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Why it’s never too late to take a ski lesson (or to go to Colorado)



Ski lessons are a fun and essential tool for skiers of any skill level. Take one this season and discover what you’ve been missing.

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Dylan Hennessey, February 14, 2013 11:19:32 AM

I’ve been skiing for about 20 years now. And while I don’t ski like someone who’s been skiing for two decades, you’re going to have to trust me on this one.

I’m what I like to call a good fake-skier. I can carve with the best of them on nice smooth groomers, but as soon as I hit bumpier terrain, my polished sheen melts away like snow on a sunny March afternoon. Kids carve past me with effortless swooshes, while chairlift-riding onlookers take bets on which leg I’ll break first.

So when I recently visited Colorado’s [Winter Park Resort](#), I made sure to take full advantage of their ski school to try to shake 20 years of bad habits. I figured that since I no longer looked like a sixth-grader skiing in jeans, I shouldn’t ski like one, either. With that, I signed up for a morning lesson with one of the resort’s friendly, experienced instructors and was almost immediately happy with my decision.

With over 3,000 square acres of skiable terrain, I wanted to put my best ski forward at this incredible mountain. Regardless of where you’re skiing this season (though if you like light, fluffy snow, Colorado’s champagne powder is legendary), here are five things you should know about taking lessons:

- 1. Do it on your first day.** The earlier on you decide to take the plunge and get a lesson, the more time you’ll have to work on what you’ve learned. Adult lessons at Winter Park start at \$119, so as invaluable as the experience is, you’ll want to make good and sure you’re getting your money’s worth. By giving yourself time later that day, week, or even season to actually work on what your instructor taught, you’ll get to put that knowledge to good use. I know the tips my Winter Park instructor gave me will stay with me for as long as it takes me to become an expert skier. So basically forever.
- 2. You’re going to suck.** Like, Nicholas-Cage-as-a-financial-advisor suck. This is ok. Unless you’re on the slopes 160 days a season, or have some sort of Lindsey Vonn gene thing going on, chances are you’ve got a lot to learn. The sooner you abandon any hang-ups about what you’re doing wrong, the sooner you can start focusing on what to do right. For me, my first mountaintop glimpse of the Colorado Rockies stretching out before me also helped soothe my battered ego. So that helped.



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3. **Be honest with your instructor.** Whether it's about your skill level or your preferred type of run, it pays to be completely up front with your instructor. One way or another, he or she is going to find out how well you ski. Have this conversation at the top of the hill. Do not have this conversation as you nervously side-step down a run you thought you could maybe-sort-of-kind-of do. Winter Park's famed Mary Jane Mountain, while a paradise for bump-lovers, was one area where I'm glad I came clean with my instructor at the top of the run. With his expert help, I was able to not only survive but actually *enjoy* the run of my former nightmares.

4. **Use your own equipment.** Not sure if your equipment is up to the task? Bring it anyways. A good instructor will be able to tell you exactly what works and what doesn't with your skill level and style of skiing, starting with your own gear. I had been wearing a boot size too big for the past 15 years, for example. Who would have guessed? (Hint: It was my instructor) The next day, I was able hit up Winter Park's ski shop to get some minor adjustments for some major improvements at no cost.

5. **Never let your significant other teach you.** Do you enjoy the company of your significant other? Do you enjoy how he or she just gets you, and is always there to support you? If you value any of these relationship qualities, avoid having your partner teach you how to ski or snowboard. What begins as good intentions and patient support often deteriorates into frayed nerves, intolerant sighs, and, ultimately, someone sleeping on a couch. Mind you, that's not necessarily a bad thing if you're staying at one of Winter Park's five slopeside lodges. It just means you're that much closer to the door for one of the mountain's first tracks tours the next morning.



(Credit: Winter Park Resort)

I'm nowhere near being a perfect skier, but after being careful to observe these five rules during my first ski lesson since I owned a walkmen, I'm on my way to being a much better one. Having a Winter Park instructor who averaged over 200 days of skiing a season didn't hurt, either. But hey, who's to say which helped more?