

NEW SKIER LESSONS: HOW MANY DO YOU REALLY NEED?

Taking one or more lessons is a great way to get a head start on skiing, and it's highly recommended that you plan to take a lesson if you have never skied before. Although ice skating and rollerblading are very similar to alpine skiing, the technique skiers use can be somewhat counterintuitive for new skiers. However, ski instructors are trained to combine your expectations with the best possible instruction to help you achieve your goals. Determining how many lessons you'll need depends on whether you are planning to ski for one day or several in a row, and if your goals are to ease into the sport or quickly challenge yourself. Either way, group or private lessons can have you comfortably venturing around the mountain.

Alpine skiing is a lot like hiking except that you are choosing a trail to take you to the bottom of the hill, instead of climbing to the top. Both activities offer different choices depending on your preference of taking it easy or challenging yourself. Trail maps are the ski resorts guide to navigating down the hill, and are marked according to steepness and level of difficulty. Trails marked by a green circle are considered the easiest and best place for beginners to gain confidence with their new stopping and turning skills. Intermediate trails, marked by a blue square, are steeper and more challenging. Expert runs are marked by a black diamond, and generally require that you know a variety of techniques for turning in different types of snow conditions to ski them comfortably.

Group and private lessons are the two main types of instruction available to skiers. Group lessons can vary in size from three to over ten people. They are a great way to meet other folks learning the sport for the first time, and share in the excitement of sliding and making your first turns. Ideally resorts try to keep the instructor to student ratio small, but during busy holiday periods group sizes can become quite large. Take the time when signing up to ask about the average group size. Private lessons on the other hand give you a unique opportunity to have the entire lesson tailored to your personal goals and expectations. Private lessons can be just for one person or booked to accommodate you, your friends, and family. During a private lesson you will ski at your own pace and be able to customize the lesson depending on how quickly you learn to balance, slide, stop, and turn on your skis.

While many new skiers learn how to navigate the beginner trails in one day, others find that taking a couple of lessons gives them the skills and guided practice they need for skiing a variety of trails. To get the most out of your first experience, have the ski school recommend a lesson package based on the number of days you'll be staying at the resort, and the type of trails you're hoping to ski.

