



Competition Format and Rules

Formato e regole gara / Format et règlement des compétitions
As of FRI 30 JAN 2026

Olympic Competition Format

The cross-country skiing programme for the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 comprises 12 events:

Event	Technique	Start
Women's 10km Interval Start Free	Free	Interval 30"
Men's 10km Interval Start Free	Free	Interval 30"
Women's 10km + 10km Skiathlon	Classic/Free	Mass
Men's 10km + 10km Skiathlon	Classic/Free	Mass
Women's 4 x 7.5km Relay	Classic/Free	Mass
Men's 4 x 7.5km Relay	Classic/Free	Mass
Women's 50km Mass Start Classic	Classic	Mass
Men's 50km Mass Start Classic	Classic	Mass
Women's Sprint Classic	Classic	Interval 15"/Mass
Men's Sprint Classic	Classic	Interval 15"/Mass
Women's Team Sprint Free	Free	Mass
Men's Team Sprint Free	Free	Mass

Interval Start

Athletes start at intervals of 30 or 15 seconds depending on the event. The starting order for the Interval Start is set according to a grouping system of four groups. Depending on the athletes' rankings in the current Distance World Cup standings, their distance FIS points and, if applicable, their start slot determined by draw, the starting order is defined.

The athlete with the fastest individual time wins.

Mass Start

In distance mass start as well as skiathlon events, the top 15 athletes of the current Distance World Cup standings are lined up in top positions along the angled start line, arrow shape start line or flat start line. The current overall World Cup leader starts in pole position, the most favourable position. All remaining athletes are assigned start positions according to their distance FIS points.

Athletes start simultaneously, lined up in rows. The first athlete to cross the finish line wins the race.

Skiathlon Events

Skiathlon events are raced with a mass start and include both techniques - classic and free - within the same race. The race is started in classic technique and upon entering the stadium after half of the race, the skis and poles are exchanged in the exchange (pit) boxes and the second half of the race is skied in free technique.

The first athlete to cross the finish line wins the race.

Relay Events

Each NOC enters a team of four athletes. The first two skiers compete in classic technique with the other two skiers racing with the free technique. Each athlete skis a leg of the race and then tags off to a teammate. The relay event is held as a mass start. The starting order is determined by the placing in the previous Nordic World Ski Championships (WSC).

Sprint Events

The sprint event begins with individual time trials on the competition course with a 15-second interval start. The starting order for the interval start of sprint qualification is set according to a grouping system of three groups. Depending on the



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athletes' rankings in the current Sprint World Cup standings, their sprint FIS points and, if applicable, their start slot determined by a draw, the starting order is defined.

The fastest 30 athletes advance to the quarterfinals consisting of five heats of six athletes each. The top two finishers in each quarterfinal heat, and the two fastest athletes from the quarterfinals that did not place first or second in their heat (lucky losers), advance to the two semifinals of six athletes each. The top two finishers in each semifinal heat, and the two fastest athletes from the semifinals that did not place first or second in their heat (lucky losers), advance to the final of six athletes.

Team Sprint Events

The team sprint events consist of qualification and final rounds. A team consists of two athletes (A and B) that pass the relay to each other three times (A, B, A, B, A, B). In the qualification there are two laps (one for each team member) and in the final six laps (three for each team member)

In the qualification, athletes start individually, usually at intervals of fifteen (15) seconds. The athletes entered for the first leg start before the athletes entered for the second leg. Their times will be summed and will determine the results of the qualification round.

The final round consists of one heat of 15 teams. The start positions for the finals will be determined by the results of the qualification round.

Differences between the FIS Nordic World Championships and the Olympic Winter Games

There are different participation quotas and higher qualification criteria for the Olympic Winter Games than for the International Ski and Snowboard Federation (FIS) Nordic World Championships.

Changes since the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022

Distance and/or technique have been changed in all the events.

The number of seeded athletes has changed to 15 for all events.

The format of Team Sprint Qualification events has been changed, and the number of teams in the final increased to 15.

Fluorine waxes are no longer allowed.

Sport Rules and Procedures

Courses

For the different distances, the FIS homologation rules require that the courses include a certain criteria of uphill sections to ensure challenging and safe competitions.

Tracks

The tracks must be 4-9m wide. For the classic technique, the track must be prepared with classic tracks (two parallel grooves).

Techniques

Cross-country skiing is raced in two techniques. In the classic technique, the skis are prepared with kick wax (in the middle portion of the skis) which grips when in contact with the snow and allows the athlete to ski in diagonal or classic style. In the free technique, the skis are prepared with only glide wax and forward motion is created by using the edges of the skis, also called skating. In both techniques the athletes use ski poles to improve their forward propulsion.

Starting Order

Interval start events: the seeding and starting order are defined in the World Cup rules.

Mass start events: athletes start in a mass start lined up in rows according to previous results (overall World Cup leader, current distance FIS World Cup Standings and FIS points list) with the best athletes starting in the first positions.

Relay events: teams start in a mass start lined up in rows according to:



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- Their results from the previous FIS Nordic World Championships
- A draw for those who did not participate in the previous FIS Nordic World Championships

Individual time trials (qualifications) of sprint events: the best 30 athletes according to the current sprint FIS World Cup Standings are drawn in one group, while the others start according to their position in the FIS points list.

Finals of Sprint events: athletes will start the quarterfinals, semifinals and the final according to the progression rules.

Team Sprint events: in the qualification, athletes start individually. In the final, teams start in a mass start lined up in rows according to their team total FIS points (the sum of the FIS points of both athletes).

Entries - Substitution

Relay events

For every competition, the team captain may initially enter four athletes. In case of force majeure (for example, illness of a team member), a team member can be replaced up until two hours before the race. The substitute athlete must start in the same team position as the substituted athlete. The team's starting order cannot be changed.

Team sprint

Substitution is possible only before the qualification round. The substitution cannot change the starting order of the members of the team.

Mass start

The substitute athlete must start in the same position as the substituted athlete if their FIS points are the same or better than those of the replaced athlete. If their FIS points are worse they must start at the end of the field.

Interval start

The substitute athlete's start position will be determined by the jury.

Tie Break Rules

Interval start events: if athletes share the same time, they will share the same rank.

Mass start events: if the photo-finish cannot break the tie, athletes or teams will share the same rank.

Individual time trials (qualifications) of sprint events: if the tie occurs in the group of athletes qualified for finals, the tie is broken using the athletes' sprint FIS points. If a tie remains, then the positions are determined by a draw. Ties in qualification results will not change the maximum number of 30 qualified athletes.

Athletes with the same qualification time who did not advance to the quarterfinals will have the same ranking on the result list.

Quarterfinal and semifinal heats of sprint events: in case of a tie (dead heat) in quarterfinals or semifinals, the athlete with the better qualification time is ranked ahead. If the photo-finish cannot break the tie for positions five and six (lucky losers), the tie is broken using their qualification times. If the tie remains, the current sprint FIS points will apply; if a tie still remains, then the positions are determined by a draw.

Athletes with the same rank in the quarterfinals or semifinals who do not reach the next round are ranked according to their qualification times in the final results.

Final heat of sprint events: if the photo-finish cannot break the tie, athletes will share the same rank.

Qualification of team sprint events: in case of a tie for the 15th place after the qualification, the tie is broken using the team total FIS points; if the tie remains, then the positions are determined by a draw. Ties in qualification results will not change the maximum number of 15 qualified teams.

Final round of team sprint events: if the photo-finish cannot break the tie, athletes will share the same rank.



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Penalties / Disqualification Rules

Lapping

An athlete or a team lapped during the mass start races is required to leave the competition immediately but will be ranked according to their position at the last timing point.

Written reprimand (yellow card)

A written reprimand should be used for all infractions of the rules that do not lead to a clear advantage for the offender. An athlete may receive a yellow card during competition (e.g. for a false start in the sprint, or obstruction of another athlete in the competition). A second yellow card leads to disqualification in the event in which it occurred. Yellow cards issued before the OWG are not valid during the OWG - all athletes have zero yellow cards at the start of the OWG. Yellow cards remain with the athlete for all events during the Games.

Disqualification rules
Disqualification is used for major infractions and for infractions with a clear impact on the final result of a competition. An athlete may be disqualified, for example, for using free technique in a classic race or for intentionally obstructing another athlete.

Competition Suspension

Competition suspension can only be used for rules infractions during sprint heats. In sprint competitions, a competition suspension means that the athlete will be ranked last in the heat and last in the round (6th for final, 12th for semifinals and 30th for quarterfinals). Competition suspension will always be accompanied by a written reprimand (yellow card).

Protests / Appeals

A protest must be submitted in writing within 15 minutes after publication of unofficial results. The National Ski Associations (NSAs) and/or team captains are authorised to submit protests. During quarterfinals and semifinals of the sprint it is not possible to submit a protest.

An appeal can be made against all decisions of the jury or against the official result lists. Appeals must be submitted to FIS by the NSA within 48 hours of the publication of the official results list.

Note:
For further information please consult: www.fis-ski.com