

TERRAIN PARK PROGRAMS

Here is the final segment in a set of four articles discussing ski school programs. The following will introduce you to taking a lesson in the terrain park. Resorts have different types and levels of terrain parks located around the mountain. These parks offer the challenges of learning how to jump, ski in the half pipe, or slide the fun box and rails. A professional ski instructor can help you learn the basics or advance your abilities with new skills and thrills.

Description of Program:

Terrain park lessons can be taken as a group or individually. They are catered to your personal interests and may be either a general introduction to all the park features or specialized to one area. Some mountains offer special week long camps or weekend programs throughout the season. Trail maps now have a special orange oval which identifies the terrain park and whether it is geared towards smaller jumps and rails close to the ground or larger features for experienced park skiers. Progression parks are designed to begin with easy jumps and gradually progress to more challenging ones.

Types Available:

Terrain park lessons may begin on groomed trails where you can practice springing up and landing, jumping on small trail side features and learning to ski backwards. Once you transition to jumps in the park the instructor will review how to approach the jump, take off into the air, maneuver in the air (which could be a trick like grabbing one ski or just staying in balance), and how to land. Lessons in the half-pipe (a large u-shaped snow tunnel) are not just for expert skiers and can be fun even if you are not trying to catch some air. Learning the technique for sliding the fun box and rails can take a little more patience while working on your balance.

Equipment:

If you are taking a terrain park lesson to learn how to slide rails, ski backwards, or use the other man made features, consider renting a pair of twin tip skis that are designed for the park. These skis are more flexible than standard skis to help absorb landings, built with thicker edges for wear and tear on the rails, and have a turned up tail to aid skiing backwards or "switch".

Benefits:

Terrain parks can be hours of fun for all ages. Taking a terrain park lesson will help you understand park etiquette, become more confident, and learn how to safely explore all the features. These areas are a new challenge, although they bring the culture of skate and roller blade parks to the mountains, they are not exclusively for the younger generation.

Recommendations:

Call ahead or check the resorts website for information on their parks and lesson packages. If you are interested in a private lesson you may want to reserve this in advance, especially during holiday periods. Some resorts will require you wear a helmet during a terrain park lesson. These can be purchased or rented at the mountains retail and rental shops.