

WHAT LEVEL SKIER ARE YOU?

Often the first question skiers encounter when taking a lesson is, "What level skier are you?" This question may be confusing and most people respond with a description of the trails they ski. Resorts across the country use a similar classification system for describing your skiing ability, and generally organize groups into three main categories: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Whether you are visiting the Green Mountains of Vermont or the Sierra's in California, the following guide will provide you with information about how to evaluate your own skiing and choose the right lesson.

The Beginning Phase (Levels 1-3): This phase covers people who have never skied before up through those making turns and mastering the easy "green" trails!

Level 1: This lesson is a new skier's paradise and geared towards helping you become more comfortable with your equipment and learning how to slide on skis.

Level 2: Skiers starting in a level 2 lesson are generally looking to get more information about how to turn or improving their ability to change direction. If it's been a long time since you've skied and you don't remember how to turn, this may a good place to start.

Level 3: Once you can link turns together on easy green trails you have reached level 3. Now you're ready to learn how to vary the shape of the turns for speed control and venture onto new trails.

THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE (Levels 4-6): This area is fairly broad and refers to skiers who can link turns on green or blue trails, or using the parallel technique on easy black runs.

Level 4: When you can ski all types of green trails confidently and are ready to start venturing onto blue terrain or other intermediate trails. Skiers generally use a combination of the snow plough and parallel while making their turns.

Level 5: The level 5 lesson is for skiers who can comfortably make turns on easy blue trails but want to improve their use of the parallel technique.

Level 6: This level best describes skiers that are getting more comfortable skiing parallel on blue trails. Lessons will help develop the skills needed to ski a variety of trails.

THE ADVANCED PHASE (Levels 7-9): This area covers skiers who are linking turns on steeper trails and comfortable in a variety of snow conditions.

Level 7: These skiers are comfortable on blue and some black trails. Lessons at this level may include improving pole usage to assist skiing steeper terrain, and skill improvement for moguls and off-piste.

Level 8: When you can ski a variety of turns comfortably on different types of trails including very steep black terrain, moguls and powder.

Level 9: Skiers at this level are quite comfortable skiing all terrain in all conditions and at a variety of speeds. Lessons for these skiers focus on refining their skills and strengthening their versatility.

The phases and levels described can help you rank your skiing and guide you towards the lesson level for building your skills. Note that when signing up for a lesson, there are a range of instructional programs at ski schools. In previous articles we reviewed women's adventure clinics, adaptive lessons, mountain adventures, and introduction to the terrain park features.

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