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Skiing 101: Everything You Need To Know To Conquer The Slopes

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Skiing 101: Everything You Need To Know To Conquer The Slopes

Getting in Shape for Ski Season

Staying in shape shouldn't be a seasonal thing. Ideally you will be physically active year-round. Skiing uses different muscle groups than other sports, though, so it's always a good idea to prepare those muscles for the slopes. Preparing for the ski season will let you enjoy the ski season. Don't believe me? Just think of those years when you did NO preparation training ñ the first few times out your whole body was probably aching.

There are three areas that need to be developed before strapping on the skis ñ flexibility, strength and aerobic ability. Flexibility can help you restore your balance and recover from near falls while minimizing the risk of injury. Strength will bring your skiing ability to a new level. And good lung capacity will allow you to keep on going run after run.

All three of these will naturally develop as you prepare for the ski season. Almost any exercise routine is suitable: jogging, bicycling, or in-line skating will get your heart pounding and increase your lung capacity. Stretching should be done before any workout ñ including skiing.

Besides being generally fit, you can work on specific muscle groups that are important in skiing. The legs take the brunt of skiing, the quadriceps, hamstring, and gluteal muscles should be strong. In addition, the oblique muscles of the abdomen receive a good workout.

To develop these muscles you can use workout machines that are available in most gyms. They allow you to work on each muscle group individually and build up their strength gradually. Some gyms may have special ski workout programs that offer advice and tips about how to effectively use these machines.

You can also use dumbbells to build up the strength of your arms and upper body. Be sure to use them properly and give yourself the necessary resting time between sets of exercises.

There are several exercises specifically designed for increasing flexibility. The hip area is the most important for skiing as this is where you adjust your upper body to maintain balance. To increase the flexibility of both your hips and legs you can do gentle calisthenics to stretch and strengthen the muscles groups in these areas.

All of these exercises are great for general physical condition and will help you get ready for skiing. There are also other more specialized movements you can do to improve your skiing ability.

For example, squat positions are important in skiing, especially for high-speed runs. To increase your squatting strength get into a squat position and walk sideways while placing most of your weight on the inside of your legs. This approximates the muscles movements made while skiing and builds up strength for the real thing.

Another exercise that will help your ski position is to place your weight on one leg with the other slightly bent. Hold this position for about 10 seconds and then bend your supporting leg a bit more. Again hold this position for a short period and drop even further. Repeat with the other leg. This is a great way to develop your sense of balance.

Remember - don't just think about getting into shape as ski season approaches. Exercise should be a regular part of your routine year-round. There are lots of benefits to staying in shape. You'll be ready to hit the slopes, you will minimize injuries, and you will feel great.

Skiing in the USA

The USA is home to some of the best ski resorts in the world. Famous names like Lake Tahoe, Vale, and Aspen are icons to ski enthusiasts. Although there are ski areas in many of the northern states, the mountains of Vermont, Colorado, and New York offer some of the best skiing in America.

Vermont

This area was discovered by European skiers who immigrated to America in the early 20th century. It quickly became famous for its great hills and snow conditions. These are some of the oldest ski resorts in the USA and many of them have a European feel.

The highest mountains in Vermont are near Stowe. This ski resort has been in operation for more than 60 years and has a well-developed trail system. Beginner skiers can find gentle slopes and even the most advanced skiers will be challenged by Stowe's expert trails. Killington is another Vermont resort. It has a vertical drop of almost 3,000 feet and over 60 miles of trails. Experts will find less of a challenge here than at Stowe, but for the intermediate skier there is plenty of variety.

New York

The most famous ski resort in New York is Whiteface in Lake Placid, home of the 1980 winter Olympics. It has the biggest vertical drop of any mountain in the eastern US, providing lots of challenges for the expert skier. It also has lots of choices for beginner and intermediate skiers with trails up to 100 feet wide and stretching an impressive 2,200 feet. Whiteface also has some of the most advanced ski lift systems in the eastern US, their high-speed gondola goes from bottom to top in just 8 minutes.

Colorado

Colorado has great ski conditions and the longest ski season in America. Vail and Aspen are the most famous ski areas in Colorado with Keystone a close third.

Aspen includes four ski areas: Snowmass, Aspen Mountain, Aspen Highlands and Buttermilk. All four have a complete range of trails that are suitable for beginners to experts. The snow conditions of Aspen are top notch most of the ski season.

Vail has 127 trails over an area of more than 5,000 acres and gets over 350 inches of snow a year. It also has access to fabulous off-piste skiing and snowboarding. It has a lively night life and world-class shopping.

Keystone has three mountains for a great choice of trails. All three mountains are accessed from the central village and in total there is 1861 acres of pistes. There is lots of variety for all levels of skiers, wide, gentle slopes for beginners and expert-rated mogul runs for experienced skiers.

Wyoming

Wyoming is home to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. It also boasts one of the best off-piste ski areas in America. Jackson Hole has two ski areas: Rendezvous and Apres Vous. They offer wide open trails for beginners and intermediates. For the advanced skier, there's a good choice of powder bowls ñ Cheyenne, Laramie, and Tensleep are challenging expert level runs with superb snow conditions.

Skiing in Canada

Canada and skiing are made for each other. There are ski areas in almost every province of Canada, but the mountains of British Columbia and Quebec have the best conditions for skiing. Each of these areas has several well-developed ski resorts to choose from.

Western Canada

British Columbia has lots of mountains and lots of famous ski resorts. Whistler-Blackcomb is probably the most famous and will be the setting for the 2010 winter Olympics. Whistler-Blackcomb is just 78 miles from Vancouver. It has the highest vertical drop of any ski resort in North America as well as the largest ski-able area--8,171 acres--more than 50% larger than the largest ski resort in the USA (Vail).

To make the long runs more accessible, several high speed gondolas and chair lifts have been installed. Skiers can get from base to alpine in just 15 minutes ñ a one mile vertical lift. The longest run on Whistler-Blackcomb is an amazing 7 miles. The total number of trails is more than 200, and range in difficulty from beginner to expert. No matter what your level is, you can find a suitable trail at Whistler-Blackcomb. The snowfall here is 360 inches a year, and the snow stays on the mountain year-round for those hardcore skiers who just can't let the season end.

Another popular ski area of British Columbia is the Kootenays. As well as being home to several popular ski resorts like Red Mountain and Kimberly, the Kootenays is also famous for back-country skiing. Skiers can get to pristine powder by either snowcat or helicopter. This is one of the most expensive ski options in the world, but offers more than 80,000 acres of unskied deep powder.

Quebec

The mountains of eastern Canada are nowhere near the height of those in western Canada but still offer respectable skiing. The two main ski areas in Quebec are the Laurentians (close to Montreal) and the Quebec City region.

Mont Tremblant in the Laurentians has been rated as the #1 ski resort in Eastern North America. It has 600 acres of trails with a maximum vertical height of 2,871 feet. The longest trail here is 3.73 miles. There are 94 runs rated from easy to expert. The 12 ski lifts have a capacity of about 27,000 skiers per hour.

Mont Sainte Anne near Quebec City has a slightly lower vertical height than Mont Tremblant (2,050 feet) but offers 64 trails over 450 acres. Because of its northerly latitude it has the longest ski season in Eastern North America. Ski trails are located on 3 sides of the mountain so you can pick trails to stay in the sunshine almost all day long.

There are also 17 lighted trails for night skiing for those who want to extend their ski day to a maximum. With a total of 13 lifts (including two high-speed covered lifts) waiting time is kept to a minimum. The close proximity to Quebec City gives you access to fabulous restaurants and night life after a day of skiing. Quebec City is just 20 miles away from Mont Sainte Anne.

Types of Skiing: Part One

Skiing is a versatile sport, which includes many different styles and methods. Although most people associate skiing with snow it can also be done on water, grass, and sand. It can be done on hills or flat terrain, and it can be done with one ski or two. Let's take a look at the wide world of skiing.

Alpine and Nordic

The two basic styles of snow skiing are alpine (downhill) and Nordic (cross country). The two types use quite different equipment and require different techniques. That's not to say that if you do one kind you can't do the other ñ many skiers enjoy both Nordic and Alpine skiing at various times.

The main difference in equipment is that Nordic ski boots are attached to the ski at the toe only. This allows the heel to be lifted from the ski to allow a striding motion. Alpine ski boots need to be firmly attached to the ski to offer the most control under high speeds and when turning.

Other differences in equipment include ski boots and skis. Ski boots used for Nordic skiing are flexible and low cut compared to the rigid, high boots used in alpine skiing. Nordic skis are longer and thinner than alpine skis to allow them to glide more easily over the snow.

Alpine Skiing

There are many types of alpine skiing including powder, mogul, off and on piste, as well as specific disciplines like free-style, telemark, speed skiing and ski jumping.

Powder

For many skiing enthusiasts powder is the ultimate. The experience of cutting through light pristine snow cannot be matched, so it's no wonder that skiers go to great lengths for the chance to ski in powder. Powder snow refers to snow that is light and dry.

Skiing in these conditions requires a different technique than skiing on groomed trails. The weight has to be further back on the skis and turns are more gradual. The technical finesse is a pleasure to watch and when done properly, powder skiing can be like floating on clouds.

Moguls

Moguls are the bumps that form on a ski hill as a result of many skiers following the same paths down the slope. Some hills can become covered in moguls and skiing them requires a specific technique.

It is important to maintain control when skiing through moguls. It may be frightening to face a hill full of moguls but the key is to take them at a slight angle and to use your downward pole as a pivot point. Use the spring action of your knees to go over the mogul and pivot around the pole at the same time. Learning how to maneuver moguls on easy and intermediate slopes prepares you for the fun and excitement of fast mogul skiing. Maintaining a rhythm to your turns is a great way to stay in control while mastering a mogul field.

Backcountry Skiing

Experienced skiers sometimes get bored with the groomed trails of ski resorts. The call of the wild beckons. Although backcountry skiing can be exciting and challenging it also has dangers, which most ski resorts have removed. Skiers who go backcountry are on their own--there is no ski patrol to get you out of difficulties and the nearest shelter may be miles away. Nonetheless, thousands of people take the challenge of backcountry skiing without any mishaps. Being a strong skier and knowing what to expect are the keys to a successful off-piste excursion.

Types of Skiing: Part Two

In this second article describing the various types of skiing we will take a look at some of the more demanding styles including telemark, speed skiing and ski jumping.

Telemark

Telemark skiing was developed about 140 years ago in Norway and was popular up until the 1940s. It was revived during the 1970s but didn't regain popularity until about 10 years ago.

Telemark skiing is similar to cross-country (Nordic) skiing in that the heel of the foot is not secured to the ski. This makes it a combination of Nordic and Alpine styles ñ it can be used for cross-country skiing and also for downhill runs.

The skis used for telemark are similar to alpine skis, but the binding hold only the toe to the ski. Boots were traditionally made from leather, but in recent years they have become more rigid, with plastic buckled boots becoming the norm. Telemark skis can be used to climb hills by attaching a skin to the bottom of the skis. This provides backwards resistance that prevents the ski from going downhill.

Telemark downhill turns are made by shifting the body weight to the outside ski while bringing it forward. The inside ski is trailed behind by lifting the heel off the ski. The use of poles is optional in telemark--some skiers use none while others use one or two. A single pole is held in both hands and touches the snow only on the inside of the turn.

Speed Skiing

The fastest skiing is speed skiing--going straight down steep slopes. Speeds of up to 150 mph are possible - making speed skiing the second fastest non-motorized sport after skydiving. Needless to say, speed skiing is dangerous. Skiers have to wear padded suits and specialized helmets that cut down wind resistance.

Streamlining is very important in this sport. Everything from the skier's stance to all his equipment is designed to reduce wind resistance. The ski suits are treated with polyurethane to minimize wind drag and the poles are shaped to match the skier's body. Even the runs are chosen for their minimal air resistance ñ most speed skiing runs are on high-altitude mountains.

Ski Jumping

Ski jumping has been a competition sport since 1862. Skiers go down a steep slope to a ramp, which sends them flying through the air for about 60 feet. As far as skiing goes it is one of the most popular spectator sports - ski jump competitions can draw thousands of people.

Ski jumping skis are very specialized. They are very wide and long and the ski attaches to the toe only. Aerodynamics plays a big part in this sport ñ skiers try to get the most lift possible by holding their skis in a 'V' shape and bending forward almost parallel to the skis. This presents as much surface area as possible to keep the skier in the air longer.

The popularity of ski jumping as a spectator sport is not hard to understand--we are literally watching people 'fly'. At the same time, the thought of doing such a feat is both frightening and exhilarating to most people. Regular skiers can get a taste of ski jumping by going over the bumps on their ski trail. For most people, going 3 feet into the air is more than enough.

Snowboarding: Part One

Skiing was originally a snow sport that migrated over to water and other surfaces like grass. Snowboarding is a sport that originated in the water and migrated the other way to the snowy mountains. Snowboarding is like surfing on snow. Surfboards and snowboards have a similar shape and both are controlled by the shifting of weight. There are other similarities too--they are both exhilarating, addictive sports that attract a core of enthusiasts.

Snowboarding was developed in the 1960s but it wasn't until the 1990s that it really took off. Today, snowboarding is almost as popular as skiing and is now an Olympic sport. Besides its similarity to surfing, snowboarding owes a lot of its techniques to skateboarding. Many of the exhibition moves that have become a part of snowboarding were developed from skateboarding.

Snowboarding is often compared to skiing but the two sports require quite different techniques. Whereas skiers control their movements by shifting weight from one ski to another, snowboarders shift their weight from side to side and forwards and backwards.

There are 4 main types of snowboarding and each type uses its own variation on the basic snowboard design.

Freeride

This is the most popular style of snowboarding - freeride snowboards account for 50% of snowboard sales. Freeriders are more focused on the enjoyment of the run itself rather than the tricks or speed practiced in other styles. Freeriders can explore the mountain terrain as they please, through wooded areas or powder bowls or simply on a wide slope.

Freeride snowboards are usually ridden in one direction. The tail (backside) of the board is narrower and flatter than the tip. It can be ridden backwards but usually only for short distances. These boards are easy to maneuver and are suitable for beginners.

Freestyle

Most people associate snowboarding with freestyle--tricks and aerial maneuvers that borrow heavily from skateboarding. Freestyle boards are usually shorter and lighter than other snowboards and the boots are softer. This makes them easier to control and allow greater flexibility in body movements. Freestyle boards are upturned at both ends to allow them to be ridden in either direction.

Alpine

Alpine snowboards are designed for groomed ski trails. The board handles more like a ski--it travels in the same direction as it is pointing (rather than the sliding motion used in other snowboards) and turns are sharper and faster. The boards themselves are longer and narrower than other types of snowboards with the boots angled towards the front. They are designed for speed and are more difficult for the beginner to handle.

Backcountry

This last style of snowboarding was actually the original. In the early days of the sport many ski resorts prohibited snowboards from their trails, so the only option was to hike up a mountain on snowshoes. Today, backcountry snowboarding has a loyal following--some of whom may hire snow cats or helicopters to take them up the mountain.

Freeride boards are the most common for backcountry use, and there are also specialized 'split boards'. These boards are in two detachable halves. When split they can be used as cross-country skis to get up the hill and then they are reattached for the ride down.

Snowboarding: Part Two

Beginner snowboarders are usually better off renting equipment than buying it. This saves you the initial investment while allowing you to become familiar with the sport and the equipment. You can try out various brands and types of boards to get a feel for what's available. All this experience will be invaluable when it comes to buying your own board and boots.

Snowboards come in different shapes depending on how they will be used. For example, freestylers want a board that can be ridden both ways, so these boards have both a nose and a tail that is tilted up. Alpine boards are built for speed so they are shaped more like a ski.

Base

In addition to the shape, the base of the ski can be a big factor in its performance. Most boards have a polyethylene base, which is either 'extruded' or 'sintered'. Extruded bases are found on budget boards--they are easy to manufacture and easy to repair. The downside is that they are the slowest type of base and don't hold wax well.

Sintered bases are found on higher quality boards. They are faster and more durable and take wax better than extruded bases. They are also more expensive--both to buy and to repair. Graphite bases are also available for racing boards. These are the fastest and hold wax the best. They are also very expensive.

Camber

Camber is the arch in the middle of the board. This affects turning ability. Boards with a flat camber turn easily and are suitable for freestyle. Boards with a higher camber apply more pressure to the nose and tail, and are therefore more stable at high speeds.

Sidecut Radius

The sidecut radius is the cutout area in the middle of the board. It is affected by the width of the waist (the narrowest part of the board) and the board's length. Sidecut radius affects turning ability--a board with a small radius can make tight turns but a board with a larger sidecut radius will make broader turns.

Waist

This is the area between the bindings--the narrowest part of the board. The waist has to be wide enough to accommodate your boots, although the narrower the waist the faster the board.

Boots

Good boots are essential for controlling the snowboard and they also need to be comfortable and warm. They are available with either a hard plastic or soft leather shell--soft boots have more flex and are a better choice for beginners. Hard boots offer better high-speed control and are generally used for alpine snowboarding.

Freeride boots usually have an inner boot that can be laced as tightly as needed. The outer boot is stiff enough to provide extra support. Freestyle boots are more flexible and lower cut--the inners are usually molded. Alpine boots are higher than other snowboarding boots to provide support for the ankle and lower leg.

Bindings

Bindings are made for a particular style of boot, so boots and bindings are usually bought in combination. There are 3 basic types of bindings: flow-in, step-in, and lever. The most popular with freestylers and freeriders are the flow-in because they offer the most flexibility and comfort.

Step-in bindings are easy to get in and out of but require boots to match the particular set of bindings. Lever bindings are very solid and give the most control over the board. They are suitable for alpine snowboarding.

Snow Conditions for Skiing

Beginner skiers are sometimes dismayed by snow conditions that can change from day to day. Just when you've got the feel of one type of snow you are suddenly faced with icy patches or crud. Don't worry! You will soon get the hang of it, and these different types are a big part of what make skiing so fun and exciting.

Snow texture on ski trails is affected by both weather conditions and the number of people who are skiing the trail. Snow can vary in moisture and density, usually the colder the weather the drier the snow. The longer that snow stays on the ground the denser it becomes. When many skiers are using a trail of older snow icy patches usually develop because the action of the skis over the snow causes it to melt and then freeze.

Here are a few snow conditions you are likely to encounter throughout the season:

Powder

Skiers love powder! This is fresh, soft snow, untouched by other skiers. Skiing through a powder field is considered the ultimate skiing experience by many enthusiasts, and some will go to great lengths to get to powder. Powder requires a different technique, though, and the beginner may fall a lot. Not to worry--the snow is soft enough and dry enough to make even falling a pleasure!

The biggest challenge when skiing powder is to keep your weight evenly distributed over the skis. Because the snow is so soft, excess pressure on one ski will cause it to sink. Weight also has to be distributed from front to back, so shifting your center of gravity more to the rear is necessary.

Crud

Crud is powder that has been skied on. As more skiers go down the slope the trail becomes a patchwork of soft and packed snow. This presents the challenge of constantly varying snow as you progress down the slope. Skiing on crud can be fun but requires a more aggressive technique than skiing on powder. The knees should be kept bent to absorb the impact of the larger pieces of snow and you have to be constantly alert to what is coming up.

Crust

Crusty snow has a hard surface on top of softer powder. It is caused when the sun melts the top layer of snow and it refreezes. Crusts can be either hard or soft. Hard crusts usually present no problem because the skier will stay on top, but softer crusts will break. Skiing through soft crust can be a real challenge because your sideways movements will be somewhat restricted. The most challenging of all is a mixture of hard and soft crusts. Hitting a patch of hard crust while skiing through a soft crust can cause you to fall.

Ice

Ice is the most challenging and the least fun. If your skis are angled as they go over ice they will slip out from underneath causing you to fall or lose your balance. Usually only parts of the slope have ice patches and they can be spotted by their different color. The key to skiing icy slopes is to keep alert and flatten your skis whenever passing over an ice patch.

Slush

Slush is very soft, wet snow. It is created by rising temperatures that cause the snow to melt. Because the snow is heavy more effort is needed to make turns. Gentle, gradual turns are more successful than quick maneuvers, which may cause your skis to get caught in the snow and make you fall. Falling in slush is not fun! If you are a hard-core skier trying to get the last few days out of the season, maybe you can tolerate slush. Most skiers are better off avoiding it.

Turning Techniques

Skiing has been a popular sport for about 150 years. During that time various techniques have been developed for navigating down snowy slopes. Some of these techniques eventually lost popularity but there are a few enduring methods that are still in use today.

Telemark

The earliest skiing technique was developed by Norwegian Sondre Norheim in the 1860s. It became extremely popular and was in continual use until the 1940s. Telemark turns are accomplished by letting the downhill ski trail behind the uphill ski by bending the knee of the downhill ski. The skier's weight is shifted to the uphill ski which forces the skis to turn.

Although telemark skiing lost out in popularity to stem skiing and parallel skiing, it enjoyed a revival in the 1970s and today enjoys a loyal following ñ mostly among those who combine cross-country skiing with downhill skiing.

Stem Skiing

Stemming was introduced by the Austrian skier Mathias Zdarsky in the 1890s. It involves pushing the uphill ski away from the downhill ski to form a 'V'. Zdarsky went on to train the Austrian army with this skiing technique during the First World War. Most beginner skiers are familiar with stemming in the form of the snowplough.

Stemming can be used for controlling the speed of the skis as well as for turning. By angling the skis inward and applying pressure to their inside edges the skis can be slowed and stopped. Snowplough turns are done by angling the uphill ski away from the downhill ski while shifting the weight. As the turn is finished the two skis are brought parallel to traverse the slope.

Parallel Skiing

Parallel turns were introduced in the 1930s. This style of skiing paved the way for high speed alpine skiing--in fact, it can only be done at relatively fast speeds. Parallel turns are accomplished by angling the outside ski toward the direction you want to turn. For example, if you want to turn right, you have to apply pressure to the right edge of the left ski. This forces the skis to cut into the snow on one side and turn.

As the name implies, parallel skiing involves keeping the two skis parallel to each other. Weight can be quickly shifted from one ski to the other to perform fast, tight turns. However, the cutting action of the ski edge makes the ski lose a bit of speed, so to overcome this, carve turns were developed.

Carve Turns

Carve turns became possible with the development of shaped skis in the 1990s. The shape of the ski allows it to turn naturally by placing weight on it, so high speed turns can be accomplished without any of the skidding associated with parallel turns.

In order to master carving technique you have to control the weight distribution over each ski. In particular, the weight must be smoothly shifted from ski to ski as each turn is finished.

The turning ability of a shaped ski is determined by its sidecut radius. Skis with a deep sidecut (the 'cutaway' section of the ski under the boot) can turn more easily than those with a shallow sidecut.

How to Tune and Maintain Your Snowboard Equipment

To get the best performance from your snowboard it should be tuned on a regular basis. You can take it to the shop for a pro tuning but if you want to save a bit of money do it yourself. It's not hard and doesn't require many tools. There's one thing you shouldn't attempt on your own: smoothing the base. This job requires a specialized grinder, so if you find your base is not even, take it to the shop rather than try to fix it yourself. Without the proper tools you are likely to make it worse.

Edges

Begin with the edges. There is a metal strip around the perimeter of the snowboard that contacts the snow. It may become damaged by hitting rocks or other hard objects, and this causes the edge to become jagged and rough.

Run your finger along the edge to feel for imperfections. It's better to catch them when they are small. Ideally the edges should be touched up after every day on the slopes.

To tune the edges you need a small sharpening stone. Start with the base edge - the part that is at the bottom of the board. Keep the stone parallel to the bottom of the board and run it lightly along the length of the edge.

When the base edge is smooth, turn the board on its side so you can do the side edge. The side edge gives you grip during turns, so it should be sharp enough to dig into ice. When tuning the side edge you can shape it so that it is 90 degrees with the base or you can make a slight outward angle. This makes a sharper edge, which is more effective in icy conditions.

Base

The base should be examined at the end of every snowboarding day. Any deep gouges should be taken care of immediately. Regular base maintenance should be done after every 5 snowboarding days.

Begin by cleaning the base with a special base cleaner that will dissolve old wax and dirt. Examine the base for gouges ñ they can be fixed with a special compound that melts into the base.

The base should be waxed on a regular basis to keep the snowboard running fast. Old wax will actually slow you down by creating an uneven surface on the bottom of the board.

Begin by scraping the base with a plastic scraper. Then take an iron (either a special waxing iron or an old clothes iron) and hold it against the wax so that it drips onto the surface of the base. Don't heat up the wax to the point where it smokes or you will destroy the wax properties.

Drip the hot wax over the base and then smooth it out by running the iron back and forth. Let it cool down and then remove any excess wax with a rubbing pad.

Storage

During the summer the snowboard should be stored in a cool dry place. Many people put their boards in the basement but the excess humidity can be harmful to the board and the bindings.

Before storing it, the snowboard should be waxed. This will protect the metal edges from rusting and also allow the wax to seep into the base for a more durable surface.

Boots should also be stored with care, especially soft boots. Clean them well and apply a softening compound like neats foot oil over the surface of the boot. During the summer they can be stuffed with newspaper to help absorb any excess moisture.

Body and Ski Alignment

Have you ever noticed that some people can ski all day and still be full of energy while other people are moaning and groaning after a few hours? Some of that has to do with being in shape. Skiers who are in good physical condition, though, and are still suffering after a day's skiing, may benefit from a body and ski alignment.

Postural alignment can improve your skiing ability by teaching you to regulate your center of balance. Once the techniques of alignment have been absorbed, you will use them unconsciously to experience greater skiing control and greater comfort in your boots.

Most of us have limbs and joints, which are somewhat out of alignment with the rest of our bodies. The degree of this misalignment can determine our comfort level while doing physical activities like skiing. In fact, skiing is likely to exaggerate any problems with alignment because of the rigidity the equipment imposes on your posture.

While walking or going about our daily activities we unconsciously compensate for our misaligned bodies, but as soon as we strap on a pair of skis these problems come to the forefront. If you experience pain and discomfort while skiing or simply want to bring your skiing ability to a new level, body and ski alignment may be for you.

How it Works

Misaligned limbs are usually the result of inappropriately tensed muscle groups that attempt to compensate for hips, which are out of alignment. This hip problem is very common and has the

effect of dropping one leg lower than the other. There is usually not a physical difference in leg lengths, but the angle of the hips causes one leg to extend lower than the other.

In order to compensate for this, muscle groups of the 'longer' leg will unconsciously tighten to make that leg 'shorter'. These contracted muscles can produce a ripple effect by causing the muscles on one side of the back to contract, throwing off your center of balance.

Body alignment sessions teach you to restore your natural sense of balance by relaxing the muscles and allowing the body to truly balance. Once this feeling has been experienced, the body naturally 'remembers' the sensation and will adopt that same stance.

To apply these principals to skiing, the body has to learn how to balance in the 'unnatural' confinement of ski boots. Once the initial sessions have re-established your balance, additional sessions must be conducted while wearing ski boots.

Ski boots restrict your stance so finding your center of balance while wearing them is not as intuitive as with bare feet. The therapist will work with you while you are wearing your boots to help you find a comfortable balance.

This work can greatly improve your confidence and flexibility when on the slopes. Having a firm center of gravity allows you to balance more easily and recover from sudden movements.

Those who have gone through ski and body alignment sessions report that their skiing ability has improved and that they experience less pain. These sessions are suitable for all levels of skiers.

You are invited to pass this report along to as many people as you like, provided that you make no changes to it and that you give it away for FREE.

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