

## THE MOUNTAIN JOURNAL

# SKIER DEVELOPMENT: SELECT DRILLS TO ENHANCE SKILLS

by TONY D. CRESPI, TECHNICAL EDITOR

I do not know if artists have days when they cannot get it right, but skiers certainly do. Some days, it just seems, the mountain can feel less than hospitable to the art of carving a turn.

Certainly, during an off day, certain hesitancy is understandable. After all, it would be foolish to expect our muscles to always remember the intricate movement patterns required for black diamond skiing.

How, though, can skiers cope? How can skiers turn visual images of clean, sharp, turns into reality? The ideal way, of course, is to start in good condition. That's one key. Another key? Good skiers often practice skill-building drills.

Here is one opening tip to remember before you explore our triage of pointers: keep it fun. That is, enjoy yourself. Play. Laugh. Smile. Grin. And do not take it very seriously.

Keep things in perspective. We are not learning surgery. We are simply practicing drills that can enhance your skiing skills. Try not to lose sight of that. So smile, grin and keep it light.

## Ski School Pointer: Turning To Long Turn Success

What kind of turns do you like best? Short turns? Long turns? Most skiers tend to prefer certain kinds of turns. But different kinds of turns demand different kinds of skills. You probably already know that, but we sometimes forget it after a busy summer away from the mountain.

"It works on your ability to meter out rotary movements," reflects John Baymore, a division clinic leader for PSIA, the assistant ski school director at Bromley Mountain and a sufficiently gifted pro. "Turning longer helps you focus on the precision. Look at the track of your skis and make sure you see a roundish shape rather than a straight line or straight skid. Look for an arc as the shape."

Stop a moment and mentally select your favorite turn. Think about the kind of snow and terrain that you like to ski. It is best to refine skills on snow and on terrain where you feel most comfortable. This diminishes the mental component to the game.

As a general rule of thumb, it's a good idea to start practicing slow, "long" turns. That's right. Long, round, clean, turns! Even if you prefer short turns.

### Long turns are a great warm-up.

To start, find well-groomed snow on moderate terrain. Try to ski slowly. You can turn up the volume later. Initially, try to emphasize weighting the outside, downhill ski.

### Stay loose and relaxed.

As you initiate each new turn, keep emphasizing the weighting of the downhill, outside ski. Take your time. Keep your hands forward. Try to feel the snow.

Fine-tuning long turns is a critical ingredient to advanced skiing. Just as tennis players must maintain certain basic skills to stay on top of their game, the accomplished skiers know that the long turn is the foundation for advanced skiing skills.

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## Ski School Tip: Set the Accelerator To High Performance

Some people think that better means faster. But that is not necessarily true. One important skill to refine involves speed control.

To refine your speed control, think about modifying the shape of your turns. That is to say, if you find yourself motoring along at a pace that is simply too fast, try to give your turns a more pronounced "C" shape.

Too often, people simply traverse straight across the hill, using a quick jamming, slamming, action to turn direction. But, straight traverses linked together with quick jamming changes in direction do not provide the same kind of speed control, rhythm and smooth fluid feeling that a round arc-shaped turn can accomplish.

"Speed control is vitally important," emphasizes long-time PSIA course conductor and veteran PSIA Examiner Charlie Rockwell, the director of education at Bromley. "It is so important to work on the skill blends, feel comfortable, and choose a speed at which you can most comfortably advance."

"People often thinking increasing skill is going faster, but always going warp ten is not ideal," emphasizes Baymore. "We ask our pros to keep the same movements but go slower. And slower. How slow can you go while accurately blending skills and actually keeping a simultaneous release of both skis into the turn? Speed can hide a multitude of inaccuracies."

To refine your turn shape, start by choosing a favorite run. Choose a place you are "really" comfortable. Then, try guiding your skis from one turn into the next, giving the turns a definite round, C-shaped arc. Practice one or two turns at a time as you begin. See how much speed dissipates if you actually overturn, turning "up" the hill at the end of the turn. Gradually start to link more and more turns together.

**BE AWARE,  
SKI WITH CARE,  
KEEP IT FUN**

To be sure, speed is an elixir. But it can also be intimidating. The key to black diamond skiing is to learn how to control that speed. One strategy is to work on modifying the shape of your turns.

Make your turns C-shaped. Whether you are enjoying shaped or traditional skis, learning to execute different shaped turns can help give you better speed control.

### WATCH THAT ACCELERATOR.

## Ski School Tip: Getting in Balance for the Season

One of the most unsettling feelings for a skier is feeling out-of-balance. Whether sliding out of control on ice, or feeling out of sink in the moguls, good skiers seem to have the knack for staying in balance.

"This is a critical skill," emphasizes Rockwell, who has trained, tested and been involved in certifying ski pros at resorts throughout the East. "People often are falling in or out of balance. It can be a fundamental component to help refine balancing."

"To refine balance I dial the speed way down and find easier terrain," adds Baymore. "If you want to be accurate, you need to know when things break down. During the first days of a season, if you dive into terrain for which your body may not be ready, you are primed for failure. We need to find what feels good. I ski conservatively and try to make sure I am initiating turns appropriately. I try not to impress anybody. I work on accuracy! Then I build off of that and turn it up as my muscle memory returns."

The next time you go skiing, before you take your first run, take a minute and regain your balance. To start, find a flat piece of snow. Then, after putting on your skis and before you start down the mountain, slowly rock forward in your boots, and then rock backward. Start slowly. As you move forward, feel the front of your boots touch against your shins. Then, very gradually, rock backward.

### Like a swing move forward and back.

Gradually reduce the range of motion, until you find your center of balance. Practice before the first few runs. Practice mid-mountain and feel that centered position.

For intermediate and advanced skiers, gradually move this drill from a standing position to a skiing position. That is, on moderate, groomed terrain, while executing several long traverses, gradually rock forward and backward. As you ski, try to find that position which feels most comfortable. Initially, try several slow turns rocking forward. Then execute several turns rocking slightly backward. Then try skiing in a centered, position, square with your body and skis.

One hallmark of an accomplished skier is a centered, square stance. Refine your balance. Stop. Stand still. Gradually rock yourself forward and backward. Find your centered position. Then, try to keep that feeling on the mountain.

### BE AWARE. SKI WITH CARE. KEEP IT FUN.

Technical Editor Tony D. Crespi has served as both a ski school supervisor and development team coach. A frequent contributor to publications throughout snow country, his column is published throughout the season.

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