ROYAL CANADIAN ARMY CADETS

GOLD STAR

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

SECTION 5

EO M426.02D – SNOWSHOE ALONG A ROUTE

Total Time: 270 min

PREPARATION

PRE-LESSON INSTRUCTIONS

Resources needed for the delivery of this lesson are listed in the lesson specification located in A-CR-CCP-704/PG-001, *Gold Star Qualification Standard and Plan*, Chapter 4. Specific uses for said resources are identified throughout the instructional guide within the TP for which they are required.

Review the lesson content and become familiar with the material prior to delivering the lesson.

PRE-LESSON ASSIGNMENT

Nil.

APPROACH

An interactive lecture was chosen for TP 1 to introduce and give direction on the types of snow that may be encountered when snowshoeing.

A demonstration and performance was chosen for TPs 2 and 3 as it allows the instructor to explain and demonstrate the procedure for fitting snowshoes and executing snowshoe techniques while providing an opportunity for the cadet to practice the skills.

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

Nil.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson the cadet shall have practiced snowshoe techniques along a route.

IMPORTANCE

It is important for cadets to snowshoe along a route by using different snowshoe techniques so they will be prepared for the technical challenges, when given the opportunity to participate in more advanced level expeditions. Snowshoeing along a trail or predetermined route requires the individual to be aware of their surroundings, their limitations and the limitations of the group they are travelling with. Knowing different types of snow conditions provides the snowshoer with the information to make a decision as to whether the snow conditions are safe enough to continue.

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Teaching point 1 **Discuss types of snow.**

Time: 10 min Method: Interactive Lecture



Cadets will be expected to snowshoe during an expedition. While travelling, it is possible to travel across many different types of snow. Being aware of what type of snow one is travelling on will help to increase awareness of how their footing will react to the condition of the snow.

If cross-country skiing was chosen as a mode of travel and was instructed prior to this EO, types of snow have already been discussed. If that is the case, conduct a quick review bringing attention to how snow can affect snowshoeing.

Point out examples of different types of snow that exist in the surrounding environment.

TYPES OF SNOW

Snow and ice conditions change with heating and cooling, and are largely affected by the weather. With a change in conditions speed of travel may be affected.

New fallen snow. Very loose and light. The snowflakes still have multiple branches. If new snow is dry, it is feathery; if damp, it quickly consolidates into a stage of settled snow. When this snow is damp, it can be difficult to snowshoe on. When dry and fluffy, this snow is easy to snowshoe on.

Powder snow. New, untouched freshly fallen soft snow. It can give the feeling of floating in a weightless environment. Powder snow can be packed in thick layers that form a natural pillow. Powder snow has a low moisture content, as almost 97 percent of it is air. In coastal regions, where there is higher humidity, the snow is heavier than in a continental region. Powder snow compacts easily, supporting the weight of the snowshoer. This is a good type of snow to snowshoe on.

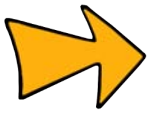
Wind-packed snow. Snow blown from one direction, compacted by the force of the wind. Wind-packed snow is created by the pressure exerted by wind, causing a form of cold-heat hardening. In some areas, the snow surface is strong enough to hold the weight of a person on snowshoes. This snow is good to snowshoe on.

Sun crust snow. Snow that has had the upper layer melt and then refreeze. Usually on top of powder snow, sun crust snow is stronger than the powder snow below it due to the refreezing. This snow can be dangerous to snowshoe on if on a slope; the crust may give and a person may lose their footing. Snowshoeing on a flat surface over sun crust snow can be difficult as the snowshoe breaks through the crust and can hook into the crust on the return. The constant hooking and breaking in sun crusted snow can tire the snowshoer.

Sun crust snow is not very stable on a slope and can be dangerous when weighted. The snow will give way causing a fall or a slide.

Corn snow. After thawing, corn snow occurs. The structure of the snow is very grainy at this point. Corn snow usually occurs in the spring, and can be strong enough to carry weight but it also can indicate the presence of rotten snow, which is very dangerous. Corn snow is produced during the cycle of melting and refreezing in the accumulated snow. Caution should be taken when snowshoeing on this type of snow, especially in mountainous or hilly terrain.

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A layer of snow that has been sun crusted will become corn snow.

Rotten snow. Caused by repeated melting and freezing and is found mostly on the south side of hills, or in lower levels of snow. Water will seep to the lower layers and will not freeze because it is insulated from the weather by the covering snow layer. Rotten snow can resemble very small icicles, or candle ice. This snow is dangerous. Sudden drops may exists and holes develop under the surface of the snow. Falling and injury are highly possible.

Slush snow. When the air temperature becomes warmer than the freezing point, the snow begins to melt and the water content becomes high. Slush snow absorbs water from melting snow. Slush snow is recognizable by depressions in the snow with darker or bluish snow areas. These areas show holes in the ice or an accumulation of water on the surface of the ice. Snowshoeing on this type of snow can be dangerous since the chance of stepping into a large puddle or slipping by loss of traction exists.

CONFIRMATION OF TEACHING POINT 1

QUESTIONS:

Q1. What type of snow is loose and light?

Q2. Describe wind-packed snow.

Q3. What is rotten snow?

ANTICIPATED ANSWERS:

A1. New fallen snow is loose and light.

A2. Snow blown from one direction, compacted by the force of the wind. Wind-packed snow is created by the pressure exerted by wind, causing a form of cold-heat hardening. In some areas, the snow surface is strong enough to hold the weight of a person on snowshoes. This snow is good to snowshoe on.

A3. Rotten snow is snow found on the south side of hills, or in lower levels of snow. It is caused by repeated melting and freezing.

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Teaching point 2 **Explain, demonstrate and have the cadets fit personal snowshoe equipment.**

Time: 15 min Method: Demonstration and Performance



For this TP it is recommended that instruction take the following format:

(1) Explain the importance of selecting and properly fitting snowshoe equipment.

(2) Explain and demonstrate the selection of snowshoe size and how size affects carrying capacity.

(3) Have cadets select and size snowshoes.

(4) Explain, demonstrate and have the cadets fit snowshoe bindings.

(5) Explain, demonstrate and have the cadets select and properly size poles.

(6) Once each cadet has selected snowshoe equipment, label all equipment with masking tape.

Note: Assistant instructors may be used to monitor the cadets' performance.



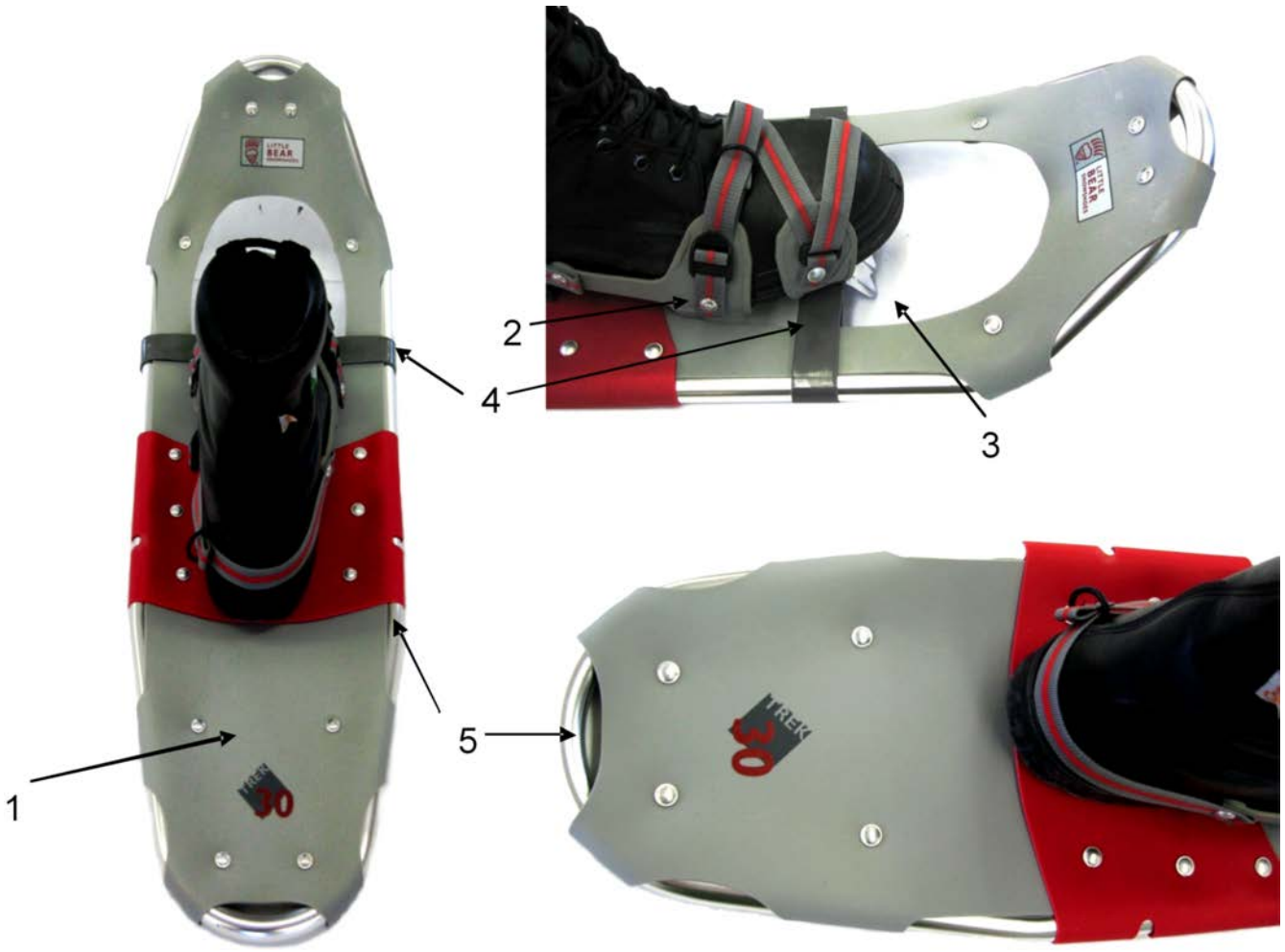
The standard snowshoe may vary between expedition centres. Check the manufacturers' specifications for sizing and holding capacity.

SNOWSHOES

Snowshoe size is dictated by a person's total weight including body, pack, boots, and clothing.

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Parts of a Snowshoe



Note. Created by Director Cadets 3, 2009, Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence.

Figure 1 Parts of a Snowshoe

1. **Deck.** The part of the snowshoe that supports a person's weight on the snow. It can be webbed or solid and is made from a variety of materials depending on the manufacture.

2. **Binding.** Connects the boot to the snowshoe. When worn, the bindings should be secure but comfortable.

3. **Crampon.** Attached below the pivot point. When weighted, the crampon digs into the surface below it and provides traction to the snowshoer.

4. **Pivot point.** Allows the foot to rotate with a natural arc when walking. To engage the crampon, rotate the pivot point forward with pressure from the ball of the foot—this provides more traction when digging into the surface below.

5. **Frame.** This is the part of the snowshoe that makes up the skeletal shape. It can be made of metal or wood and functions as the seat for the bindings and crampons. A snowshoe with a strong frame will last a long time.

Selecting Snowshoes

The chart below is a rough guide to follow when in a standard condition of wet powder snow.

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If in between weight categories:

- Select the smaller snowshoe if expecting to encounter heavy snow.
- Select the larger snowshoe if travelling through deep backcountry powder.

Snowshoe Size	Carrying Capacity
20 cm by 56 cm (8 inch by 22 inch)	68 kg (150 lbs)
20 cm by 63 cm (8 inch by 25 inch)	90 kg (200 lbs)
22 cm by 43 cm (9 inch by 34 inch)	113 kg (250 lbs)
24 cm by 86 cm (9.5 inch by 36 inch)	136 kg (300 lbs)

The smaller the snowshoe, the better it will be for climbing over blow downs (fallen trees and bushes) and through brush. The larger the snowshoe, the better flotation on top of snow.

BINDINGS

The binding attaches the foot to the snowshoe securely, preventing the heel from sliding from side to side, even when travelling across a slope. Bindings most often fit a wide range of boots sizes. In any category of snowshoe, the binding should be made of hardy, flexible rubberized nylon straps, with buckles that do not loosen or freeze and are easily manipulated even when wearing mittens. The bindings must not be fastened too tightly where circulation may be cut off, as the chances of frostbite will increase.

During rest breaks, bindings should be checked for fit and possible readjustment.



Types of bindings include:

Fixed rotation. Lifts the snowshoe tail up with the foot. These tend to throw snow onto the snowshoer's back, but are better when climbing over forest obstacles.

Free rotation. Will not lift the snowshoe tail up with the foot. The extended tails may get hung up in vegetation or downed trees. Military issue snowshoes have free rotation bindings.

The binding on most snowshoes connects to the pivot point.



Snowshoe bindings may be different at each expedition centre. The following guide to fit bindings is a description on how military issued bindings are fitted. When using civilian bindings, check the manufacturers' specifications and present those instructions to the cadets.

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It is much easier to make binding adjustments when not wearing the snowshoes.

Adjusting the Binding (Harness)

Snowshoe bindings (harnesses) need to be adjusted to fit the boot / mukluks. Improper fit can result in a snowshoe falling off on the trail and poor foot placement on the snowshoes. Bindings (harnesses) should hinge freely up and down, with the toe of the boot / mukluk fitting through the toe hole in the snowshoe and the ball of the foot directly over the toe cord.

Adjust the Bindings (Harnesses) to the Boot / Mukluk

1. Resize the toe strap by undoing the tie down strap from the tie down buckle.

2. Reweave the tie down strap through the webbing on the snowshoe to either loosen or tighten the toe strap to the size of the mukluk.

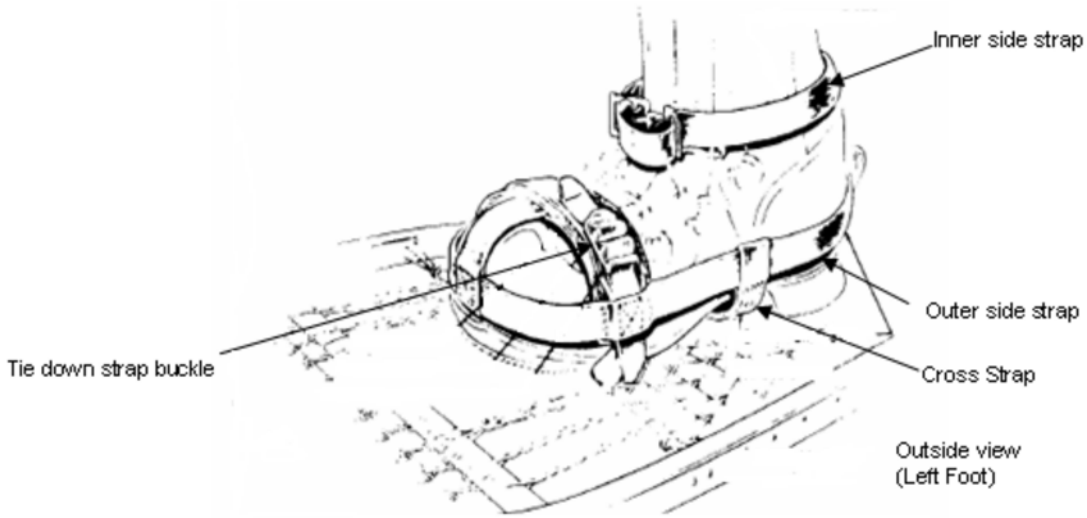
3. Fasten the tie down strap through the tie down buckle.

To prevent the toe strap from slipping up over the toe of the mukluk, the toe strap should be tied down to the front mesh of the snowshoe using a 20-cm piece of heavy duty twine.

Attaching the Snowshoe to the Boot / Mukluk

1. Position the boot / mukluk in the toe strap, with the cross strap under the instep.

2. Bring the inside part of the side strap back diagonally up over the heel and around the outside of the boot / mukluk (as illustrated in Figure 2).

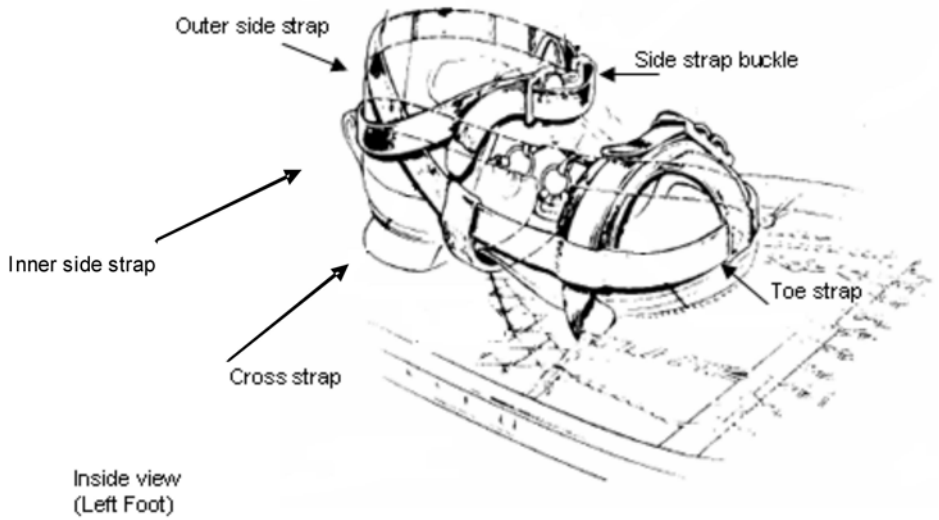


Note. From Artic and Sub Artic Operations Volume 2 Basic Cold Weather Training (p. 5-44), by Chief of the Defence Staff, 1974, Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence. Copyright 1975 by Department of National Defence.

Figure 2 Attaching Harness to the Boot / Muckluk

3. Bring the outside part of the side strap back and around the lower part of the heel, around the inside of the boot / mukluk, crossing over the inner side strap, with the buckle located over the boot / mukluk laces, as illustrated in Figure 3.

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Note. From Artic and Sub Artic Operations Volume 2 Basic Cold Weather Training (p. 5-45), by Chief of the Defence Staff, 1974, Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence. Copyright 1975 by Department of National Defence.

Figure 3 Attaching Harness to a Boot

POLES

Telescoping trekking poles are the most versatile choice for snowshoeing. These poles provide better balance and reduce the amount of stress on the knees, shoulders and back. They absorb some of the impact the body would otherwise absorb. The poles, rather than the body, absorb shock, reduce arm and leg fatigue and improve endurance. While snowshoeing, they help a person keep balance while climbing inclines or when backing out of an area in deep snow. Although trekking poles are generally not required when snowshoeing, they are a helpful accessory.



Note. From Wintergoodies.com, 2007, Hiking, Trekking & Walking Pole Adjustable, Copyright 2007 by Wintergoodies.com. Retrieved April 12, 2007, from http://www.winterbrookgoodies.com/pd_swissgear_hiking_trekking_walking_pole.cfm

Figure 4 Telescoping Trekking Pole

Sizing a Pole

Sizing poles to fit a snowshoer requires the user to stand up straight and hold the pole close to the body. The pole when held upright should come to a height in-between the middle of the chest and slightly below the armpit. Adjust the trekking pole accordingly until it is sized to the snowshoer.

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CONFIRMATION OF TEACHING POINT 2

The cadets' fitting of personal snowshoe equipment will serve as the confirmation of this TP.

Teaching point 3 **Explain, demonstrate and have the cadets practice snowshoe techniques along a route.**

Time: 235 min Method: Demonstration and Performance



Cadets shall be given detailed instruction on how to complete each snowshoe technique.

For each technique explain, demonstrate and have the cadets practice the movement.

Cadets shall perform each technique at a level of proficiency that will allow successful completion of the route to be travelled prior to departing.

SNOWSHOE TECHNIQUES

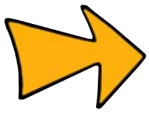
Snowshoeing is a very easy skill to learn. People can immediately walk on snowshoes even if they have never worn them before. However, there are techniques that will greatly improve these abilities while snowshoeing over snow-covered terrain.

STRIDING

To conserve energy when snowshoeing on soft snow, lift the snowshoe to clear the snow and thrust forward to complete each pace.

The rest step allows for momentary pauses between steps. With practice, one can adjust the length of the pause to the state of fatigue. As one steps forward, thrust the front snowshoe out and let it plop down, or stamp it firmly into place. Straighten and lock the rear knee joint so the tendons and cartilage are holding weight and pause and relax the thigh muscles, using the poles to maintain balance. Bring the rear leg ahead, thrust the snowshoe out, place it, lock what is now the rear leg, relax momentarily and repeat.

The effect is to rest the legs during the time they are actually working hard. A couple of seconds of work with a couple of seconds of rest make it possible to keep going steadily without long stops.



Novice snowshoers have a tendency to look down at the snowshoes when they walk. They will adapt more quickly to snowshoeing if they keep their head and eyes up, and look forward, down the trail.

Executing Kick Turns



Kick turns are performed when conditions exist where there is not enough room to perform a normal 180-degree stepping turn. Remind cadets to always assess the area and perform a normal 180-degree steeping turn when they can; it is safer and less accidental falls and twists will occur.

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Kick turns are performed when a change in direction is required. It is commonly used in an enclosed area along the trail. The steps in performing a kick turn are:

1. Lift one leg and swing it back, and then kick it forward and upward.
2. At the top of the kick, just as the tail of the snowshoe clears the snow, turn the foot 180 degrees.
3. Lower and plant the foot in the snow, with the front of the foot facing to the rear.
4. Shift the body weight to the foot facing 180 degrees to the rear and then lift the other foot.
5. Bring the foot over the trailing edge of the planted snowshoe and face the new direction.

Crossing Obstacles

Obstacles such as fallen trees, logs, tree stumps, ditches and small streams can be stepped over. Care must be taken not to place too much strain on the snowshoe ends by bridging a gap, since the frame may break. In shallow snow, there is a danger of catching and tearing the webbing on tree stumps or snags that are only slightly covered.

Never bridge two obstacles together with the snowshoes. When jumping over obstacles do not let the tails of the snowshoes fall downward. If the tail of the snowshoe is vertical upon landing, it will strike the snow first and may result in a fall. When possible, find an alternate route around the obstacle.

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Verify against the official publication.

Bridging. When the toe and tail of the snowshoe are placed on two elevated objects and the entire weight of the snowshoer is fitted on the webbing of the snowshoe.



Note. From Snowshoeing: From Novice to Master (p. 46), by G. Prater, 2002, Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers Books. Copyright 2002 by The Mountaineers Books.

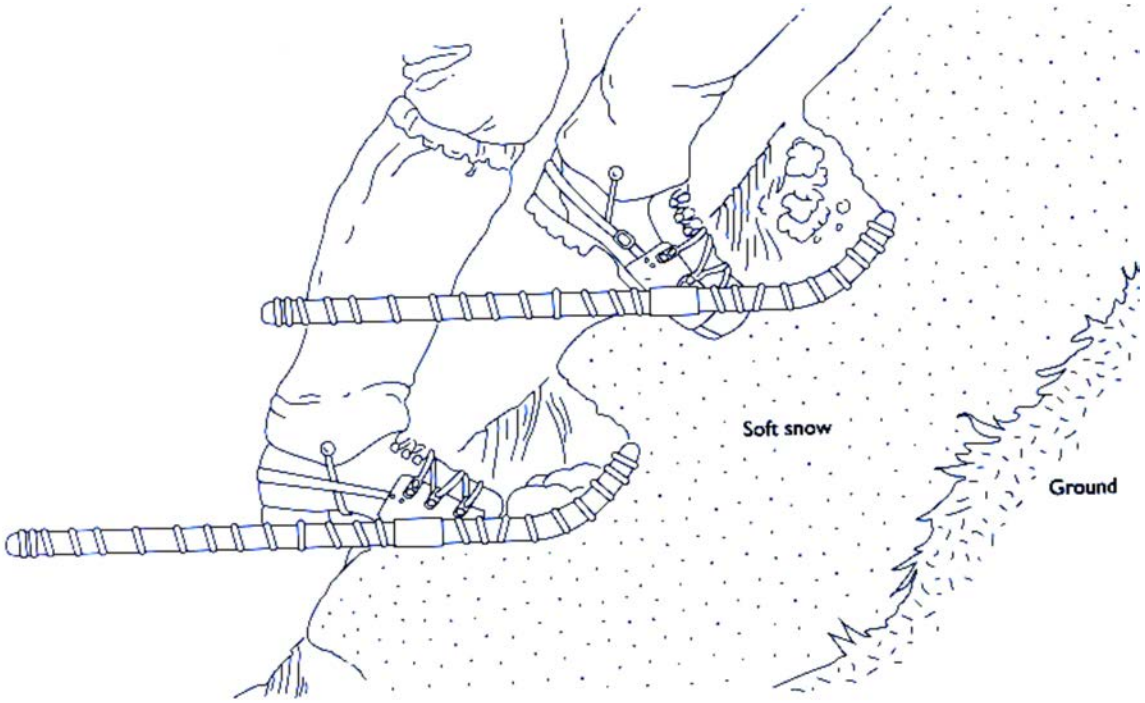
Figure 5 Bridging

Ascending Hills

The method chosen to walk uphill will depend on the angle of the incline and the condition of the snow. The following techniques can be used when navigating uphill.

Step kick. When going straight up a hill, this is the most efficient method on firm or hard packed snow where traction is not a concern. Kick the toe of the snowshoe in the snow ensuring that it is firmly planted before shifting weight to the snowshoe.

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Verify against the official publication.



Note. From Snowshoeing: From Novice to Master (p. 114), by G. Prater, 2002, Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers Books. Copyright 2002 by The Mountaineers Books.

Figure 6 Step Kick

Edging. Performed by simply kicking the snowshoe sideways into the slope, or moving the boot heel as far toward the uphill side of the slope as possible. Stamp the snowshoe down, forcing the outside edge of the snowshoe into the slope. When edging, the body will be perpendicular to the slope. It is used when walking up a steep slope.

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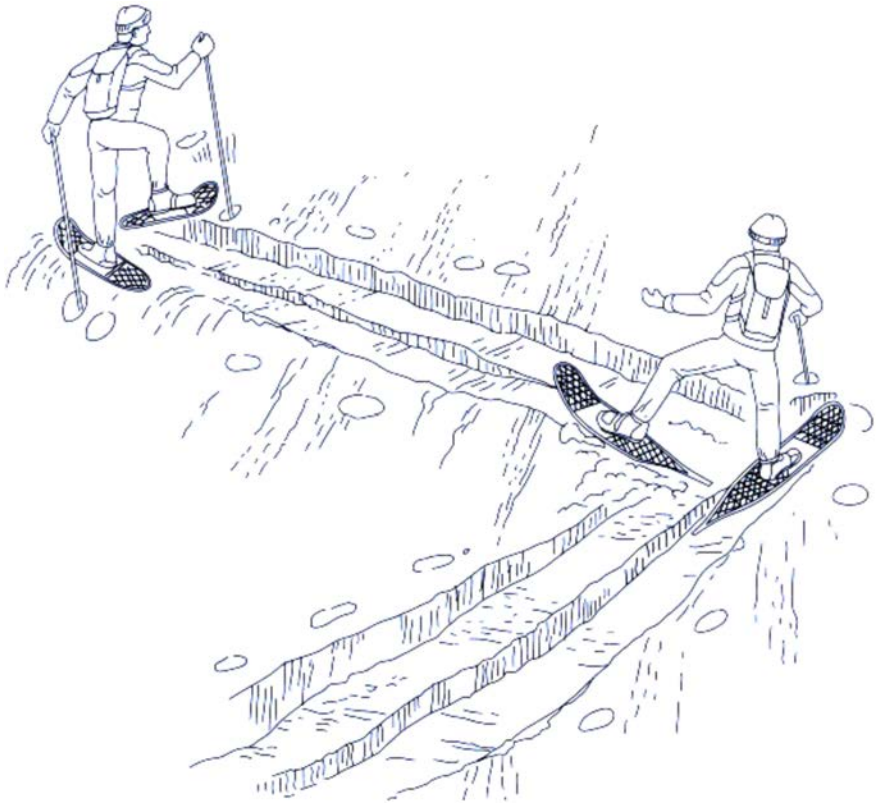


Note. From Snowshoeing: From Novice to Master (p. 113), by G. Prater, 2002, Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers Books. Copyright 2002 by The Mountaineers Books.

Figure 7 Edging

Switchbacking. Used to travel a slope that is fairly steep and is covered in deep powder snow. Ascend the hill by walking across the slope at an angle that is comfortable and not steep enough to allow the snowshoes to slip. To turn back (switchback) to the right, firmly stamp the left snowshoe in the snow and make sure it will hold. Shift the weight to the left foot, face the slope, and then swing the right snowshoe around to point it in the direction of the next switchback and firmly stamp it into the snow. Ensure that the tail of the right snowshoe is not placed on the left snowshoe. Stamp the right web into the snow and gently shift the body weight and step on it. To make a left turn, reverse the procedure.

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Verify against the official publication.



Note. From Snowshoeing: From Novice to Master (p. 110), by G. Prater, 2002, Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers Books. Copyright 2002 by The Mountaineers Books.

Figure 8 Switchbacking

Descending Hills

The method that is chosen to walk downhill will depend on the angle of the incline and the condition of the snow. The same techniques for ascending hills are used to descend. When descending a hill a person should follow the following guidelines:

- Do not lean forward by bending at the waist. This is a normal tendency for beginners and will increase the chance of falling forward.
- Avoid leaning back on the snowshoes, as if digging in the heels. This will increase the chance of the snowshoes sliding out from under the snowshoer.
- To assume a safe posture, stand straight up; balance the body straight over the foot; and slightly bend the knees to compensate for changes, and then relax.

Breaking Snow

In loose snow, the trailbreaker may have several extra pounds of snow on the snowshoes. The snow falls on top of the webbing when walking and sinking in deep snow. This extra weight will exhaust the trailbreaker at a faster rate than the followers. When the trailbreaker feels they can no longer move forward at a progressive pace, they should step to the side and drop to the rear as the rest of the party moves past.

Trailbreakers, depending on the depth of the snow and the terrain being covered should only break trail for 2–5 minutes.

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ACTIVITY

Time: 200 min

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this activity is to have the cadets, in teams of no more than six, snowshoe along a route with an expedition field pack, to include:

- adjusting stride;
- performing a kick-turn;
- crossing obstacles applicable to the terrain;
- ascending a hill;
- descending a hill; and
- breaking snow.

RESOURCES

- Personal expedition equipment,
- Personal snowshoe equipment,
- Group snowshoe equipment, and
- Water carrier (one per cadet).

ACTIVITY LAYOUT

Nil.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Conduct a briefing to include an explanation of:
    a. the objectives and importance of the activity,
    b. the resources that may be required to perform the activity, and
    c. any safety guidelines that must be followed while performing the activity.
2. Have the cadets retrieve their snowshoes and packs.
3. Have the cadets put on their snowshoes and packs.
4. Have the cadets, in teams of no more than six, snowshoe with an expedition field pack, following the designated route during an expedition to practice:
    a. adjusting stride;
    b. performing a kick-turn;
    c. crossing obstacles applicable to the terrain;
    d. ascending a hill;

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e. descending a hill; and

f. breaking snow.

5. Upon arrival at the end point, have the cadets remove, clean and inspect snowshoes for damage and then properly store / return all equipment.

6. Conduct a debriefing by asking the cadets:

a. how they felt about the activity;

b. how they felt their team worked together;

c. what portion of the activity challenged them the most;

d. how their teammates assisted them when they were challenged;

e. if there are any specific examples of when their team bonded;

f. how the team made decisions;

g. whether or not all team members ideas / suggestions were considered; and

h. what they would do as a leader of this type of activity to ensure their subordinates enjoyed the experience.

SAFETY

- Each team will be led by the assigned team leader.
- The Team Instructor(s) (TI) must be in sight or sound of the team at all times.
- In areas of complex / technical terrain TI(s) will demonstrate requisite skills as required.
- Teams will travel separately on the same trail.
- There will be a minimum of 500 m between teams at all times.
- Cadets must travel in single file at all times.
- Cadets must have at least 1 L of water.
- Water resupply points will be located along the route.
- Meals will be provided at a predetermined location(s) and detailed in the route instructions.

CONFIRMATION OF TEACHING POINT 3

The cadets' participation in the activity will serve as the confirmation of this TP.

END OF LESSON CONFIRMATION

The cadets' participation in snowshoeing along a route will serve as the confirmation of this lesson.

CONCLUSION

HOMEWORK / READING / PRACTICE

Nil.

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METHOD OF EVALUATION

This EO is assessed IAW A-CR-CCP-704/PG-001, *Gold Star Qualification Standard and Plan*, Chapter 3, Annex B, 426 PC.

CLOSING STATEMENT

Snowshoeing is one of the dynamic modes of transport that can be used during expedition training. It is critical that the cadets are given the opportunity to practice snowshoe techniques along designated routes to prepare them for more advanced snowshoeing experiences. Being aware of sharing the trailbreaking task and implementing the rest step while snowshoeing will ensure a more enjoyable snowshoeing experience for the individual and the team / group. When travelling the possibility of encountering obstacles is quite great, so it is important that all members understand how to safely cross them.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES / REMARKS

Expedition centres are required to select two dynamic modes of travel from EO M426.02a (Paddle a Canoe), EO M426.02b (Ride a Mountain Bike), EO M426.02c (Hike Along a Route), EO M426.02d (Snowshoe Along a Route) and EO M426.02e (Ski Along a Route) to incorporate into the expedition training.

This EO has been allocated nine periods in the overall course period allocation. Each expedition centre may adjust this allocation to reflect the choice of activities, facilities and available resources at the expedition centre.

Upon arrival at the expedition centre, cadets will be divided into teams. Cadets will be given an opportunity to navigate and lead peers. These teams will remain the same for the duration of the weekend.

Total distance for the snowshoe route can be adjusted depending on terrain and level of skill of participants.

The following equipment is required when snowshoeing:

1. personal snowshoe equipment, to include:
    a. snowshoes,
    b. bindings,
    c. poles,
    d. whistle, and
    e. appropriate cold-weather clothing; and
2. group snowshoe equipment, to include:
    a. topographical / trail map of area as required,
    b. compass,
    c. first aid kit,
    d. communication device (eg, cellular phone or hand-held radio),
    e. GPS receiver, and
    f. cold weather emergency kit appropriate to the activity.

IAW A-CR-CCP-930/AG-001, *Cadet Program Interim Activity Safety Direction* weather must be continuously assessed. Training should cease and cadets must be brought inside if the temperature gets too low (consider wind chill).

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Verify against the official publication.

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