

Article 2

Development and Progression of Skiing Skill for Entry Level Children

Introduction

Directed and undirected free skiing is the cornerstone of skill development. This section will present some important aspects of how skill development occurs and will provide some practical guidelines that a coach can utilize in his/her efforts to introduce fundamental skiing skills and be effective in skill acquisition. Programming that incorporates the following components will help maximize skiing skill development.

- Supervised Free Skiing
- Drills and games in free skiing
- Obstacle courses and terrain gardens
- Giant slalom in gates
- Giant slalom gate training
- Slalom drills

The entry level coach can maximize skill development by ensuring that he/she utilizes the following in his/her program:

- knowledge of eight motor skills
- knowledge of the planes of balance and movement
- knowledge of the tactical approach to skill development
- planning your training program with specific goals and objectives
- awareness of children's abilities at this level
- terrain selection for skill acquisition
- drill selection (drill/skill matching)
- terrain selection to challenge diversity and versatility

Fundamental Skill Development

Skill acquisition in skiing at the entry level is accomplished through free skiing activities. There is a simple and effective method of ensuring skill development and that is through free skiing as many vertical feet as possible ensuring the following:

- utilizing flat terrain for skill acquisition
- challenging the children by using a variety of snow conditions
- employing a variety of turning radii
- utilizing a variety of terrain to challenge
- employing a variety of coaching intervention methods
- utilizing mental skill training techniques (breathing, goal setting, focus, activation control, visualization)

The most effective coach is the one who is capable of setting up a "safe learning environment" and allowing the children to learn through task teaching and/or guided discovery.

**SAY IT
SHOW IT
DO IT**

**“A picture is worth a thousand words”
“A feeling is worth a thousand pictures”**

An effective coach must employ a variety of coaching methods in order to accommodate the various learning styles by which children learn. The coach should act as a facilitator in order to make complex movements easy to acquire and then act as an observer who is ready to provide timely and relevant feedback. The coaches' method of instruction must match the children's style of learning in order for skill acquisition to take place.

DO NOT RUSH INTO GATES

Sequential training from open hill skill training to games, exercises and drills with bamboo, foamies or stubbies and eventually gates, requires planning and patience. It is imperative that the children are perceiving, patterning and in some cases adapting line and turn shape in free skiing before being introduced to a gate training environment. It must be understood that children need to be allowed to progress through the stages of skill development once gate training is introduced. Practice time that promotes a high success rate should be allowed in order for the youngsters to perceive and pattern the specialized requirements in a gate training environment. The sequence of events should follow a pattern such as the following:

- technical/tactical free skiing
- games and exercises in gates (obstacle courses, over/under)
- drill courses - rhythm, rhythm change
- gate training
- competition (team environment)

An effective coach should plan his/her sessions in gates with specific tactical objectives in mind:

- line
- turn shape
- rhythm
- looking ahead

It is important for the coach to teach the children how to monitor their anxiety and activation levels so that learning takes place. Planning and conducting a creative session which employs elements of mental skills training, variety and **FUN** while learning will always be successful and motivating. Above all, keep your learning environment **SAFE** by being aware of the inherent risks in gate training.