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CATS Trails in Winter

Thank you for using Champlain Area Trails in winter. **To help you pick a trail to explore**, here is a list describing levels of difficulty for cross-country skiing (*numbers are from CATS' 2014-2015 Trail Map*). We recommend using showshoes or skis in snow deeper than 4 inches to prevent "postholing." Page 2 has winter trail etiquette.

CATS trails are good for snowshoeing and most provide enjoyable cross-country skiing with some trails being more challenging than others. The easy trails are relatively level or on old roads. Moderate have some steeper slopes and can be narrower. Difficult trails are steep and narrow. The asterisk connotes highest recommendations for easy trails.

Easy cross-country skiing

3. Big Woods Trail
4. Noblewood Park Trail
5. Florence Hathaway Park Nature Trail
- *6. Ancient Oaks Trail
7. McAuliffe Rd Trail
8. Brookfield Headwaters Trail
- *15. Bobcat Trail
- *34. Hidden Quarry Trail
35. Crown Point Historic Site

Difficult cross-country skiing

1. Poke-O-Moonshine Trail
2. Rattlesnake Mt Trail
10. Rocky Ledges Trail
11. Wildway Overlook Trail
13. Black Kettle Nature Trail
20. Split Rock Wild Forest Trails
28. Cheney Mt Trail

Moderate cross-country skiing

9. Boquet Mt Trail
14. Beaver Flow Trail
- 16 & 17. Field & Forest Trails
18. Split Rock Wild Forest Trails
23. Woods & Swale Trail
25. DaCy Meadow Trail
26. Mountain Spring Rd Trail
27. Barlett Pond – McConley Rd Trail
32. Blueberry Hill Trails
37. Coot Hill
43. Penfield Pond Trail
44. Old Ironville Rd Trail

Snowshoes, Postholing, and Winter Trail Etiquette

(adapted from Section Hiker – Hiking and Backpacking for Beginners and Experts)

Use snowshoes or skis in snow deeper than 4 inches

It's a common courtesy among winter hikers to wear snowshoes when hiking on winter trails that are covered in unpacked snow deeper than 4 inches. Hikers who don't wear snowshoes usually posthole, plunging knee or waist deep into the snow and creating a deep hole that other hikers passing by the same spot might fall into. This can lead to serious leg injuries, but is easily avoided if everyone using the same trails uses floatation like snowshoes or skis.

Trails that have been cratered by someone postholing are extremely annoying to walk on. It's a lot like playing the game Twister while walking across a minefield. Plus, you have to scratch your head, and ask why anyone would want to posthole in winter because it is so exhausting, not to mention dangerous, because a single person postholing alone can easily become trapped in deep snow. Before you set off on a winter trail covered in unpacked snow, take the time to equip yourself properly with snowshoes and other winter gear so that you can be self-sufficient and not put others at risk if you need to be rescued.

Snowshoers should stay off ski tracks

But hikers aren't the only ones using winter trails, especially where cross-country skiing is popular too. Postholing and snowshoeing in existing cross-country ski tracks is also frowned upon because it's disrespectful to the person who broke the ski track in the first place and will wreck the track, making it much harder and less enjoyable for skiers to ski back on.

When snowshoeing along ski tracks, snowshoers should walk outside an established ski track or create a parallel track next to an existing ski track. That way both snowshoers and cross-country skiers can enjoy the winter trail system in their own way, without conflict or ill will. There's plenty of snow for all of us to enjoy.