

A Luge Primer for Parents

A cooperative document from the Calgary and Maple Leaf Luge Clubs

Welcome to the luge community in Calgary. We hope that you will get involved, ask questions, and have some fun. The luge community in Calgary is small so come on out and meet some new people and you will probably bump into both current, and former Olympians. The domestic program is the direct feeder into the international levels, so interacting with the senior athletes is a unique experience and often a big motivator for the younger athletes.

The purpose of this document is to provide you with some information about the sport and the organizations involved. As this document is in it's infancy, we'd love feedback to make it better.

Shelina Wardrope
President
Calgary Luge Club
Email: shelinawardrope@shaw.ca

Eric Pothier
President
Maple Leaf Luge Club
Email: president@MLLC.ca

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Background Info for Parents:

What is luge?

Luge is one of the three sliding disciplines including Bobsleigh and Skeleton. Although sliding of various types has been a winter activity since the mid-1500's, it wasn't until the early 20th century that sliding sports were born. We would direct you to Wikipedia as it has a reasonably informative and concise history of luge.

What is the organizational structure of luge?



The Maple Leaf Luge Club (MLLC)

- Is a new entity and will become a major funding arm of the domestic program
- Its members consist of the novice sliders and luge alumni (Completing the Circle of Luge if you will)

The Calgary Luge Club (CLC)

- Is a major funding arm of the domestic sliding program
- Its members consist of the development, junior and senior level sliders
- Upkeep and maintenance of the passenger van used on trips

The Alberta Luge Association (ALA)

- Is a major funding arm of the domestic sliding program
- All sliders from both MLLC and CLC need memberships for insurance
- Hires Coaches
- Negotiates track time
- Upkeep and maintenance of the cube van

The Canadian Luge Association (CLA)

- Designing the overall sliding program
- Helps mentor the Coaching Staff

- Sled technology
- Senior and junior team funding

How is the domestic luge program funded?

- Athlete fees
- Provincial sporting grant
- Fundraising

ALA and CLC have casinos every 18-24 months and these bring in the bulk of the fundraising money. MLLC is gaining the fundraising experience necessary to apply for a casino. Other major fundraisers include the (Oil) Patch for Luge and the Pub Night and Silent Auction. ALA also has 10 bingos during the year which bring in approximately \$15,000 annually. There are also several smaller fundraisers during the year where your child can earn funds to be used directly to their travelling costs.

Despite all of the fundraising, the domestic sliding program remains very expensive to run (for example, track time is >\$300/hour) and it is a constant battle to balance fees with a good sliding program. It is estimated that each domestic slider is subsidized ~60% of the actual cost of sliding. Naturally, if you have any further ideas for fundraising or would like to sponsor the program we would love to talk to you.

Volunteer Commitments

Volunteers don't just do the work ~ they make it work.
-Carol Pettit

To run a successful program, many volunteer hours are needed to both run the program and fund raise. Every slider registration comes with a volunteer commitment, divided up into program volunteering and fundraising volunteering. There are a wide variety of skills required and many opportunities to be engaged. Volunteers are needed for everything from staffing public luge, to officiating at races, to organizing fundraisers, to working World Cup events, and serving on club executives. This commitment varies depending on your child's. Once a week sliders are required to fill fewer volunteer spots than full program sliders.

The volunteer commitments that each of us make are *crucial* to our children's success and enjoyment. The Calgary luge community has a policy that each of us is responsible for finding a replacement if we are unable to keep our commitment.

Equipment FAQ:

What equipment does my child need?

- *Sleds* - These are built or purchased by our coaching staff, and are provided by the Luge club your child is registered with. This is included in your fees, and the coaches will fit the sled for your child based primarily on his or her height and age. *Sleds cost approximately \$2000*
- *Helmet and Visor* (\$400) - Your child will need a helmet. This does not have to be a luge specific helmet until your child progresses beyond the Junior Start, or goes on a Whistler trip. In the beginning any hard shell helmet with hard non removable ear covers is suitable (~\$50-\$100). Have the coach approve it before you throw out any receipts. If you do not have one, we are able to loan you one until you decide to purchase.

Rarely would someone move up beyond Junior Start before Christmas, if it does happen in their first year at all. Although a 12 year old novice will usually move up faster than a 9 year old. Everyone except once a week novices will be offered a chance to go to Whistler in their first year. But the bottom line is that you will have time to try things out before committing to an expensive helmet.

Visors are also not mandatory until beyond Junior start, or a trip to Whistler. They do make sliding a bit easier from Junior Start, particularly as the temperature drops. Think of the visor as your ski goggles, it keeps the wind out of your face so you can see more easily. Also, ski goggles don't work for Luge as they block your most important viewpoints.

When the time comes for a Luge specific helmet they can be ordered through the coaches. (\$400) These are very high quality UVEX helmets specific for Luge, and sold at cost. You may find a used one that is less expensive but not knowing the history of the helmet is risky. If it has been dropped or hit the helmet could be compromised. If you choose to buy a second hand helmet, you do so at your own risk. CLA or ALA will not pass down used helmets.

- *Mouth Guard* - (\$15-\$70) This compliments the helmet in preventing concussions. Shock Doctor and Under Armour are both popular and available at stores like Sport Chek. One that has a strap to attach to a helmet is best as children tend to lose them quite easily.

Clothing - Sliding can be done in layered form-fitting clothing and sneakers for the first year. It will get scuffed up! Your child will also need regular winter clothing to keep them warm during the sessions. Please no jeans or hoodies for sliding in.

-Jacket, Toque, Warm Gloves, Warm footwear that they can run around and do warm up exercises in. (Uggs, are not recommended)

Starting towards the end of first or early second year, the sliders will usually upgrade to a speed suit*. An order is made every summer, so those interested can order new (~\$150-\$250) .

**Your slider may tell you that the suits cannot be washed. Unless it is a race suit you are using for the national team, you can hand wash the suit. Dyes fill pores in the suit, making it faster; by washing you remove some dye, and sometimes separate the membrane layer in the high performance race suits. This is a very, very small amount of time compared to the duct tape patches or small holes most suits have!*

- *Gloves* – (\$30 - \$80) Batting gloves, curling gloves, cross country ski gloves, or any glove that isn't too bulky to start with. Please do not use the stretchy magic gloves or receivers gloves. Appropriate gloves permit the slider to quickly and easily get a good grip on their sled handles. Bulky winter gloves or mittens tend to get in the way, although they are good to have between runs. Mountain equipment co-op has a good selection.
- *Long Underwear* – Probably the most important after the helmet and sled once you are wearing a speed suit! Spend as you see fit, but remember they'll probably end up putting some holes in it, and or outgrowing it. Again, Mountain Equipment Co-op has a good selection.
- *Finesse Shampoo and Cloth (AKA- Goop)* – If you walk inside with your glasses on when it's cold out they fog up. The same thing happens when you breathe on a cold visor. This will make it difficult to see during your child's run. While it is a convenient excuse for bad driving, it's better to rub the shampoo on the visor to prevent it. Because cheap shampoos like Finesse contain glycerin, they will prevent fogging. Some people have mixed pure glycerin, or used expensive ski fog stop, but in many years and many countries with varied weather, nothing is as consistent as Finesse, and its only \$3.00!
- *Booties* – Once kids are racing for speed and not consistency they will wish to have a pair of luge specific shoes. These booties are aerodynamic shoes, with built in ankle protection. They are available as trainers (which have some traction) or race booties (faster and smaller, but with no traction). Like suits, an order is placed every summer for new (~\$150) When the time comes, a coach will likely discuss it with you.

- *Spikes* – Coaches will provide these when your child is ready for them. They are used to help propel sliders at the start once they become experienced enough. Spikes will be taped (by the coaches) to your child's sliding gloves on the first three fingers. They provide the slider a means to propel themselves at the start of the run.
- *Hockey Tape* – Used to attach the spikes to their sliding gloves. White is best as the dye in the black tends to eat into leather gloves, making it hard to tighten and replace.
- *Duct Tape*- Used to help tape down pant legs or sweaters when the kids first start out. Also used to repair any holes in your gear. Duct tape will become a very good friend
- *Tools* that are needed include Allen Keys (3mm-7mm), a flat head screwdriver, a 10 and 13mm wrench, wet dry sandpaper (400-600), A file and duct tape (lots of it!). Your coaches can go over this with you so you can make sure you have the right sizes for the sled you are assigned. This is not needed for your first session but do not delay too long. The athletes are responsible for checking their bolts. A coach will go through this with both athletes and parents. *(A sandpaper package is generally sold each year by one of the clubs and will save the hassle of collecting it yourself so ask your coach)*
- *Hand and foot warmers*- Optional disposable hand/footwarmers are used inside gloves and shoes during cold sessions. Available by the box at Costco in the fall or at any sporting store for those who desire them. (Sport Chek).
Can be purchased as a fundraiser through CLC

What are the parts of a luge sled?

LUGE (THE FRENCH WORD FOR SLED)

Steels: The steel runner is attached to the *kufen* of the sled, which contacts the ice. The 'edge' of the steel, only a millimeter wide, is the only part of the steel that actually comes in contact with the ice.



Kufen: The runner of the sled. Often made out of wood or fiberglass.

Bow: The shape built into the *kufen* and steel runner. The slight "U" shape, or arc, allows the sled to steer. When pressure is placed on the front or the back of the sled, the point where the steel touches the ice rolls forward or backward as well.

Pod: The aerodynamic shell which supports the body while going down the track. Acts like a seat. Made of fiberglass.



Bridge: The part of a sled that connects the two *kufens* together and from which the aerodynamic racing pod is suspended. Made of steel. There are two bridges, front and rear, per sled.

Track Terms and Technique

Loop: A wave like motion on a curve (dropping and rising). Created by an incorrect entrance point in a curve and/or a missing a drive. Pressure due to changing radius of a curve may cause a loop. Generally “looping” costs time, and causes problems.

Roll: A technique used to control the sled. By dropping one shoulder (applying pressure to the pod), the sled will react to the shift in balance, turning the sled in that direction.

Drive: This refers to a stronger input to the steering mechanism of the sled, which is needed to make larger direction changes, and to control the sled in curves.

Position: The ideal position while traveling down the track would be to have your head back, shoulders flush against the pod, feet high on the kufens, and to be relaxed on the sled.

Twisting: Twisting most often occurs when athletes are driving and rolling on the sled, causing a twisted body position. Because of the way sleds operate, the two motions can cancel each other out, locking the sled on its course instead of turning.

Loosing your head: The condition that occurs when an athlete cannot keep their head up in a high G-force turn. Sometimes the head may go all the way down to the ice.

Roll back/returning to neutral: An important skill when exiting corners. It is essentially a motion to end the drive off the curve, and keep the sled tracking straight at the exit, which involves bringing your body back to neutral (rolling back). It is mostly used into straights, and between left-left or right-right curve sequences.

Ping ponging: The motion of hitting multiple walls (back and forth) on the track.

Paddles: The act of pushing the sled forward using spiked gloves on the ice surface.

Kreisel: German for “Circle”, the word is used to describe a turn on a Luge course that curves back under itself.

Labyrinth: A series of three or more curves placed together with little to no straight-away in between them. On Calgary’s track, the labyrinth consists of corners 10, 11, 12 and 13.

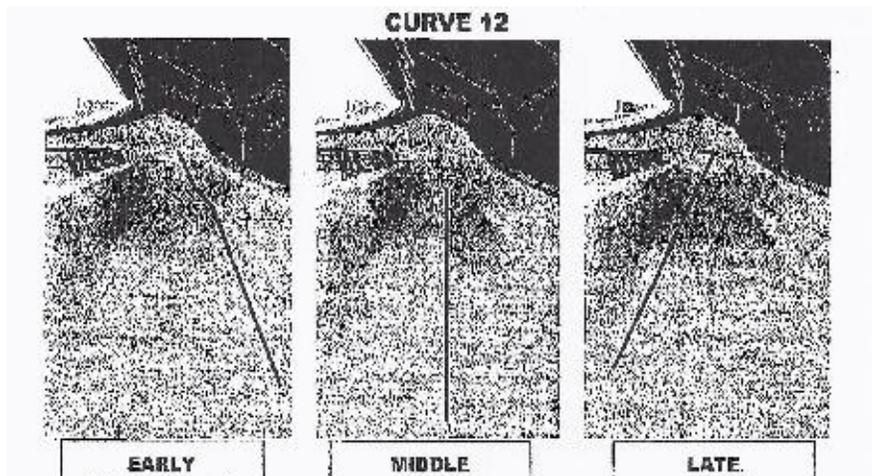
Kunstbahn: (German) an artificially refrigerated Luge track like Whistler or Calgary. Typically what you imagine when you think of Luge, Bobsleigh or Skeleton.

Line: The trajectory or route a sled takes down the track.

Late: Late is a term used when an athlete enters a corner close to the short wall in a curve. You might think of this as entering the curve from the side furthest from the vertical surface of the curve.

Middle: Entering the curve right in the middle of the track.

Early: Early refers to entering a curve too close to the vertical surface of the curve. An athlete may “bump on” by hitting the profile or radius of the curve to abruptly with an early entrance.



General FAQ:

Is there a schedule available?

Your coaches will email you a schedule when it is available. You may also check team snap.

Where do I direct questions?

Your coach should be able to answer almost all of your questions, this should be your first point of contact. Their contact info will have been provided at your registration night. Should that fail, the next point of contact would be the administrator for the domestic program Jason Hegerfeldt. Other than coaches, Jason is the only paid staff member in the domestic program. He can be reached at:

admin@albertaluge.com
403-202-6570

Why are sliding sessions limited, or sometimes not at an ideal time?

Track time is hard to get. With only 4 tracks in all of North America, track hours are at a premium. Time on the Calgary track is split between Bobsleigh, Skeleton and Luge. Each program has its own Novice, Development, Junior National, and National Teams. Add to this demands placed by hosting international events, and you begin to see there aren't always enough track hours to go around.

Why do my children need dryland/off season training?

Luge is a sport that requires intense mental concentration, coordination, relaxation *and* physical strength. Muscle groups important for luge include a strong neck, core, upper body, abdomen and thighs. As the slider goes faster from higher start heights, more strength is required to withstand increasing g-forces. Also as the sliders develop more skill and become competitive, physical training will come into play at the start in particular.

Why are parents needed for the novice sessions?

The coaches are usually at key places in the track during the session watching and providing driving feedback. Parents are needed to help get the younger sliders organized in the start house, so that as many runs can be completed in their allotted training time as possible. Younger sliders often have trouble lifting their sleds out of the track at the finish, and may need assistance there as well. After the run, the coach talks on a radio to the slider at the finish dock to provide feedback. Parents are a crucial part of our program. We have limited track time and need help keeping the kids focused and ready both for safety and efficiency.

**Parents helping may wish to purchase a set of “cramp-on’s” (removable shoe spikes ~\$10) as this makes such chores a great deal easier.*

Can I watch the sessions?

Absolutely! Anywhere along the track will show you different perspectives, but one of the best places is along the straight-of-way (see the map at the end). Please be considerate and avoid flash photography, as it can be distracting, particularly to inexperienced sliders.

What does “work on my steels” mean?

Fairly early in your child’s sliding career, you will need to purchase sandpaper to polish the metal steels. Usually they start with low grit (320) wet-dry sandpaper and work up to 1200 grit or higher, and then finish with diamond paste. Be forewarned- this can take hours for high performance athletes, but much less for younger sliders. The more competitive your child becomes, the better the finish quality they’ll need on their steels. The purpose is to reducing the friction between steels and ice, as well as to maintain the shape of the steel, which makes the sled controllable. Only sliders are allowed to work on their sleds, under the direction of the coaches

Injuries

Injuries happen in any sport. Luge is much safer than it looks! Skiing and hockey are statistically much more dangerous even on a per athlete basis. Most injuries in luge involve bumps and bruises and little else. More serious injuries include broken ankles, the occasional laceration, and concussions. Sliding is not permitted on the track unless the medic truck is present at the track.

Concussion deserves special mention because recovery can be longer and the injury isn't apparent in the usual manner. If you suspect a concussion, it is important to take the time necessary for full recovery, and to discuss this with the coaches. A tool that can be useful is the SCAT tool (Sport Concussion Assessment Tool) available for free on the Internet.

Where do I go? What to bring? What will happen at training?

-Please see the attached summaries for the three typical training sessions.

Typical Training Session – What To Bring – Where To Go:

Dry land:

- Meet at BNTC (Bob Niven Training Centre, see park map)
 - A coach will take the kids through a warm up, work out and or game (floor hockey, or basketball likely)

Equipment:

- Water Bottle
- Shorts/Track Pants
- T-shirt and Hoodie (Wear an appropriate top as you might be asked to do sit ups or other exercises on the grass)
- Good athletic shoes (Not Uggs, Not Skate Shoes or Puma style shoes. Cross trainers work well, and last longer than runners)
- Be weather appropriate, we may be inside or outside.
- Sunscreen

Ice House Training/Start Training:

- Meet at BNTC (Bob Niven Training Centre, see park map)
 - Coach will lead athletes through warm up routine
- Cross the street to the Ice House, use the door with the metal stairs closest to the BNTC. (It has a sign saying “Use the Main Door”, ignore the sign) This is where you’ll change. Either at the far west end at the luge ramps, or inside the lobby area located in the middle of the building.

Equipment:

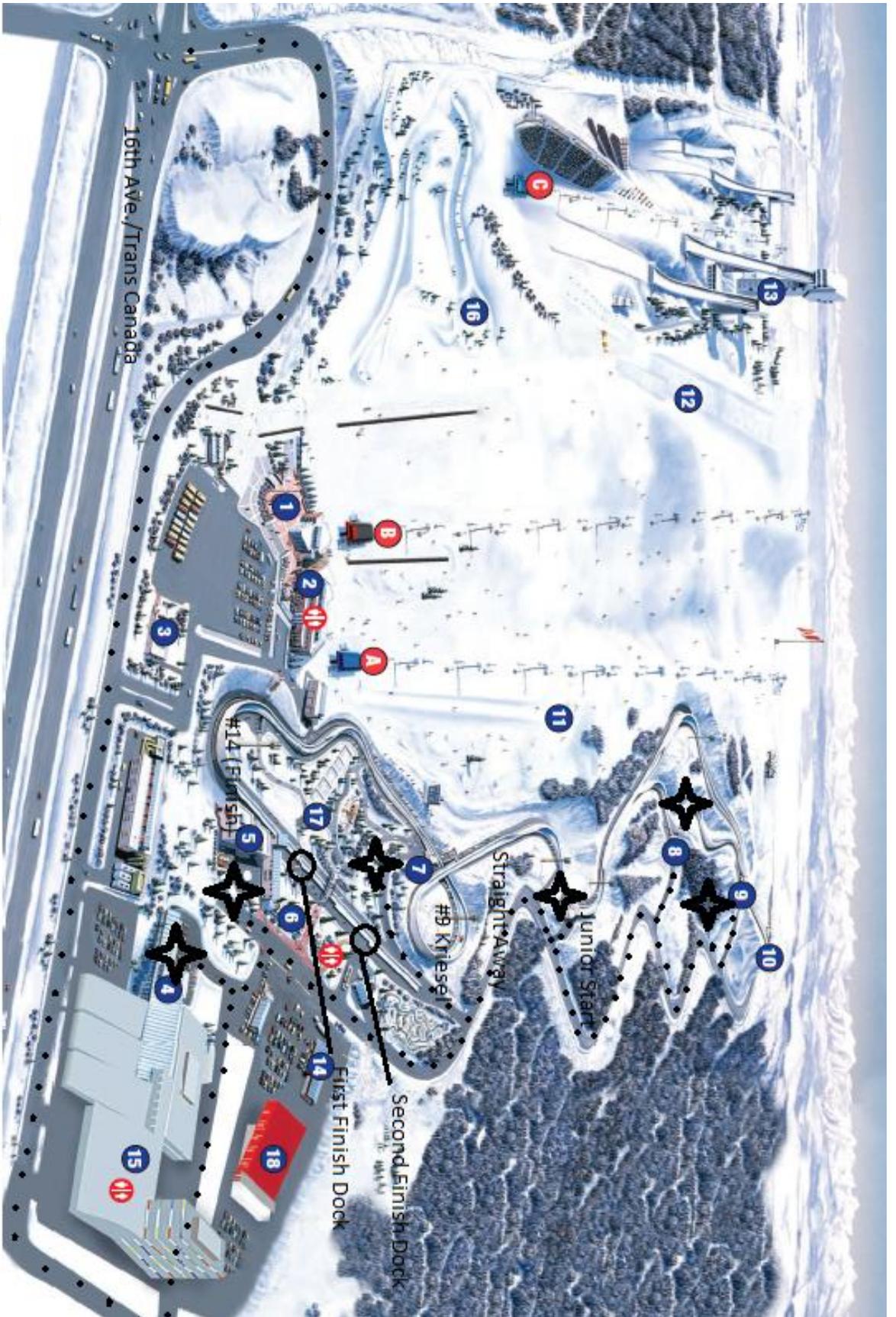
- Long pants and sleeves, or speed suit. No jeans please or hoodies please.
- Helmet
- Sliding Gloves (with spikes if your child has them)
- Sled - Your coach will tell you ahead of time if you need to bring yours as we store some in the ice house for this purpose.
- Water Bottle
- Appropriate outdoor warm up clothing and footwear

Sliding / Track Nights:

- Meet 45 Minutes before session at Doubles Start, see park map (Sometimes called Ladies or Damen Start as this used to be the Women's World Cup/Olympic race height)
- Take sled and helmet out of the room at bottom of the stairs, next to the metal bin.
- **ALWAYS** Check the bolts on your sled. Coaches will teach you how to do this.
- Place sled at the top of the stairs, there are railings for this in the shelter at the top of the stairs. Always lean sleds against railing or wall with kufins down, and pod against the wall. (See sled parts)
- Sign the attendance sheet so the coach puts you on the start list. The tower will read out the list over the PA system, it will stay the same for each run unless someone stops, or changes start height.
 - If you are new, your start height will be "Tourist Start", or "Exit Kriesel", they are the same.
- Do a warm up so you are limber and ready to go. (A coach will show you if you're new)
- Change into your sliding clothing/equipment about 30 minutes prior to session start time.
- When dressed, a truck will come to shuttle you to your start heights. Put your sled in the back laying down with steels to the sky, and hop in the front.
- Once at your start height, wait for your name to be called to the start.
 - Session run from the highest starters, to those lowest on the track, so if the sled before you is from juniors, and you are at exit kriesel, wait until it passes before getting into the track. This is why we have a volunteer at the start for each height.
- The control tower will announce that the track is clear after the previous slider is out of the track. The start volunteer will let you go then, enjoy the run.
- At the finish a volunteer will be there to help you out of the track. After your run AND after each session make sure to wipe your steels dry to prevent rust.
- **If you crash** and stop with all your equipment, you can just hop back on the sled and finish the run. You can also get out of the track by climbing over the railing, with your sled and equipment. It is a good idea to stay at the curve where you got out of the track; if you roam it will take longer to find you and slows the session. If you are hurt, you do not have to move. Track crew, a coach, or the medic will come to check on you and radio the tower that you are okay, and ensure none of your equipment is left in the track. The medic will drive you back to the finish or start so you can continue sliding.
- At the end of the session the truck will take you back to the doubles start. Put your sled back; wipe down the steels of your sled with WD40 and a rag. Once your sled has been cleaned you may change out of your training clothes. Please don't leave immediately as the coaches sometimes have a brief meeting after the session.

Equipment: (See equipment FAQ for descriptions of the following)

- Helmet – wear long hair up inside it for safety reasons
- Long pants (no jeans)/Long sleeves or coat (without a hood, and layered for weather)
- Runners (Boots won't work well for the actual sliding but are fine before/after)
- Sliding Gloves
- Mouth guard



WINTER PARK MAP

1. International Flag Court
2. Daylodges/Frank King Olympic Visitors Centre
3. ATCO Centre

4. Ice House
5. Bob When Training Centre
6. Festival Tent
7. Tourist Luge Start
8. Women's/Doubles Luge Start

9. Men's Luge Start
10. Bobsleigh/Skeleton Start
11. Terrain Park and Halfpipe
12. Freestyle Aerials and Moguls
13. Ski Jump Towers

14. Calgary Gymnastics Centre
15. Martin Mariophall Centre
16. Nordic Area
17. Challenge Course
18. Canada's Sports Hall Of Fame

- CHAIRLIFTS**
- A. Legacy Express Chairlift
 - B. NEW High Speed Quad Chairlift
 - C. Eastside Runner Chairlift