gym.
- Set up the targets 5m beyond the pylon and towards gym wall.

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Biathletes shooting from the prone position lie flat on their front with their legs apart. They support the upper body with one arm, and stretch the other out in front.



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:


- Line up each team behind the start. The first person of each team has 2 bean bags in their hands.
- On “go”, the first member of each team runs to the pylon and lies in the prone position.
- They then throw the bean bags at the target. If they hit the target, they set up the target, grab the bean bags and run back to tag the next person on their team.
- Divide students into pairs. Assign each student within a pair to be the Lead or the Second. Lead student begins at the throwing line, facing the targets.


ACTIVITY EXTENSION:


- Increase the size and/or weight of the object being thrown.
- Decrease the size of the targets and/or increase the distance of the objects from the throwing line.

STANDING SHOOTING RACE

The cross-country skiing portion of biathlon raises the athlete's heart rate and gets them breathing very hard. When they ski into the shooting range, they must calm their breathing because breathing hard will make the rifle move up and down and often all around. They must hold their breath before firing. This activity gets students practicing this part of the sport.

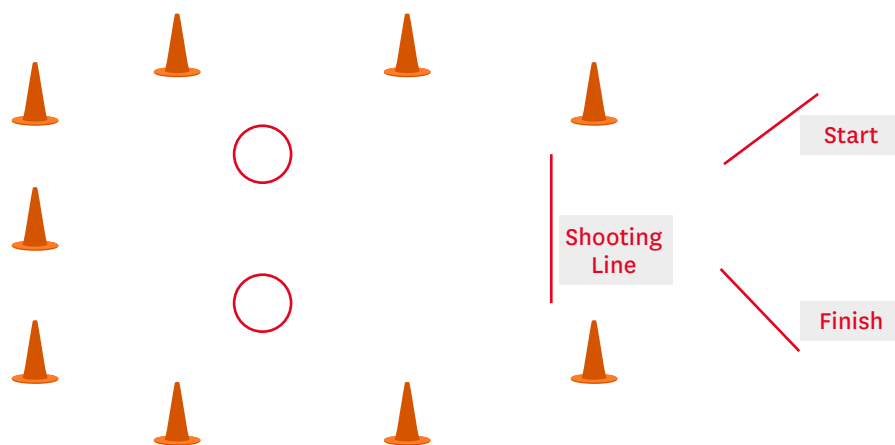
 **Participants:** individuals

 **Space:** gym

 **Equipment:** 5 bean bags and one hula hoop per team, 8-10 pylons.

SET UP:

Set up a race course and shooting range as pictured.



THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Biathletes alternate shooting from a prone and a standing position. When shooting from a standing position, they place their feet shoulder width apart, with one foot at a 90° angle to the target. They keep their legs extended and knees relaxed. The head is straight and looking at the target.



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- Individuals race head-to-head for time.
- On “go”, two students run around the loop from the start to the shooting range.
- They shoot the bean bags from a standing position, aiming at the hoola hoops. They must hold their breath for 2 seconds before releasing the shot (throw).
- Have the rest of the class count the 2 second breath holding.
- If they miss any of the targets, they have to do 5 push ups as their penalty. If they get all the targets, they have to finish by crossing the finish line.
- Time each athlete and let them try to beat their personal best time.


ACTIVITY EXTENSION:


- Run the races as a relay.
- Alternate shooting from a prone and a standing position

SOCK SLIDER RELAYS

Biathletes use the skate skiing or glide technique. Students can try this out in a gym by using sliding shoes covers or thick wool socks. The technique is much like hockey skating, where the skier pushes out to the side with their non-sliding foot (see the picture below). This activity lets students learn to transfer their weight from foot to foot in a skating technique.

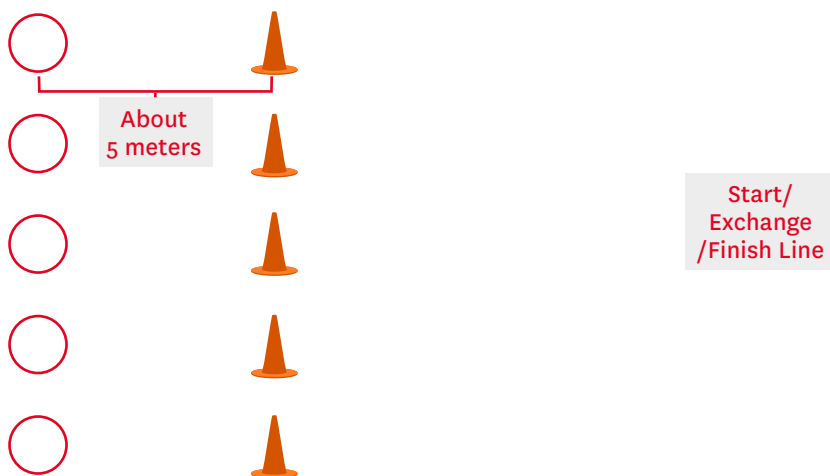
 **Participants:** teams of 4

 **Space:** gym

 **Equipment:** 5 bean bags, 1 pylon, 1 hula hoop, and 1 pair of thick wool socks or shoe sliders per team.

SET UP:

Set up the gym as per the illustration.



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

- On “go” the first student from each team puts on the thick wool socks and slides to the pylon.
- At the line, the student picks up the bean bags and shoots from the standing position.
- Once they have shot the 3 bean bags, they run to the hula hoop to retrieve the bean bags and return them to the shooting line.
- They must circle the hula hoop once for every missed shot.
- They race back to the exchange line, remove the socks and tag the next person in their team.
- The race ends when the last team member completes their leg.



ACTIVITY EXTENSION:

- Alternate shooting from a prone and standing position.
- Introduce the breath control, requiring that students hold their breath for 2 seconds before each shot.

BRINGING IT TO THE CLASSROOM

Often biathletes will train at altitude (above sea-level). Using the Internet for research, write a paragraph describing why they do this. What benefit do endurance athletes get from training high in the mountains?

INSTANT ACTIVITY:

Only have a minute of classroom time to get up and be active? This activity will get the heart pumping. Biathletes alternate shooting in a standing and a prone position (lying down). Burpees develop the core strength they need to quickly move into the prone position.

The Burpee has four parts. Start by doing a push up. When complete, bring your knees up under your chest. Next, jump up, reaching for the sky. Lastly, crouch down and return to the push up position. How many can you do in 30 seconds?
