

## Duties & Responsibilities of a USSA Gate Judge The Most Important Person on the Hill

Ski racing is unique among junior sports in the number of officials it takes to run an event. During your athlete's career as a ski racer, you WILL be asked to function as a gate judge. Gate judges are similar to officials in other sports in that all must make instantaneous decisions on a particular situation. Among other things, Gate Judges (GJ) decide whether a competitor has passed through a series of gates correctly or has committed a "fault". Decisions must be prompt, consistent, and properly documented. Unfortunately, most gate judge education is limited to a 15 minute meeting prior to the race. This creates the situation where gate judges are unsure of their responsibilities and the rules, sometimes resulting in decisions that are not fair and equitable to all competitors. The documents associated with this educational program are designed to make you a confident, knowledgeable gate judge who will help to decide a fair competition, help you educate your athlete to understand the rules, and ensure that you and your club will meet your responsibilities to provide a sufficient quantity of qualified volunteers. The rules discussed here are for USSA races only.

Important: Before beginning this course, please watch the 17 minute USSA Alpine Gate Judge video available [HERE](#).

### Definitions:

SL: Slalom

SG: Super-G

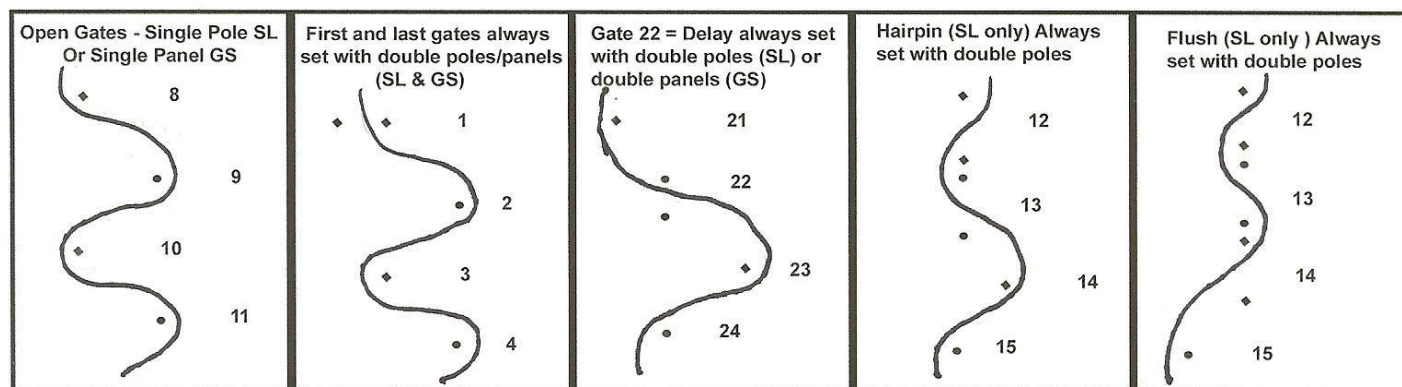
GS: Giant Slalom

DH: Downhill

Scored: The race will be counted for USSA seed points – typically U18 & U21

Non-scored: The race will not be counted for USSA seed points – typically all U16 or younger races

### Types of Gates:



### Preparing for the day:

Wear clothing for varying and unknown weather conditions. Bring hand warmers, extra gloves, food, and fluids if desired. Portable seating is acceptable only if placed far from fall zones, and not used while racers are on course.

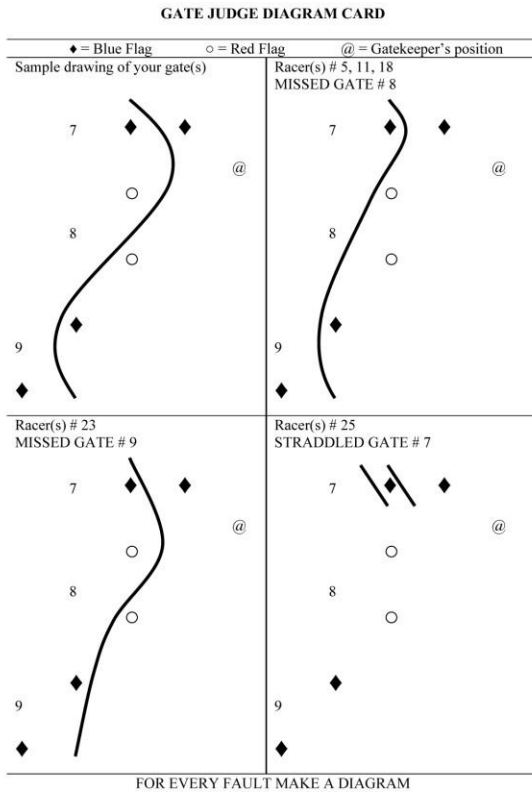
### Gate Judge Meeting:

The gate judge meeting lasts about 15 minutes prior to the race and includes important information such as schedules, a review of the rules, and special circumstances for that specific race. Gate Judge supplies and lift tickets are usually distributed at the gate judge meeting. Please be on time.

### Placement on the Hill:

- At the gate judge meeting, the Chief Gate Judge (CGJ) will announce the time to meet at the top of the race slope. Please be prompt or you will make the CGJ's job of placing Gate Judges more difficult and you might delay the start. When all the gate judges who are skiing have arrived at the top, the CGJ will position them on the course and assign gates. GJ's who are hiking should walk high enough above the finish so that the CGJ does not have to wait while they hike to their positions. Wear your GJ bib so that competitors and race officials can easily identify you.
- Place your personal equipment out of fall zones, outside B-netting if possible, and laid flat on the snow.

3. Be prepared to stand in your position while the race is under way. You may not abandon your duties without notifying the CGJ or a member of the Jury (see below).
4. Position yourself so competitors can pick you out from spectators, and where you have the best view of your assigned gates. You may need to move into and out of the racing line quickly to make repairs, remove equipment, or inspect tracks.
5. Prepare your gate cards in advance. Fill out all information requested in the header area, and draw 4 diagrams of your assigned gates. The first of these diagrams should include an “@” where you are located in relation to your gates, numbers corresponding to the gates you are watching, and a line showing the fastest legal passage through these gates. Use separate gate cards for men & women and for scored & non-scored competitors. A properly completed gate card:



**UNITED STATES SKI AND SNOWBOARD ASSOCIATION  
GATE JUDGES CARD**

NO FAULTS       FAULTS X

Men       Women **X**      Run # 1      Gate(s) # 7, 8, 9

DH       SL **X**      GS       SG       Date 7 January 2001

Gatekeeper (print full name) G. Gatejudge

Alternate (mark at 1st racer) \_\_\_\_\_

For every racer who reaches your gates note the Bib # and mark the proper column ✓ or F. FOR EVERY FAULT ALSO MAKE A DIAGRAM.

✓ = Legally passed      F = Fault

BIB NO.	OK	F	BIB NO.	OK	F	BIB NO.	OK	F	BIB NO.	OK	F	BIB NO.	OK	F
1	✓		20	✓										
2	✓		21	✓										
3	✓		22	✓										
4	✓		23		F									
5		F	24	✓										
6		DNF	25		F									
7	✓		26	✓										
8	✓		27	✓										
9	✓		28	✓										
10	✓		29	✓										
11		F	30	✓										
12	✓													
13	✓													
14	✓													
15	✓													
16	✓													
17	✓													
18		F												
19	✓													

**Note:**

- Sample drawing with “@” to indicate your location and drawing of fastest legal passage
- All gates are numbered
- All diagrams except the sample drawing include an explanation of the fault and bib numbers of competitors who have faulted as drawn.
- You may use the same diagram for multiple racers who make the same fault at the same gate
- Diagram for straddle by bib #7.
- Diagrams are not necessary for DNF's – “DNF”, not “F” noted in fault column
- Header information is complete

**The Jury**

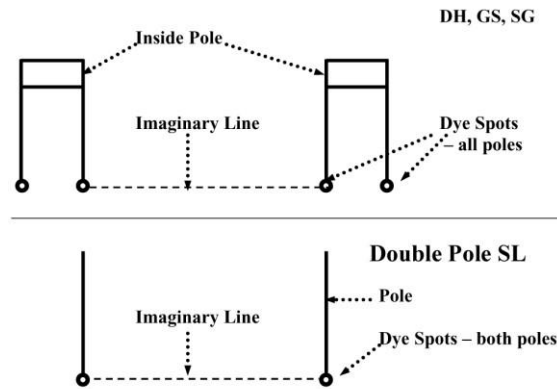
The jury consists of the Technical Delegate (TD), the Referee, and the Chief of Race. These three people are certified USSA officials who insure the race is run according to the rules, address all protests, and decide all issues not otherwise covered by the rules. Jury decisions are made by majority rule votes after taking testimony from witnesses if necessary (often including GJ's) and reviewing physical evidence (often including gate cards). The Start and Finish Referees are non-voting members of the jury who are typically USSA certified officials, and are jury advisors and “eyes of the jury”.

## Gate Judge Race Responsibilities

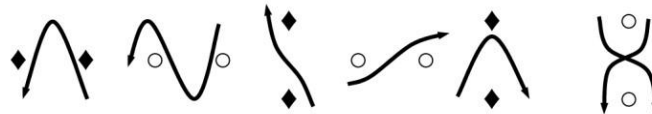
1. Do not allow spectators or coaches to influence your opinion. Ask spectators and coaches to move out of your line of vision if necessary. If a spectator or coach gives commands to a competitor, ask them to stop and note the situation on your card – particularly if the command was contrary to yours.
2. Do not discuss your decisions with anyone except the CGJ, or members of the Jury.
3. Work as a team – ask adjacent Gate Judges for missed bib numbers, and help with course maintenance or equipment removal from adjacent gates if necessary.
4. Reply promptly and clearly to a competitor's request for assistance with either "Go" or "Back". You may also point to or say the color of the gate that needs to be passed. Be loud and clear. You may add the command to "loop around" gates in single pole SL or single gate GS course sets. The competitor himself is fully responsible for his action, and in this respect, he cannot hold the Gate Judge responsible, but do your best to help racers understand what they must do to avoid a fault.
5. Maintain your gates between racers. Quickly replace gates that have been knocked out in their original vertical position, and refasten gate panels that have been knocked loose. Never "bowtie" a gate panel.
6. Hiking or slow competitors must yield to oncoming racers. If it appears that a competitor might interfere with an oncoming racer, instruct the competitor to quickly get out of the racing line. If a hiking or slow competitor is passed, that competitor is DNF and may not continue on course.
7. Be alert to faults and interference above and below your assigned gates. If the assigned Gate Judge has not seen and/or recorded them, you should draw a diagram of faults and note all incidents of interference you have witnessed. These may be reviewed later by the Jury.
8. Proper, legible diagrams of faults and notes regarding interference are critical to the fairness of the race. See examples later in this document.
9. Diagrams are not required for legal passage unless you have reason to believe that another official might disagree with your judgment.
10. Interference is any outside object (not personal equipment) that causes the skier to change their racing line or affects their speed i.e. broken or missing gates, hiking skier, course maintenance worker, equipment in the race line, etc. Competitors who believe they have been interfered with must immediately pull off course report the interference to the nearest gate judge.
11. Competitors who have pulled out and made a report of interference should be instructed to report to the Finish Referee at the finish line. Document what you saw – you will be asked whether you thought there was interference.
12. If you witness interference but the competitor does not immediately pull out, document what you saw. You might be asked to explain what happened.
13. Competitors who lose a ski may not continue on course and are DNF (for exceptions, see special "Fall in Finish" rules later in this document). DNFs are not Faults and do not require a drawing. They should be noted as "DNF" in the fault column. You should note every DNF you witness.
14. Every skier that enters your gates but ONLY skiers that enter your gates should be noted in the OK/Fault columns on your card. Do not pre-number your cards.
15. The decision handed down by the Gate Judge must be clear and unbiased. The GJ must declare a fault only when convinced that a fault has been committed. Benefit of the doubt goes to the competitor.
16. After EACH run, ALL gate judges must meet with the Chief Gate Judge (CGJ), usually in the finish area. It is not acceptable to have someone else turn in your gate card for you even if you have no faults. Each GJ who has reported a fault or who has been witness to an incident leading to a fault or has been a witness to possible interference must be available to the jury until after a final decision has been reached. If a protest against disqualification is filed, the GJ must be available to provide additional testimony. Gate Judges who report faults or were witnesses to faults or interference should stay readily available until 15 minutes after posting of the Referee Report. This report is usually posted about 10 minutes after all gate judges have been dismissed.

## Legal Passage: Double pole SL, GS, SG, DH

1. Competitors must pass through every gate. Both feet and both tips must cross the imaginary line between the bases of the innermost poles of each gate (the imaginary gate line).



2. Gates may be passed in any direction and any order as long as both tips and both feet pass through the gate line (for example, gate 12 can be made before gate 11 and it is allowable but not necessary to pass through gate 12 again). All the following are legal passages in events where double pole / double gate sets are used for some or all of the gates. See exceptions in #3 & #4 below:



3. In GS, SG & DH, a competitor that has come to a complete stop (e.g. after a fall or missed gate) may not continue through any previous or further gates. He may not hike to a missed gate. He must exit the course. His status is Did Not Finish (DNF). If he continues on course, he is disqualified (DSQ) and should be noted as a fault on the gate card with a diagram of the Fault. See exception in #4 below.
4. Hiking to a missed gate or continuing on course after coming to a complete stop is permitted only in Slalom as long as the competitor does not interfere with the run of a following competitor or has not been passed by another competitor. A competitor that has been passed may not continue on course and is classified DNF.
5. The hiking path should be diagrammed if a hiking racer faults due to an incorrect hike.
6. Feet and tips may be off the snow, but in this case, both feet and both tips must pass through the plane defined by the gate line with the gate poles in their vertical position.
7. A competitor in a Slalom race who slides across the gate pole so that only the feet or only the tips have legally passed through the gate line may hike to the missed gate, and only the feet or tips that have not previously made legal passage are required to pass through the gate line.



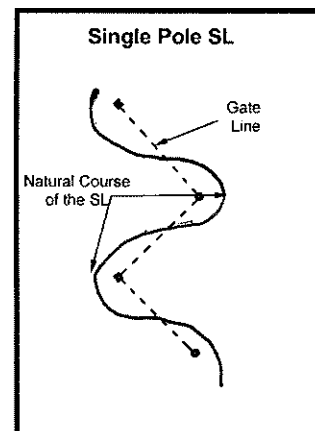
In the photo above, the competitor's ski tips have made legal passage but the feet did not. To complete legal passage, the skier must hike so that both feet cross the gate line. The tips do not have to cross the gate line again.

8. If a gate has been knocked out, the hole in the snow where the gate was originally placed will substitute for the gate pole to determine legal passage. Missing gate poles that have altered a competitor's speed or racing line may be legitimate grounds for interference.
9. Competitors may legally enter and exit a gate from the same side as long as both feet and both tips cross the gate line – see diagram above.
10. A straddle occurs when one of the skis passes inside the turning pole. This is a fault.
11. Two of the more difficult situations to judge are a “tip straddle” and a hooked tip. It is possible for a ski tip to knock down and pass over the base of the turning pole (usually seen in SL). This is a fault unless the tip is deflected and passes inside the base of the gate. Sometimes when the inside ski tip hooks a pole, the racer will be spun around backwards so that both tips and both feet pass legally through the gate.
12. In some cases, Gate Judges can confirm legal passage by inspecting a racer's tracks in the snow.
13. The best method to determine legal passage is to watch the feet & tips (not the body) and freeze your vision momentarily on the base of the gate as the competitor passes to get a mental “snapshot” of the passage, then immediately move your vision back to the feet & tips and freeze again on the base of the next gate. This is especially effective in slalom combination gates.



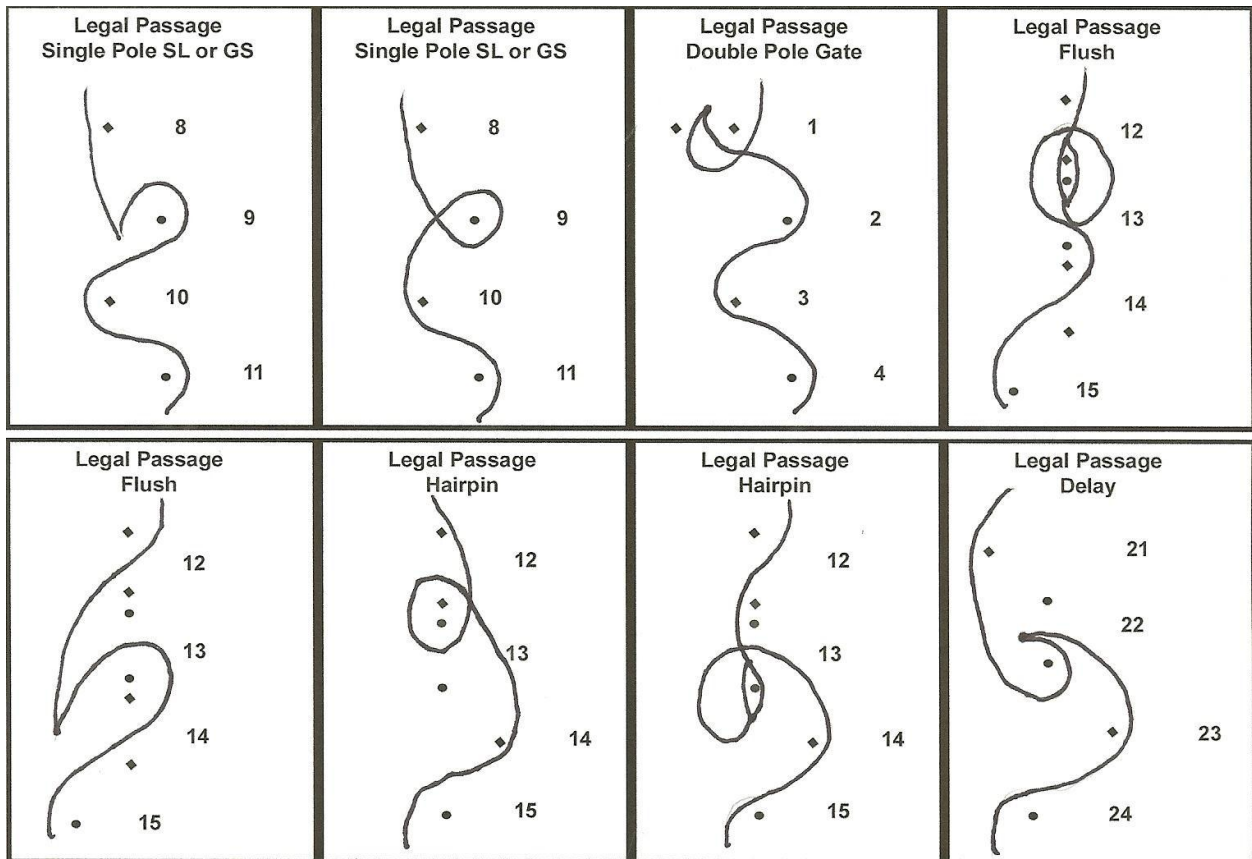
### **Legal Passage: Single Pole SL & GS**

1. All rules for legal passage of double pole gates apply for single pole slalom & single gate GS except that both tips and both feet must pass the imaginary gate line between the turning pole of the gate being passed and the one immediately previous to it, AND both tips and both feet must pass around the turning pole following the natural course of the set. If a racer must hike to a single pole SL or single panel GS gate, the fastest way is to loop around the gate in either direction.
2. In single pole SL or single panel GS sets, the first & last gates, all combinations, and delay gates will be set as double pole gates. Double pole gate passage as explained above applies with these gates.
3. Rules for hiking or coming to a complete stop are identical for both single and double pole sets: Hiking is permitted only in Slalom as long as the hiker does not interfere with or get passed by the following competitor. In all other events, coming to a complete stop or hiking is treated as a DNF. Competitors who continue on course after coming to a complete stop or hiking in GS, SG & DH are committing a fault and the fault should be diagrammed.
4. All the following diagrams of legal passage assume the race is SL where hiking is permitted. Diagrams are not required for legal passage. Note that it is not necessary to loop around missed double pole gates to attain legal passage.
5. Competitors who continue on course after being passed in ALL events are committing a fault and the fault should be diagrammed.

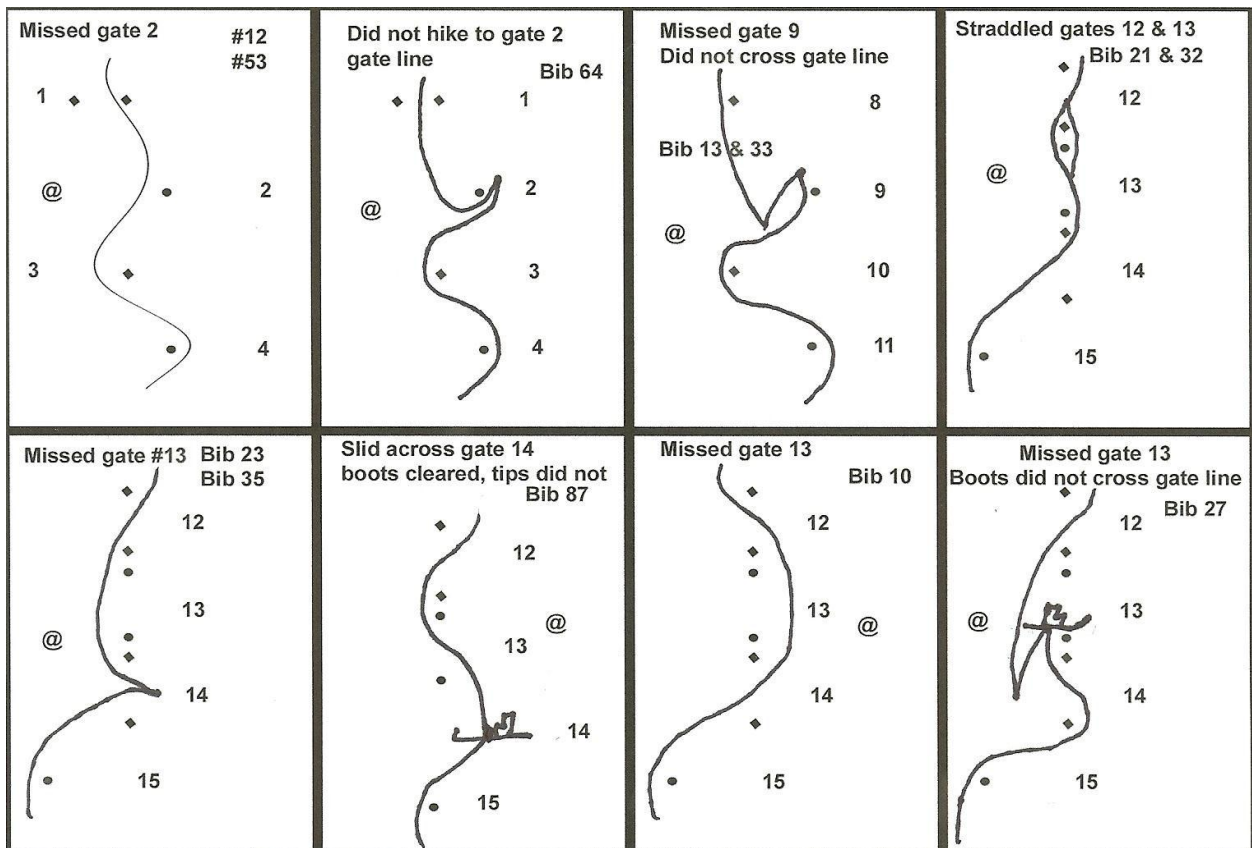


**See Diagrams on next page**

**Legal Passage – Diagrams on gate card not required for legal passage**



**Unequivocal Diagrams of Faults With Notes**



### **Fall in the Finish Rule:**

In SL, GS & SG, a competitor who has legally passed the second gate above the finish (the second to last gate on the course) may legally pass through the last gate and finish the run on one ski. A competitor who has legally passed the gate immediately above the finish (the last gate on the course) may finish the run without any skis. If the ski(s) are missing due to a fall, the competitor must cross the finish immediately after the fall.

Competitors who have missed a gate and crossed the finish line may not hike back to a missed gate. They are DSQ unless the jury agrees they have legitimate grounds for interference at the finish that caused them to miss a gate, AND they could not stop before crossing the finish. Falls in the finish should be well documented and diagrammed.

### **Other faults and actions that may result in disqualification or other sanction**

Gate Judges must watch for and report actions that could lead to sanctions up to and including disqualification. It is the Jury's responsibility to determine if a sanction should be applied and what the sanction will be, but a member of the Jury or a Jury advisor may not physically see all actions. The Gate Judge should document these actions:

1. Competitor accepts outside assistance in any form.
2. Competitor may not alter the course or use the gate poles for aid.
3. Slow, fallen or hiking competitors must yield to overtaking competitors at the first call and vacate the course if passed.
4. Competitors may not obstruct or interfere with other competitors or with officials performing their duties.
5. Racer trains on a course closed to competitors or does not follow the rules for inspection.
6. Competitors must respect all instructions of officials including those for inspection.
7. Racer does not comply with safety regulations.
8. Competitors must observe good sportsmanship behavior including no usage of foul language or visible displays of anger.
9. Only a coach may submit a protest to the jury. Competitors and their parents may not protest decisions of a race official.
10. Competitors who know they have committed a fault must immediately ski off the course.
11. Competitors must not request a rerun without legitimate cause.

### **Examples of Straddles and Tip Spins**

If this racer spins so that the tip of his right ski passes the correct (legal) side of the turning pole, and he does not lose a ski, he will have legal passage on this gate.



Straddles that would lead to DSQ (Fault) or hikes back to the straddled gate for legal passage.



Thank you for taking the time to become an educated official. Gate Judges interested in becoming certified and eligible for the additional incentives available to Certified Gate Judges must pass the Gate Judge exam. Please [return to the SARA Gate Judge page](#) for access to download the exam.

Now that you understand the rules for interference, coming to a complete stop, requests for provisional reruns, and legal gate passage, we recommend that you explain these rules to your athlete. It might save him/her a slow time, disqualification, or other sanction in an important race.