

Ski Pole Length: Andrew Gardner

It should come up to your nose.

It should come to the mustache.

It should fit in your armpits.

Eye level, baby.

One should be about forehead length, the other to your waist.

Short of Voodoo, midnight invocations of the ski-pole gods, or common sense, just about every type of ski-pole length for every ski discipline has been tried. Per Erik Vold, a designer at Swix www.swixsport.com and the man responsible for gluing the new baskets to the new pole shafts for the big dogs on the newest Star poles sat with tired expression and explained to me how a particularly finicky Swedish skier wanted a ski-pole in one centimeter increment between 148 and 153 for skate and similar sizes for classic as well. "I can't believe he could notice the difference". Every wax room worth its citrus solvent has posters of skate-skiing's infant years replete with poles fit to hold up telephone wire and arms wild enough to make Steve Martin look reserved. Subsequent seasons have yielded shorter poles, cleaner technique and fewer gangly photographs but the guidelines for pole lengths still aren't completely pieced together. When picking a ski pole, one should take into account a number of things, among them technique, ability, terrain, and financial constraints.

Classic technique is straightforward. Long has the armpit held the secret of the classic ski pole. There are centimeter approximations that correspond with an individual's height (those are listed below) but technique for classic dictates the ski pole reach the near end of the humerus (the upper arm bone) in the crook of the arm where the upper bicep meets the subscapularis. Somewhere in this area is the sweet spot for classic skiing. It is sage to begin with a lengthy pole and move down. Skiers beginning will always be better off with a slightly shorter pole; it is easier to handle, lighter and less likely to create technique anomalies than a pole that is too long. Swix poles that are ideal for high level classic racing are the silver hued Star and its younger brother, the "Team".

Skate technique has considerably more fog surrounding its pole length recommendations but a good starting point is the part of the lips. Think of the thousands of young Bill Koch skiers that have been spotted chewing on their pole straps! In all seriousness, anything longer is detrimental to your ability to plant and return the pole. Length does not necessarily equal might. In fact, should you be of the budding class of skiers that is moving towards specialization, there are different pole recommendations for different techniques used. Slightly shorter pole in the sprint can be useful in quickening turnover. Some World Cup skiers are shortening their poles approximately one centimeter from typical skating length. Classic sprinters are leaving poles unchanged.

This article is meant to serve as a starting point yet there is no hard and fast data available to describe what will feel the best for you. Be mindful in pole selection and flexible enough to change your pole length if you need to. If all else fails, be the first to move to the single pole cut from a large tree- pointed on either end, ala the Scandinavian

lumberjack. Just be certain to take careful calculations about the length of said tree, grain type, bark consistency and so on.

Poles should be sized with shoes or ski boot on with poles tip on solid floor, or with skis on with the pole tip on the ski. The measurements are from the tip of the pole to the strap handle (the spot where the strap comes out of the grip. If there are any questions, the final word for a good pole reference is the skier's height minus 18-20cm for skating, minus 28-30 for classic. It is better to error on the side of short poles than long.

HEIGHT -- POLE LENGTH

Inches, cm -- Skate / Classic

4' 11" ,150 cm -- 130 /120

5' 0" , 152 cm -- 132 /122

5' 1" , 155 cm --135 /125

5' 2" ,157 cm --137 /127

5' 3" ,160 cm -- 140 /130

5' 4" ,162 cm --142 /132

5' 5" ,165 cm --145 /135

5' 6" ,167 cm -- 147 /137

5' 7" ,170 cm -- 150 /140

5' 8" ,172 cm -- 152 /142

5' 9" ,175 cm -- 155 /145

5' 10" , 178 cm -- 157 /147

5' 11" ,180 cm -- 160 /150

6' 0" ,182 cm -- 162 /152

6' 1" ,185 cm -- 165 /155

6' 2" ,187 cm -- 167 /157

6' 3" ,190 cm -- 170 /160

6' 4" ,192 cm -- 172 /162

6' 5" ,195 cm -- 175 /165