

Position Paper

Health Protection and Winter Tourism

Austrian Ski Schools



Safeskiing at a distance!

#safeskiing

#Austrianskischools

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Preamble:

- ✓ In preparation for the upcoming winter season, Austrian ski schools are seeking to provide their guests with lessons that are as safe as possible, with particular reference to Covid-19.
- ✓ **The Federal Government's guidelines form the basis for ski schools' activities.**
- ✓ Austrian ski schools will ensure that minimum social distancing (also referred to as "baby elephant" in Austria) is adhered to – between snowsports instructors/staff and their guests, between snowsports instructors/staff themselves and between snowsports instructors/staff and other people.
- ✓ Where keeping to minimum social distancing is not possible, face coverings must always be worn by everyone concerned (snowsports instructors, staff, ski school guests). Children under the age of 6 are exempt.
- ✓ Austrian ski schools will ensure that no sick snowsports instructor goes to work.
- ✓ The fastest possible contact tracing in a confirmed case of COVID-19 is of great importance. Austrian ski schools will ensure that ski school guests are registered, taking into account data protection legislation.
- The Austrian Ski School Association represents the interests of the regional ski instructor associations and thus the interests of Austrian ski schools and all snowsports instructors working in them. There are currently more than 18,000 snowsports instructors working in 679 ski schools in Austria.
- The success of the Austrian ski school system depends in many cases on in-person contact between snowsports instructors and ski school guests. Almost no other Austrian winter tourism stakeholder spends more holiday time with their guests. We should note here that around 70% of all ski school guests are children, who require especially intensive supervision, meaning that contact between snowsports instructors and children as ski school guests is very close.

Terminology:

- **Ski schools:** Austrian ski schools are comprehensive snowsports providers offering alpine skiing, snowboarding, cross country skiing, ski touring and currently snowsport trends.
- **Snowsports lessons:** Covers all areas of snowsports instruction such as alpine skiing, snowboarding, cross country skiing, ski touring and snowsport trends.
- **Snowsports instructors:** Denotes all teachers in ski schools providing lessons in alpine skiing, snowboarding, cross country skiing, ski touring or snowsport trends.
- **Ski school guests:** Denotes ski school customers for the various snowsports.
- **Staff:** Alongside the ski instructors, Austrian ski schools also employ admin staff, front office workers in the ski school offices, child care workers, manual workers and auxiliary workers.

The legal basis for ski school operation

(Excerpt)

- The provision of paid-for ski lessons (specifically alpine skiing, snowboarding, cross country skiing, ski touring, sport trends) is regulated by law and the sole domain of the ski schools.
- An official permit (ski school permit) is required to operate a ski school.
- Holders of a ski school permit are authorised to employ teachers (snowsports instructors) to provide ski lessons, whereby the ski school proprietor must verify the prescribed qualifications of the instructor etc.
- Instructors at a ski school must ensure that the physical safety of the guests is not compromised and must carry the equipment required for the provision of first aid.
- The ski school proprietor must allocate his guests to receive ski instruction in a group commensurate with their skiing ability. When leading or accompanying people on ski tours and on off-piste descents, the ski school proprietor must specify the maximum number of guests to be led or accompanied, taking into account their ability and the degree of difficulty of the planned ski tour and/or descent so that the physical safety of guests is guaranteed.
- The ski school proprietor must manage the ski school in person and supervise the instructors. They must also take out sufficient liability insurance for each instructor and each child care worker.
- Holders of a ski school permit are authorised to construct and operate the equipment necessary for providing snowsports lessons, in particular to beginners and children, such as ski conveyor belts, ski carousels and so on, and the equipment required for supervising the children at the time and place related to the issuance of ski lessons for children.

The legal provisions – in slightly varying forms – can be found in the Federal States' ski school laws.

Ski school office / assembly points

It is mandatory for every ski school to have a ski school office (as a contact point for the ski school guests) and an assembly point (for dividing the ski school guests into ability classes).

Proprietors of "one-person ski school permits" are exempt from this.

Children's (adventure) worlds / "warm-up rooms" / nurseries / children's restaurants

As guests of the Austrian ski schools, children play a large and important role. The ski schools look after and teach children as young as toddlers.

Many ski schools provide their own children's (adventure) worlds with their own lifts (magic carpet, conveyor belts etc.), which are separate from the public pistes.

These children's (adventure) worlds usually have rooms where the children can warm up, take breaks or be looked after without taking part in ski lessons (ski-school nurseries).

Some ski schools also provide lunch in their own children's restaurants in addition to their overall care provision.

COVID-19 recommendations for ski schools

I. Recommendation for ski schools

1. Ski school proprietors must create a **COVID-19 prevention concept** as part of the general ski school regulations. This prevention concept must include:
 - a) Rules on how to act in the event of COVID-19 symptoms. Specific rules that ski school staff may not go to work if they show any symptoms associated with COVID-19.
 - b) Hygiene training for snowsports instructors and customer-facing front office staff before starting work in the ski school, especially as regards the overall COVID-19 instructions for ski schools.
 - c) A hygiene and cleaning plan for ski lesson aids and teaching materials.
 - d) A hygiene and cleaning plan for the ski school offices (disinfectants for entering and exiting guests and snowsports instructors) and for any existing premises such as warm-up rooms, nurseries, restaurants and the ski school's entire sanitary facilities.
 - e) Rules that ensure minimum social distancing is observed between all ski school staff in the case of training sessions, meetings etc.
 - f) Rules that ensure minimum social distancing is observed between people from different households when entering the customer area (ski school offices). Face coverings must be worn where this is not possible.
2. Snowsports instructors arriving from abroad must provide evidence of a SARS COV2 test (PCR test) to the ski school proprietor.
3. Regular SARS COV2 testing of the snowsports instructors and any staff who come into contact with ski school guests.
4. The registration of the ski school guests taking data protection regulations into account.

5. Equipping the front office area of ski schools (ski school office – customer area) with disinfectant and a “physical barrier” or “partitions”.
6. If staff or ski school guests display symptoms or believe they are infected with COVID-19, this person must be immediately separated from other people. The medical advice helpline must then be contacted by calling 1450 (corona hotline) to clarify the issue further.
7. The online booking options for ski courses will be especially highlighted and promoted on the ski schools’ marketing platforms.
8. Ski school guests must be informed of the existing hygiene measures and rules such as hand washing, hand disinfection, behaviour when coughing and sneezing, social distancing, wearing of face coverings etc. in an appropriate manner.

Symptoms associated with COVID-19 are:

Any kind of an acute respiratory infection (with or without a fever) with at least one of the following symptoms, for which there is no other plausible cause:

- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath
- Sudden loss of taste / smell

II. Recommendations for snowsports instructors

1. All teachers working within the scope of ski lessons are obliged to implement and abide by these COVID-19 recommendations for ski schools in a responsible and independent manner.
2. Should a snowsports teacher feel unwell, specifically in the presence of COVID-19 associated symptoms, they may not undertake any snowsports lessons and must stay at home. The medical advice helpline must then be contacted by calling 1450 (corona hotline).
3. Social distancing must be maintained between people from more than one household. Where keeping to minimum social distancing is not possible, face coverings must always be worn by everyone concerned (snowsports instructors, staff, ski school guests). Children under the age of 6 are exempt.
4. It should be explained to ski school guests that they must not attend if they are displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19. Ski school guests should be given the corona hotline number – 1450.
5. If ski school guests display symptoms or believe they are infected with COVID-19 during snowsports lessons, they must be immediately separated from other people. The medical advice helpline must then be contacted by calling 1450 (corona hotline) to clarify the issue further.
6. All snowsports instructors must wash their hands thoroughly several times a day.
7. Snowsports lesson aids should be given to and used by one person only. They should then be cleaned after the lesson.
8. Snowsports instructors must always carry a face covering, hand sanitiser and surgical gloves for use in first aid when required (such as skiing accidents), alongside the materials necessary for providing assistance.
9. In particular, the applicable COVID-19 regulations for accommodation and cable car companies used as part of snowsports lessons should be noted and all snowsports instructors taking part in snowsports lessons should follow them.

III. Recommendation for practical snowsports lessons / general

1. In order to facilitate compliance with the social distancing rules (minimum 1m distance), it is recommended to select a manageable group size and to subsequently maintain the original composition of this group. Legal provisions concerning group size must be adhered to.

Recommendation: **Max. 10 people** including the snowsports instructor per group

2. Assembly points should be large so that compliance with minimum social distancing is possible.
3. Rules should be made at the assembly points to ensure that minimum social distancing can be observed between the snowsports instructor and their group, and between the groups themselves.
4. Where keeping to minimum social distancing is not possible, face coverings must always be worn by everyone concerned (snowsports instructors, staff, ski school guests). Children under the age of 6 are exempt.
5. Courses should be planned and designed so that the number of people in one place is minimised.
6. When using cable cars, it is important to ensure that ski school guests abide by the cable car regulations.
7. Face coverings must be worn in cases where moving closer than the 1 metre minimum distance is necessary, such as providing urgent aid as part of the snowsports lesson or for providing aid after a fall (helping someone up etc.).

IV. Recommendation for practical snowsports lessons / children's (adventure) worlds

1. Children as young as toddler age and up are taught and cared for in the children's (adventure) worlds / nursery areas. Where there is a largely automatic distance between snowsports instructor and guest for adults, i.e. the length of the skis, social distancing is naturally often not adhered to by children.
2. Adherence to minimum social distancing must be ensured by the snowsports instructor. As this cannot always be ensured (see introduction), snowsports instructors in this part of the ski school must always carry a face covering so that they can immediately use this protective measure when not adhering to minimum social distancing.
3. Otherwise, the recommendation for snowsports instructors (pt. II) and the recommendation for practical snowsports lessons / general (pt. II) apply to snowsports lessons.

V. Recommendation for supervising children inside ski nurseries

Basic findings:

Austrian ski schools provide childcare as well as snowsports lessons.

The Federal Government's rules are used and/or adapted for ski school provision as a recommendation for Austrian ski schools:

1. Symptoms:

In the case of someone displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19: Call the corona hotline on 1450, inform the parents and immediately separate the person concerned from others.

If staff, children, parents or other relatives feel unwell, they must stay away from the ski school's childcare facility.

2. General hygiene recommendations:

For entering the nursery / warm-up room / restaurant:

Staff should inform parents that they can only drop their children off at the ski school's childcare facility if the children are healthy and do not feel unwell.

Prevent bottlenecks when dropping off and/or picking up children, staggered arrivals.

Maintain a distance of one metre between parents and staff and between parents themselves.

Ski school staff and parents must wear face coverings when talking to one another.

Washing hands: After entering the facility: Children min. 30 seconds.

Provide hand sanitiser for children and store out of the reach of the children.

Everyday teaching:

Provide age-appropriate education on hygiene (coughing/sneezing...).

Maintain social distancing, if possible, taking account of the child's needs for closeness and security.

Hand washing: regularly throughout the day.

Avoid changing groups, groups should be kept as small as possible and not altered, jointly used areas should not be used by more than one group.

Avoid external contacts.

Maximise time and movement outdoors where possible.

Clean toys after contact with saliva etc.

Face coverings for children are not recommended in nurseries.

Indoor areas (day rooms, in-house restaurant areas):

Ensure hygiene in sanitary facilities, no shared use of drinking containers, dummies etc.

Disinfect the rooms – especially objects, door handles and so on; use disinfectant wipes rather than spray.

Regular ventilation (at least once an hour, cross ventilation if possible).

3. Recommended guidelines for Austrian ski schools:

Everyone involved with childcare inside ski school nurseries are obliged to responsibly and independently follow and implement these COVID-19 recommendations.

In the case of symptoms such as: fever, coughing, sore throat, shortness of breath, sudden loss of taste/smell:

- Call 1450
- Inform the ski school manager by phone

Immediately and consistently implement quarantine measures for the contact person.

“Air lock” in the entrance area – no direct contact between parents and ski school staff.

Drop off and pick up times to be as broad as possible to avoid cloakroom bottlenecks.

Disinfectant wipes for nursery furniture.

Exclusive use of toys and furniture that can be properly cleaned.

Wash toys twice a day.

Clean cosy corners and nap spots.

Childcare should be mainly outdoor and only indoors if necessary or there are no other options.

Stagger joint meal/snack times, or provide them on multiple tables, in the ski nursery premises outside of children’s restaurants.

4. Additional recommendations for ski schools with in-house children's restaurants

Stagger joint meal/snack times or provide them on multiple tables.

Child-appropriate instructions to maintain the minimum 1 metre social distancing using table talkers, signs, boards, floor markings or other aids in the entrance of the children's restaurant.

Ensure minimum distancing of 1 metre between the chairs.

If the food is served to the table, ensure that the minimum 1 metre social distancing is adhered to between the children.

Clean the tables, chair backs and armrests, and/or change the tablecloth, after eating.

Clean trays, if used, after each use.

Ski school staff involved in the children's restaurant must wear a face covering when serving food.

Any measures taken in indoor premises and sanitary facilities should be carried out in accordance with point 2 "General hygiene recommendations".

Staff working in ski school children's restaurants must independently implement and comply with all other measures in this COVID-19 recommendation.

VI. Recommendation for staff

1. All staff are obliged to implement and abide by these COVID-19 recommendations for ski schools in a responsible and independent manner.
2. Should a member of staff feel unwell, specifically in the presence of COVID-19 associated symptoms, they may not come to work/the ski school and must stay at home.
3. Social distancing must be maintained between people from more than one household. Face coverings must be worn where this is not possible.
4. The front office staff in the ski school office should explain to ski school guests that they must not attend if they are displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19. Ski school guests should be given the corona hotline number – 1450.
5. All staff must wash their hands thoroughly several times a day.
6. Customer-facing staff, e.g. in the front office area of the ski school office, must be behind a physical barrier or divider separating them from ski school guests/customers or wear a face covering.

VII. Note – regulation position

These COVID-19 recommendations were created based on the Federal Government's current regulation position and will be adapted in response to changes or new Federal Government requirements.

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