

Created by Christine Nielsen
 Length: 60 minutes

Profile description

This class draws on the physical demands of some snow- and ice-related activities to create a coherent story, which contains embedded references to cycling-related form and effort. I teach this class as part of the silly season before Christmas, but there are no overt references to the holiday in the lyrics or coaching so you can use it at any time during the winter months. The playlist contains music by many Canadian artists, which is only fitting given that it has a winter theme.



The term “storm-stayed” is an adjective unique to the maritime provinces and Ontario in Canada. It essentially means snowbound.

Note: The paragraphs in red are reflections on what is being cued and why.

Objective

This class uses familiar experiences and sensations as guides and cues for effort and form while cycling. Participants can use discretion in choosing the level of effort.

Warm-up

December Snow, The Moody Blues, 5:11, 83 bpm

Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Les Brown, 2:38, 72 bpm

It is a winter morning and you have just looked out the window to see what happened overnight. The forecasters said a slow-moving storm would dump 30–40 centimeters of snow on the region. It looks more like 50 centimeters to you.

Time to get up and warm up so that you can confront what awaits you outside.

Structure a warm-up as you prefer.

It Snowed, Meghan Smith, 3:44, 69 bpm

It is important to make sure that your cardiovascular system is ready for the demands you will place on it as soon as you start to shovel. Let's do some “jumping jacks.”

Even though I make a reference to jumping jacks, these are clearly not jumps on the bike. You could call them calisthenics if you want to avoid the term “jump.”

Make sure that everyone is using enough resistance to allow them to stand, and cue 30-second stands alternating with 30-second sits.

Main part of the class

First Snow of the Year, Hawksley Workman, 3:10, 70 rpm

You're warmed up. Grab the shovel and let's get the driveway clear. This should feel like work in your legs, but don't work so hard that you get out of breath. Put on enough resistance to give you that sensation.

Remember that good form is essential to taking care of your body when you are shoveling. I find it helpful to think carefully about what my muscles have to do to push, lift, and throw. Put your attention on what is working hardest right now—your legs. Think through what you are asking of them. Get in touch with each of the muscle groups that contribute to the pedal stroke.

When I am shoveling I like to alternate sides of my body. I am much less coordinated with my left side but that won't get better if I don't develop the necessary neuromuscular connections. That's what we are working on when we do leg isolation drills on the bike. Right now I don't want you to do those isolations but I want you to direct your attention first to one side of your body and then to the other.

This is a cue I use a lot. I see many people who lack body awareness. That inhibits their ability to use the cues I provide. I think awareness can be taught, to some extent. People just need time and a reason to pay attention. I introduce awareness drills when discussing pedal strokes and then generalize them to other aspects of performance.

Good for you. You got the driveway clear in record time. Let's head back to the house.

Sled Ride, Buckethead, 3:04, 62 bpm

You just heard them announce on the radio that the police are asking people to stay off the roads. You get a snow day! Remember how exciting that was when you were a kid? Let's spend the day playing.

First we are going to join the kids who have headed to the sledding hill. Slow your legs to the beat and put on resistance that feels like you are climbing a steep hill, in the snow, dragging a sled behind you. Your breathing will change and your heart rate will increase. By the time you get to the top you might be breathless.

There's a secret to walking in deep snow. You need to draw your knee up—close at your hip and knee joints—while keeping your heel back. If you let your toe stay forward it will catch in the hole. When your foot is clear of the snow—when your knee joint is closed—then you extend your toe and foot forward before you let it sink back into the snow. Think about that motion as you climb this hill.

I was delighted when I made the connection between trudging through deep snow and the pedal stroke. It works well for those of us who live in areas that have a lot of snow. I would love to learn about equivalents from warmer places...perhaps some Australians or Brazilians would like to chime in?! If you create a similar profile using common activities performed in summertime, please consider sending it to ICA so we can share it with other members!

Downhill Racer, Bill Myers, 3:32, 70 bpm

You're at the top of the hill. Flop onto your sled and join the kids who are already sliding. This is not a time to relax. You need to stay quiet on your sled and in the middle for balance and control. Don't go too fast—you will lose control and might hurt yourself.

During this song you can encourage cadences up to 95 rpm during so long as you are able to see participants remaining balanced and in control. Add several more form/balance cues through the song.

River, Joni Mitchell, 4:05, 103 bpm

Conduct leg isolation drills during this song.

We have reached the bottom of the hill and look what is in front of us—a river. And it is conveniently frozen. Even more conveniently, you just happen to have your skates with you! Put them on and let's get out on the ice. This is your first time on skates this year so it might be a good idea to review your form. Let's take some time to do that, one leg at a time.

I want you to be thinking about the feeling of skating. Try to recall how it feels for your skate blade to float above the ice. It really is floating—there is a slick of water between the blade and the ice. I want you to feel that sense of the blade moving across the ice with no friction as your heel gets to the bottom of your pedal stroke and moves back.

Skating and cycling have more in common than you might think. You are trying to develop that same sense of effortless flowing movement. And think about it—when you skate and cycle your legs aren't actually traveling in the direction of your movement. When we cycle we have a sense of our legs going up and down. When we skate they move to the side. But our feet always point where we would like to go. Try to put your awareness in your feet while your legs act as engines.

Once again, these references will only be meaningful to people who have skated. But almost everyone has watched skating and can imagine what it would feel like.

Skater's Waltz, Dan Gibson, 6:57, 168 bpm (in 3/4 time)

Note that this is a waltz and is in 3/4 time. This promotes a smooth pedal stroke and discourages effort creep.

The use of songs that can be counted in three (1, 2, 3) is becoming a hallmark of my classes. The rhythm has a more flowing feel and complements an out-and-back feel in the feet. It also breaks up the use of the dominant leg on the first beat of the measure. If your right leg goes down on **1**, then your left on 2, the right goes down again on 3 and then it is your left leg that is going down on the emphasized **1** of the next measure.

You're warmed up and everything is working correctly. Let's skate up the river. I want you to have a prolonged experience of effortlessness. Imagine that you are skating with a group of people. I want you to be able to chat with them without your breathing interfering. Develop the sense of an easy rhythm and balance between the two sides of your body.

This is a wonderful quiet section where people have the time and space to think about what they are doing. I have made a suggestion about intensity but it is easy for people to choose to work easier or harder. I love this mix of the Skater's Waltz. With a good sound system you can really feel like you are on the river. If I had a video system in my studio I would complement the work with a peaceful slideshow of icy scenes.

at 6:35

*We have reached a straight spot in the river and I can see ahead. A community has cleared the snow off the river and it looks like the whole town is playing a game of shinny hockey. Let's join them. They are playing 30-second shifts of all-out effort with 90 seconds on the bench. * There are so many players that you can't choose what position you will play. If you are planning to be a forward you will be standing for your shift. If you are a defenseman you will sit. If you want to opt out entirely you can declare yourself a goalie.*

*Feel free to change the length of the shifts according to your classes' ability or your own preference.

Shinny Hockey, Matt Finlayson, 4:57, 75 bpm

Make sure that students increase their resistance and cadence to accommodate the increased work that the "game" will require. They should reduce their effort during the breaks between shifts.

Cue shifts and trips to the bench as you desire. Try to end with one longer shift and celebrate scoring a goal as the music ends.

Just in case some students may start to think this whole story thing is too hokey and there won't be any "hard" work (I am using air quotes here because we know that high intensity isn't the only way to do hard work) I throw in the hockey game with some opportunities to go all out, followed by recovery.

Sleigh Ride, The Alley Cats, 3:13, 83 bpm

Wow! That's perfect. There is a horse-drawn sleigh waiting when we get off the ice. It is starting to get dark so let's head for home. Take off your skates and recover. But don't let your heart rate fall too low. We aren't home yet and there may be adventures to come.

Animal/Horse/Whinny, Sound Effects, 0:07

What was that? A horse! Something has spooked the horses and they have taken off galloping.

Siberian Sleigh Ride (Instrumental), Trans-Siberian Orchestra, 3:08, 85 bpm

The sleigh driver is going to need your help to control the horses. When he asks for assistance I want you to stand up, grab the reins and put on some resistance to mimic the feeling of pulling back against the horses. Try to keep your cadence high when you do that—the horses are bolting!

Cue additional resistance and stands at:

0:11 – 0:41

1:20 – 2:00

2:44 – end

This part of the story throws reality to the wind. But the music is impossible to deny. No one in the class will be able to resist the hard work required to slow the horses.

White Is In the Winter Night, Enya, 3:00, 86 bpm

Good for you. You managed to stop the horses. I think we should get out of the sleigh and walk home. The roads have been plowed here but it still takes some effort to walk. You want to move briskly but you can't go as fast as you'd like because the footing is a little slippery. It is a little like riding our bikes on a flat road but into a bit of a headwind. Grab the beat and adjust your resistance to create that feeling in your body.

I love the reference to walking on a slick surface being equivalent to riding a bicycle into a headwind. The parallel is amazing. Both are so much harder to do than they appear. There are no visual cues for the effort we experience. It takes the same commitment to make forward progress, and any lapse of focus can spell disaster (or just slowing down a lot).

Snow Angel, Star FK Radium, 3:31, 66 bpm

The plow hasn't been by on this portion of the road. You are walking in deep snow again. Add resistance to give you that feeling. Draw your attention to your feet and legs and make sure that you are being as efficient as you can and are aware of what each muscle needs to do to move your feet out of the snow and then back down again, step by step.

Here we return to the cue regarding form while pedaling. Fatigue may be setting in at this point so the experience and awareness will be slightly different.

Winter Light, Hammock, 4:12, 109 bpm

Note: This song does not ride as fast as the beats per minute indicate.

Your lovely neighbor has used his baby tractor to plow this section of the road. The walking has gotten much easier so you can drop some resistance and speed up your legs.

Your day is drawing to a close. It would be easy to let your thoughts move ahead to what is waiting for you at home. There is dinner to make, phone calls to return, and no doubt you will have to answer some e-mails from work. Try to stay in the moment for a few more minutes. Keep up the work you are doing and reflect on what you have learned and the fun you have had.

at 2:00

Two minutes to go. Stay present. Stay focused. Don't let your thoughts stray away from what you are doing right now. We get so few opportunities for time to ourselves. Be selfish and stay with your own thoughts to the end.

This may seem like a throwaway at the end of the class but I intend for the entire hour, and especially this section, to convey an important point. We all spend too much time “working,” not playing. People even have a tendency to treat their exercise as work and not be present and enjoy the moment. This profile is meant to convey value and content in a playful manner and to correct the assumption that we have to adopt a serious working attitude to get benefits from our activities. During this song I want them to hold onto the fun for a little longer before they return to the more serious aspects of their “real” lives.

Cool-down and stretch

Song For a Winter's Night, Sarah McLachlan, 3:47

In the Bleak Midwinter, Annie Lennox

Post-class music

See Amid the Winter's Snow, Annie Lennox

Winter Song, Sara Bareilles and Ingrid Michaelson

Title	Artist	Album	Available From
December Snow	The Moody Blues	December	iTunes
Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow	Les Brown	A Traditional Jazz Christmas	iTunes, eMusic
It Snowed	Meaghan Smith	It Snowed - Single	iTunes
First Snow of the Year	Hawksley Workman	Almost a Full Moon	iTunes
Sled Ride	Buckethead	Shadows Between the Sky	iTunes, eMusic
Downhill Racer	Bill Myers	A Window on the World	iTunes
River	Joni Mitchell	Blue	iTunes
Skater's Waltz	Dan Gibson's Solitudes	Christmas Classics	iTunes, eMusic
Shinny Hockey	Matt Finlayson	All I Need of Heaven	iTunes, eMusic
Sleigh Ride	The Alley Cats	Swing N' Jive Christmas	iTunes, eMusic
Animal/Horse/Whinny	Sound Effects	Sound Effects 101	iTunes, eMusic
Siberian Sleigh Ride (Instrumental)	Trans-Siberian Orchestra	The Lost Christmas	iTunes
White Is In the Winter Night	Enya	And Winter Came	iTunes
Snow Angel	Star FK Radium	Blue Siberia	iTunes, eMusic

Title	Artist	Album	Available From
Winter Light	Hammock	Kenotic	iTunes, eMusic
Song For a Winter's Night	Sarah McLachlan	A Winter's Night	iTunes
In the Bleak Midwinter	Annie Lennox	A Christmas Cornucopia	iTunes