

Q: How can I participate in my child's luge career?

A: The help of parents is always welcome, especially at the JDT and JCT levels. An example of this might be as a chaperone at the Olympic Training Center (OTC) in Lake Placid. The coaches often like to have volunteer parent chaperones stay with the athletes at the OTC to act as supervisors of off-time and evening hours so that the coaching staff can better focus on coaching. As the need arises, a questionnaire will be sent to all parents to determine their interest. Parents can also become a luge Race Official by completing the US Luge National Official's Course. This will allow them to work at races both in Lake Placid and Salt Lake City.

The US Luge coaching staff consists of dedicated people who love the sport of luge. Many have dedicated the majority of their life to the sport and some are Olympians themselves. These people are the experts. They do what they do so that the USA can be a world leader in luge and all decisions are ultimately based on that one goal.

If your child does travel to Europe and you would like to watch them compete, we would simply ask you to stay at a hotel other than where the team stays. The staff would be happy to help you make these arrangements.

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UNITED STATES LUGE ASSOCIATION

**PARENT'S GUIDE
TO THE
SPORT OF LUGE**



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Parents Guide to the Sport of Luge

Luge is a very exciting, challenging, and fun sport for young athletes. They will learn to become part of a team and work together with other athletes of their age and ability level. It is a sport where athletes must be prepared physically and mentally in order to participate in activities such as physical training, team activities, on-track training and racing, academics, sled work, and travel. More than that, luge can be a personal growth experience where athletes can learn more than just luge skills. Determination, dedication, desire, hard work, and self motivation can all be learned from an athlete's participation in the sport. As a parent, there are several volunteer programs that will allow you to get involved with the sport as well, should you so choose.

Q: *What is the typical progression of a talented luge athlete?*

A: There are many levels of team participation within the US Luge sports program. Athletes hope to get named to a team each year with the goal of moving "up the ladder" onto a higher team level. Not all athletes accomplish this. In fact most do not make it to the elite levels of National and Olympic Teams. However, simply making a team is an accomplishment in itself. There are hundreds of athletes who try out each year hoping to be named to a team with only a select few earning the honor. Teams are re-selected twice each year (April and December), so athletes must prove their skills on a regular basis.

If an athlete has talent and dedication, the normal team progression is as follows:

- Olympic Team
- Senior National Team ("A" / "B")
- Graduating Junior
- Senior National "C" Team Candidate Select
- Junior National Team ("A" / "B")
- Junior National "C" Teams
- Junior National "D" Teams
- Luge Clubs/Local Programs/Slider Search

Q: *What is the best age to start luge?*

A: There is no limitation on what age you can start luge, however, starting at a young age will give an athlete the best shot if their goal is to win an Olympic medal. As a general guideline, youngsters should be introduced to the sport by age 10. Introduction at a younger age gives an athlete the advantage of having more time to develop their sliding skills. Generally, it takes approximately 8-10 years to develop the skills necessary to be competitive at the international level.

Q: *What can I do to help my child excel in luge?*

A: First, do not place high expectations on your child when they are starting the sport. Being selected to a screening camp or Junior Development Team does not guarantee that your child will make a National or Olympic Team one day. In the beginning, they should just have fun and enjoy sliding. Having fun is what luge is all about and it should remain fun at all levels. When and if they progress to a higher team, the level of dedication and commitment will increase; but to start with, they should just enjoy sliding!

Second, do not push your child to compete. Like any sport, luge has certain characteristics that appeal to certain people and after being involved for a short period of time, some athletes find out that the luge is not for them. If the desire and passion are not there from the beginning, chances are the athlete will not succeed at the elite level.

Q: *What are the junior racing age groups?*

A: There are five official age categories recognized in international luge racing:

- Youth G - maximum age 10
- Youth C - minimum age 11/max age 12
- Youth B - minimum age 13/ max age 14
- Youth A - minimum age 15/max age 17
- Junior - minimum age 18/max age 20

(Athletes must generally be at least 16 years of age to compete in the Olympic Games.)

Q: *What are the junior level teams in the US Luge sports program?*

A: There are three junior level teams, the Junior National "D" Teams (JDT), Junior National "C" Teams (JCT), and Junior National "A" & "B" Teams (JNT):

Jr. National "D" Teams

After their initial introduction into luge, your child can race onto, or be named to the JDT. This team meets 2-3 times during the summer for training camps in order to practice the start and work on physical conditioning and 4-9 weeks in the winter for on-ice training.

Jr. National "C" Teams

Athletes named to the JCT's usually have at least one full racing season behind them and show long-term promise as a luge athlete. They receive higher priority for track time, equipment, and housing at the US Olympic Training Center (OTC).

Jr. National Teams ("A" & "B")

This is the highest level of junior participation. The JNT's usually travel throughout Europe and North America during the winter season from the end of October to the end of February. The team represents the USA in Junior World Cup and Junior World Championship competitions.

Q: *How do athletes handle being away from school?*

A: Being away from the school environment for long periods of time can be very challenging for both the athlete and his/her school. Some schools see luge as the positive growth experience while others adhere strictly to their policies and procedures with little or no flexibility. For this reason, each case must be treated on an individual basis by cooperating directly with the school on the athlete's training schedule and academic responsibilities. During winter camps of longer duration, an Academic Advisor will be on staff in order to administer study halls, proctor tests and coordinate sending/faxing work to and from the school. They will also keep an open line of communication between the athlete and the school in order to review the athletes progress on