

New Mexico Cross Country Ski Club Beginner On-the-Snow Lesson January 2015

It Takes Practice:

You probably won't get it all in one day. XC skiing is not difficult, but you have to retrain your brain before the reactions become automatic. That takes repetition. Keep trying!

Is Your Equipment on Correctly?

- Make sure skis are on the correct foot (if using 3-pin binding). 3-pins have a left & right binding
 - Poles are held correctly, hand going UP through the loop (down through is for alpine poles)
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Falling & Getting Up:

One method in 3 steps:

- 1) get in optimal position 2) get to hand & knees 3) one foot forward, stand up
- Instructor demonstrates getting up. Instructor demonstrates other techniques he or she know.

1. The optimal position when falling is **on your butt with skis downhill** of your body.

- **Rearrange to optimal position** before trying to get up
- Skis parallel & perpendicular to fall line (what is the fall line? = steepest angle down hill)
- Legs downhill from upper body
- Remove hands from pole straps

2. Get to **hands & knees position**

- First, get on your knees, lean forward over binding. Try the following for leverage.
- In loose, deep snow, lay poles flat on snow in an X, push hands/body weight on cross-point
- On packed snow, place poles together, one hand grips near tips in snow, other hand higher up, press lower hand and tips into snow

3. Push up to **Standing Position**

- Holding a pole on each side of body, bring one foot forward
 - Stand using poles for balance and support.
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Balance & Control

Side Steps:

- Students arrange side by side, two ski pole lengths apart from each other
- Place **skis shoulder width apart**
- Practice stepping to one side, keep ski a few **inches above snow** and **parallel to ground**
- Repeat in other direction
- Emphasize control of ski keeping ski level and parallel -not at an angle or up and down

- Pinwheels & Wagon Wheels

These are not ski techniques, so the point is:

- Learn to be aware of and control the whole ski--don't just lift your boot.
- XC skiing is not just walking with skis on.
- Balance using the body, not the poles.

Pin Wheels:

- Point ski tips together
- **Pick up only the tail of the ski**, keeping tip "nailed" to the snow.
- Move tail of ski to one side, keeping tips together. Set ski down so your skis are in a wedge.

- Lift the other ski, tail up, tip down, move it in the same direction.
- Complete a circle. Then go other direction.

Wagon Wheels:

- **Lift up tip of ski only** with ski tails “nailed” to the snow
 - Move ski in one direction and set it down.
 - Complete a circle. Then go in **opposite direction**.
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Changing Direction

Kick Turn to Change Direction:

- Instructors demonstrate kick turn left and right
 - Use poles to support body
 - Control skis, don't hit poles with skis
 - Students do kick turns in both directions until they are doing it correctly.
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Kick & Glide Movement

Kick & Glide Skiing (aka Diagonal Stride):

- Instructors demonstrate
 - Slide **one ski forward without lifting it off the ground**
 - **Shuffle** instead of walking
 - Back leg relaxes
 - **Extend front knee forward** further than when you walk - this is not walking!
 - **Pause** to feel glide before changing position, this is the key
 - Then move other knee forward
 - Coordinate arm & leg motion (opposite arm & leg go forward together, hence “diagonal” stride)

 - Students demonstrate one by one so they get individual feedback and learn from each other.
 - Everyone practices as instructors observe
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Moving Uphill

- Instructors demonstrate:
1) side step uphill 2) traverse uphill 3) herringbone uphill
 - back straight, head up (always look UP the hill!)
 - weight over bindings, lean forward
 - **short steps**
 - **poles planted behind the feet** to prevent slipping backward
 - Students practice
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Moving Downhill

Three Downhill Techniques:

Very important to control **speed** and control **direction**. While it's OK to just sit down if you are getting out of control, a lot of energy is wasted in getting up. Having these basic skills will give skiers confidence to deal with typical situations.

- Powder slows your descent - use it

- Instructors demonstrate:

- 1) **Side step** downhill

2) **Traverse** kick and glide across slope, kick turn to change direction

3) **Snow Plow Position:**

- start with ski tips close, tails spread apart, feet apart in a wide stance
- hands low, in front of body - pretend to hold a lunch tray in front of you
- back rounded (try to relax your body!)
- pelvis tilted forward with knees bent
- weight inside edges of skis
- erect torso, head up, looking downhill
- poles planted in front with body weight as needed
- dragging your ski poles in the snow can help with balance and moving
- eventually, learn to rely on body to balance and stop, not on poles

Turns

Turns While Moving

Instructors will demonstrate several ways to change direction while moving.

- step turn
- snowplow or wedge turn

Snowplow Turn (very helpful on crusty or icy snow):

- start in a snowplow position (wedge shape)
- **slowly lower your seat as if they were going to sit in a chair**
- **bend those knees! and get a little knock-kneed to force the back of your skis out**
- get one ski **slightly in front** of the other (the ski in front is the outside ski)
- **most of your weight on the downhill ski**
- **rotate your torso in the direction you want to go**
- **angle inner edges** of skis into the snow for greater traction, braking
- edging controls your speed at the same time that you are turning

Step Turn:

- start in narrow wedge snowplow position or skis parallel, sliding across the slope
- Lift & move one ski while moving
- **take baby steps to change direction**
- be careful not to cross your skis (steps have to be small enough to avoid that)
- **Use several small steps make this turn.** Don't try large steps.
- lower the downhill hand to help weight the downhill ski.

Stem Christie (optional):

- start in narrow snowplow position across the fall line
- weight the downhill ski as you begin to turn
- bring skis parallel as you turn

Lunch Techniques

Take a break for LUNCH at this point

---Demonstrate proper relaxation and eating techniques.

Short Beginning Ski Tour

Class One Ski Tour After Lunch for those who stay
updated November 2014

Tips for Learning to Ski & Improving Techniques

Balance & Stability: Try to be conscious of the initial reaction of straightening up for balance. You'll react automatically by straightening your legs and posture as if you were tipping over *while standing still*. You have to deliberately counteract this to retrain your brain. *While sliding downhill* you are more stable with bent knees and low center of gravity. Bend your knees, lean slightly forward, lower your center of gravity, use your knees to absorb changes in topography-keeping your upper body level. Poles help with balance, but you must learn to use your body for balance in order to ski, not to rely on the poles. Excellent practice is to ski without poles or hold them immobile either horizontally in front of you or pointing straight back rather than planting the poles as you ski.

Lifting your skis while touring: To learn to ski, one has to counteract several ingrained habits. Because there's only one attachment point, when you lift your skis they won't go where your boot goes. Instead of projecting straight out where your boot is pointing, the tips or tails will drop and the ski will flop. To keep the tip from sticking in the snow, get used to providing a little push to lift the tip up. To keep one ski from crossing the other, you must be alert to the entire ski, tips and tails, not just your foot and boot placement. These new habits will become second nature, but must be deliberate at first.

On-line Resources

Note that many YouTube videos are oriented to racing (made by ski racers), not oriented to touring. The following videos are made for those interested in touring.

How to Cross Country Ski Part I: www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRjFcZRNR1Q

How to Cross Country Ski Part 2 (Up low hills, double poling, step turns):

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fji_Rx5eFVQ&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PL5EC754FC4B35485C

How to Cross Country Ski Part 3 (ski touring/striding on flat terrain):

www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLR-Cg4Y1sI&list=PL5EC754FC4B35485C

How to Cross Country Ski Part 4 (uphill techniques):

www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IA6rU0QB2E&list=PL5EC754FC4B35485C

How to perform an uphill Kick Turn: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljkCTQLicHo

Skating on skis: www.youtube.com/watch?v=brGZlZkCwyk

How to Recover from a Fall: www.youtube.com/watch?v=72sydWWoAY8

or www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLgnlY5l6rs

Wedge (snow plow) Turn: www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHfyG7zsvko

Step Turn: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yRGLRAR7QI

Stem christie Turn: www.youtube.com/watch?v=wvyV1MLBfgU