

TIPS FOR PLANNING YOUR FIRST SKI LESSON

The beauty of alpine skiing is that whether you're 5 or 50 (or beyond) you can enjoy the sport. Skiing holds something in store for everyone whether you like to go at your own pace or be challenged by the mountains natural terrain features. Learning to ski doesn't require special athletic ability or prior sports experience. Some people are inspired to start skiing by joining a ski club or going with family and friends. Regardless of what led you to the slopes, taking a lesson from a qualified professional ski instructor is the easiest and quickest way to help you become a skier!

Once you've decided which mountain you'll be skiing, check-out their website and look for beginner incentive packages. Most resorts have programs in place that include your lift ticket, equipment, and lessons. Often they will offer you a "learn to ski" package with the opportunity to purchase a couple of lessons in advance to be used immediately or over the course of the season. Remember that during busy holiday periods you'll want to plan ahead and allow extra time to get set up with equipment and your instructor.

Rent your equipment before you buy or borrow. As a new skier you'll want to take advantage of modern boots and skis that have been specifically designed to make learning to ski easier. Plan ahead and allow about 30 minutes in the rental shop to get set-up. Be prepared to try on a couple of different boots to make sure you have the right size and that you are comfortable. The rental technician will ask you to complete a rental agreement that is used to properly adjust your release bindings. You'll be asked to provide information such as weight, height, age, and Skier Type (there are 3 types). Skier Type refers to the speed and steepness of the trails you'll be skiing. First time skiers who do not express a preference are classified as Type 1. The technician will suggest an appropriate ski and pole length as well as explain how to enter, exit, and care for the bindings. Whether you rent at the resort or in town, bring an extra bag to make transporting your gear easier while you locate "basket check" or storage lockers.

Weather conditions at the mountain can vary from morning to afternoon. Often it's warm and sunny outside the lodge but is can be windy and colder further up the mountain. In order to be prepared dress in layers. Wearing an inner layer of thermal underwear, a middle layer that insulates such as fleece or a sweater, and an outer layer that includes wind and water resistant jacket and pants, will help you stay warm and dry the entire day. Some rental shops will carry all the gear (equipment & clothing) you need for the day, call ahead to see what they offer. Listed below are some suggestions for clothing and gear.

CHECKLIST FOR PERSONAL AND PROTECTIVE GEAR:

Water Resistant Pants and Jacket	Gloves or Mittens
Hat or Helmet	Goggles (sunglasses weather permitting)
Thermal Underwear	Hand Warmers (fit into gloves/mittens)
Fleece or Sweater	Neck Warmer (protects face from snow)
Ski Specific Socks	Sunscreen

Ski schools offer a variety of options for new skiers. You can choose from group or private lessons in the adult or children's programs, and some resorts may provide adaptive lessons for individuals with special needs. Group lessons don't require reservations but they may vary in size depending on holiday and busy periods. If you are interested in private lessons you may want to make a reservation (especially if it's busy or if you'd like to request a specific instructor).

A new skier lesson (level I) begins by establishing your goals and determining the best way to meet them. Next, your instructor will show you how to use your equipment and help you re-buckle your boots if needed. Once you are comfortable with walking in your boots they'll show you how to balance on your skis. Instructors will then guide you through the process of sliding on your skis and learning how to stop and turn. Most new skiers find that it's helpful to take a couple of lessons that teach them different techniques for turning and how to use the lifts. This helps them see more of the mountain and get better quicker.

Alpine skiing can be a life long sport for anyone willing to give it a try. It's an opportunity to participate in a winter activity regardless of your age or athletic ability. Skiing can be enjoyed as an individual, couple, family, or group experience. Professional ski instruction will help you master the sport from your first day through developing advanced skills to fully enjoy the mountain adventure.

