

CLASS PROGRESSIONS WITH SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

Beginner through Open Parallel

The four primary skills are:

BALANCE
PRESSURE CONTROL
STEERING
EDGE CONTROL

An * has been placed by the dominant skill or skills at each level

LEVEL 1 CLASS PROGRESSION

- I. Introduction of instructor to student, student assessment
- II. Introduction to Equipment
 - A. Parts of the skis and bindings
 - B. Carrying the skis and poles
 - C. Putting the skis on
 - D. Taking the skis off
 - E. Opening the bindings
 - F. Putting on the pole straps and holding the poles
 - * BALANCE - balancing on uneven terrain in unfamiliar foot gear while carrying something
- III. Moving on the flats
 - A. Scootering - one ski on and one off; straight and in a circle both directions, switch feet
 - B. Walking - slide one foot ahead of the other, poles to the side for balance. Slide the feet, do not pick feet up
 - C. Sliding - push with the poles with feet even, weight even
 - D. "Star" turn - around in both directions, eyes looking up
 1. Variations
 - a. Tips close, tails step around: wedge position, "sundial"
 - b. Tails together, tips step around: Herringbone, "clock face"
 - c. Using poles to support weight as on a hill, arms extended: bullfighter stance
 - E. Balance exercises - athletic stance (weight over feet, evenly distributed foot to foot, all joints flexed with feet, hips and shoulders aligned, hands in front, looking ahead)
 1. Rock back and forth, side to side
 2. Touch toes
 3. Move up and down
 4. Balance on one foot, then the other foot
 5. Pick up one foot and twist it in the air, then do other foot
 6. Hop
 7. Stepping sideways, both directions
 - * BALANCE - moving on an unfamiliar and slippery surface necessitates a strong focus on balancing.
 - * PRESSURE CONTROL - distributing pressure evenly from foot to foot while sliding.
ROTARY - twisting the skis to change direction as in a star turn or keeping them straight while sliding.
EDGE CONTROL - learning to keep skis flat while sliding and using the edge to maneuver in a circle while scootering.

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IV. Getting up

- A. When a fall is inevitable, relax and sit/fall to the side if at all possible
 - B. Rest, and slowly align skis side by side across the fall line and downhill from your body
 - C. Put feet apart, almost sitting on the uphill ski which should be across the fall line
 - D. Place hands in front of knees and lean forward and push up
 - E. Walk hand toward feet with head down and hips in the air until standing
 - F. Align downhill ski to match uphill ski across fall line before standing on it. There are many ways to get up after a fall. This is just one way that works for a majority of students.
 - G. Alternate methods
 1. Take uphill ski off, stand up
 2. Lay on stomach with skis downhill, tips out, push up and walk hands towards feet until standing
 3. Do like 2 but use poles to push up to standing
- * BALANCE - hips must be over the feet while getting up in order to be successful.
PRESSURE CONTROL - weight is over the feet in the center and primarily on the uphill foot until the downhill ski is re-aligned.
EDGE CONTROL - edges become engaged which helps prevent them from slipping sideways while getting up.

V. Climbing Up A Hill

- A. Herringbone - with the skis in a "V" position, the inside edges of both skis are engaged and weight is shifted from foot to foot to climb up the hill. Pole points planted behind the feet to prevent slipping backwards.
- B. Side Step - with skis across the fall line, the uphill edges are engaged sideways by tilting the knees towards the hill; weight is shifted from foot to foot while stepping uphill.
- C. Transition from herringbone to side stepping - use poles behind the feet to prevent slipping backwards while turning sideways.
- D. Bullfighter Stance - turn to face downhill by using poles in front and downhill, support weight while turning skis to point downhill at the start of a run.

VI. Balanced Gliding Down A Hill

- A. Straight run - athletic stance. Use a hill with a long, flat runout whenever possible
 - B. Balance exercises - as above III., E., 1 through 7
 - C. Combination of exercises above
- * BALANCE - weight over the center of the foot
* PRESSURE CONTROL - pressure even on both feet
ROTARY - keeping the skis parallel and pointed straight
EDGE CONTROL - keeping the skis flat

VII. Gliding Wedge

- A. Stand in a wedge position while standing still (static) on flat terrain
- B. Move one ski out then the other, then both at the same time with skis relatively flat (letter A position, arrow, piece of pizza, triangle) on flat terrain
- C. Straight gliding wedge - toes pointing in and heels pushing apart and skis relatively flat on gentle

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VIII. Braking Wedge

- A. Start in a gliding wedge, brush out tails to a wider wedge - emphasize wider wedge but not trying to edge
- B. Try stopping on the hill before the flat
- C. For those having difficulty, start on the flat and push the student from behind. Have them try to resist your pushing to a stop. Try again on the hill
 - * BALANCE - weight over the center of the foot
 - * PRESSURE CONTROL - pressure even on both feet, weight over both feet
 - ROTARY - twisting the feet and skis, toes in and heels out to create a bigger wedge
 - EDGE CONTROL - edging of the skis is a result of the skis being displaced out to the side of the body and is not an active edge engagement

Optional Exercises

- A. Ski without poles (especially for those having trouble relaxing). No poles helps them to focus on the feet better, relax muscles they do not need to use and become more aware of their hand and upper body position.
- B. Additional ways to turn around and get started down the hill
 - 1. Small steps around in wedge position without poles
 - 2. One big hop to face down hill
 - 3. Small hops to face down hill
- C. Longer straight run to gain a little speed with a gradual wedge to a wedge stop
- D. Whatever else you can think of

At this point, if the student shows good control of the wedge and braking wedge and the terrain is gentle, you may want to go to the chair lift. If the hill to be used is steeper and maintaining speed control with a braking wedge may be difficult for most students, turns should be worked on first.

IX. Riding The Chair

- A. Getting on the chair
 - 1. Watch people load
 - 2. Poles held in one hand (near partner if appropriate)
 - 3. Slide out in front of the chair immediately following the previous chair, skis pointed up the hill and parallel
 - 4. Relax!
 - BALANCE - walking with weight over the center of the feet
 - PRESSURE CONTROL - walking out in front of the chair, weight is moved from foot to foot
 - * ROTARY - turning the skis to point uphill to align with the chair if appropriate
- B. Getting off the chair
 - 1. Look for the exit and watch people getting off if possible as you approach
 - 2. Poles in one hand away from your partner
 - 3. Scoot forward on the chair seat so it is easier to get off
 - 4. Free hand goes on the seat to help you get to a standing position
 - 5. When feet touch the snow at the top, smoothly stand up and rock forward so hips and shoulders are over your feet or a little forward. Don't push away from the chair as it will swing back and cause you to lose balance.
 - 6. Get off with skis straight or parallel and brush or slide into a wedge once away from your partner

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7. Move quickly out of the exit area. Group up off to the side
 8. If you fall, scoot to the side and out of the way before standing up
 9. Watch others getting off the chair for more success in the future
- * BALANCE - Moving the hips over the feet while making the transition from sitting to standing while getting off of the chair.

LEVEL 2 CLASS PROGRESSION

I. Wedge Turns

A. Holistic Progression

1. Make small deviations from the fall line on a very gentle hill or very gradually veer to one direction (without saying "turn"). A guiding of both feet is important. Imagine you are standing on a triangular piece of plywood and direct it where you want to go
2. Gradually round out the turns and begin to complete the turns to aid in speed control. The students should follow the instructor's track. This will help tremendously. OR -

B. Linear Progression

1. Static - pick up one ski and turn it in the air. Then put it on the ground and try to turn it making a "bow"
2. Moving - start in a shallow gliding wedge traverse and try to gradually turn up the hill
3. Gradually increase the steepness of the starting traverse until able to turn out of the fall in
4. Continue the fan progression until a whole turn can be made
5. Connect turns and gradually round out and finish turns to help control speed

C. For those who are having trouble, be sure they are staying in a wedge and turning the feet and not the hips or shoulders, skis should stay relatively flat. A centered stance is essential. Try a run without poles

D. Introduce flexion at the end of the turn to aid in steering to a completed turn

E. Introduce extension at the beginning of the turn to facilitate steering and edge release at the beginning of the turn - "glide and release"

BALANCE - weight over the center of the feet and skis

PRESSURE CONTROL - pressure is still centered and on both feet

- * ROTARY - feet and skis are actively turned toward each other with tips pointing in and tails pushing out in a twisting motion to create and maintain a wedge position. This wedge is then guided as a unit with leg and foot steering to create direction change

EDGE CONTROL - skis are relatively flat or the skis will tend to travel toward each other and cross.

II. Improved Wedge Turns

A. Encourage a small gliding wedge with speed control through turn completion, turn up the hill if necessary.

B. Speed control is essential before going to a steeper hill

C. Stress balance over the center and over the outside foot, outside foot heavier and inside foot lighter.

D. Encourage steering with both feet, not just the outside foot. This will help to flatten the inside ski, increasing the chance of a spontaneous christy

E. All stops should be a turn to the side instead of a braking wedge

F. PRACTICE; mileage!

BALANCE - weight over the center of the feet and skis

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PRESSURE CONTROL - more pressure will be felt on the outside ski as speed and steepness of the hill increases

* ROTARY - legs, feet and skis are actively turned as a unit in a wedge to create direction changes

EDGE CONTROL - skis are relatively flat

LEVEL 3 CLASS PROGRESSION

I. Beginning Wedge Christy (matching after the fall line)

A. Spontaneous christy (Holistic approach)

1. On a comfortable hill for the student, encourage a very small wedge and turns kept more in the fall line to increase speed. Ask them to turn both skis in the direction of the turn. A matching of the skis at the end of the turn and a skid may result
2. Find terrain with a convex shape. Start small wedge turns at the peak of the bump. As the skis drop into the valley while making the arc of the turn, they often will match and skid.
3. Make wedge turns using a very small wedge and hop at the end of the turn. While hopping, the skis may align parallel and a skid may occur upon landing. OR -

B. Linear approach

1. Encourage weight on the outside ski by centering balance over that ski. If it is necessary to correct an inward lean, encourage having the nose lined up over the outside or downhill ski by leaning the head and shoulders to the outside or downhill. Touch the hand to the outside knee while turning.
2. Try to actively guide the inside ski while it is light, but on the snow, while standing still. Demonstrate the edge change of the inside ski. Pointing the inside knee in the same direction as the outside knee will help to flatten the inside ski and allow the skis to be steered to a parallel relationship (it may feel like you are bowlegged).
3. Make turns with a small wedge trying to match the light uphill ski to the downhill ski at the very end of the turn (#11 position, French Fries).
4. Thump the inside ski around to match and encourage balance on the outside ski
- 5 Hop at the end of the turn to encourage a skid

C. A little speed will help when confidence is built

D. The turn shape should be round and open in radius to avoid "Z" turns.

E. Extension and flexion will aid the edge release at the beginning of the turn and steering throughout the turn

F. Introduction to edging versus sliding

1. Static - balance over the inside edge of the downhill ski and roll the knees uphill or in to edge the skis. Roll the knees down or out to release the edges to slip - Sideslipping
2. Active - same as above but in a forward traverse - edge, ski, edge

BALANCE - weight over the center of the ski and over the outside ski

PRESSURE CONTROL - more pressure is on the outside ski of the turn

* ROTARY - turning of the inside ski will match it to the outside ski

* EDGE CONTROL - flattening of the inside ski will allow it to be steered to match the outside ski

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- II. Advanced Wedge Christy (matching at or before the fall line)
 - A. A narrower wedge and an increase in speed on a comfortable hill along with more active inside foot steering may result in an earlier matching of the skis (spontaneous christy); if not
 - B. Encourage an earlier commitment to the new outside ski
 - C. Work on the finish of the run through a fan progression. Turn up hill from a traverse with skis parallel, gradually steepen the traverse until it starts in the fall line (uphill christy). Work that into linked turns
 - D. Hop at the beginning of the turn, turning both feet into the turn
 - BALANCE - weight over the center of the ski and over the outside ski
 - PRESSURE CONTROL - more pressure is on the outside ski of the turn
 - * ROTARY - active steering of the inside ski begins earlier in the turn for an earlier matching of the skis
 - EDGE CONTROL - flattening of the inside ski will allow it to be steered to match the outside ski

LEVEL 4 CLASS PROGRESSION

- I. Beginning Parallel
 - A. Introduce up (and forward) and down motion (flexion and extension). Balance over the feet
 1. Up, to flatten and lighten the skis as the body moves into the direction of the intended turn, aiding steering and a simultaneous edge change in the first half of the turn
 2. Down, to pressure, steer and edge the skis in the latter half of the turn
 - B. Try making turns with skis parallel on very flat terrain with skis flat. A low (gorilla) position works well so knees can aid in steering
 - C. Fan progression : work from the fall line back to the beginning of the turn until no wedge is needed. Earlier commitment and pressure to the new outside ski before it is turned will result in a parallel turn
 - D. Hop up and turn both feet into the turn on easy terrain (leapers)
 - E. Rhythmic flexion and extension - one arc always leads to another, no traverse in between
 - F. Turn shape should always be round so skis have time to turn simultaneously: "**S**uperman" (S shape) turns not "**Z**orro" (Z shape) turns
 - G. Patience turns
 - BALANCE - weight is over the center and the outside ski
 - PRESSURE CONTROL - on packed powder the pressure is more on the outside ski. The inside ski is lighter
 - * ROTARY - simultaneous steering of both skis must occur to result in a parallel turn
 - EDGE CONTROL - simultaneous edge change as speed and steepness increases, pressure builds on the inside edge of the outside ski. With proper balance over that ski, a higher edge-to-snow angle can be developed
- II. Pole Plant
 - A. Hands always in front where they can be seen when looking ahead as a guide for where the upper body is facing, like holding the handlebars of a bicycle
 - B. The hands should be aligned with the angle of the hill so the downhill hand is always lower
 - C. Pole swing is a wrist motion, not an arm swing
 - D. The pole to be planted is the one on the side to which you are going to turn - like blinkers on a car

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- E. The pole preparation or swing is timed with the extension. This helps to move the body in the direction of the intended turn
- F. Rise up, touch the pole, then sink into the turn
- G. The pole plant happens at the start of the turn, at the edge change and in the direction of the new turn
- H. The pole triggers the edge change, aids at the least stable time in the turn when you are extended, and helps the body move into the direction of the intended turn. With practice, it helps with the timing and rhythm of the turn
- I. In short turns the pole plant helps to stabilize the upper body (blocking)
- * BALANCE - the pole aids tremendously as a feeler, promoting good balance
PRESSURE CONTROL - the pole preparation helps to maintain correct pressure control and pressure control changes by aiding good balance
ROTARY - the pole plant helps promote good steering by aiding good balance over the feet at the beginning of the turn
EDGE CONTROL - the pole plant helps stability during the edge change