

# PSIA/AASI “COMMON” STUDY GUIDE/ WORKBOOK LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATION

**DRAFT**



*GUEST CENTERED  
SAFETY, FUN & LEARNING*

**NAME:**

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**RESORT:**

**DATE:**

**OFFICE USE ONLY:**

Revision: November 10, 2011

During the initial review process, several talented Level 1 Trainers were asked the following question: Would this study guide/workbook be helpful for both the Level 1 candidate and yourself as a trainer?

\*\*\*\*\*

"Your Study Guide/Workbook has some differences that I like. The emphasis on customer service/satisfaction as a part of the Teaching Cycle, along with very practical descriptions, give the new instructor a very concrete idea of what to do during their lessons. Reading the material, a new instructor would "get a feel" for what a guest-centered lesson is supposed to be like.

Also, the emphasis on self-evaluation regarding the success of these efforts after the lesson is over is very good—as well as looking for areas of personal strength and weakness, so that weak areas can be improved. So – yes- this Study Guide/Workbook would be helpful for both the L1 Candidate and myself.

Thank you for including us in this process."

\*\*\*\*\*

"To answer your question, this document is, in my opinion, very well suited for the trainer and the candidate. I compare it to previous docs like the ATM and ATS and liked the softer approach to actually teaching and more of the guest and resort relationships as a whole. The big picture here, I think sets up new instructors for what is ahead. I really enjoyed the less technical discussions compared to the holistic approach to teaching. Ive been called a Zen teacher so the touchy feeling part really resonated with me. I can see a shift within PSIA with the inclusion of additional teaching and learning styles than in the past.

I also really enjoyed how PSIA as an organization was the forefront of the entire document. With the benefit of hindsight, I think that was lacking in previous manuals. Here at \*\*\*\*\*, it became PSIWHO? Me just being here as an L3 has opened up eyes, but armed with such a well thought out workbook/study guide I feel I can truly help my instructors succeed. We have elected to use the L1 criteria as a basis for our new instructor training regardless if they want to certify. I'm excited."

\*\*\*\*\*

Many thanks to everyone who has taken and who will take time to review and collaborate on this effort!

*In Wiki format at:*

*[http://ussnowsportsinstructorcertification.wikia.com/wiki/U.S.\\_Snow\\_Sports\\_Instructor\\_Certification\\_Wiki](http://ussnowsportsinstructorcertification.wikia.com/wiki/U.S._Snow_Sports_Instructor_Certification_Wiki)*

## Welcome

Welcome to the PSIA/AASI Level 1 Certification process. This manual is both a study guide and portfolio to introduce you to how to become certified. The manual is intended to be used across all the divisions and all the disciplines. It focuses on general professional knowledge of the snow sports industry (i.e. resorts, PSIA) as well as knowledge of people that pertains to guest service and snow sports instruction. The snow sports performance standards for Level 1 Certification will vary per discipline (i.e. alpine, snowboard, nordic, adaptive), but will remain constant across the divisions. However, due to the diverse population and geography and culture of our large country, the exact process and requirements for Level 1 Certification may vary across the divisions.

The division in which you choose to pursue your certification will provide you with the details of their particular process and requirements. Your local resort contact will help you learn how to obtain that information so that you can start working towards your Level 1 in your division. However, all the divisions are assessing the same basic standards, so regardless of which division you are a member of, your certification is valid and honored in the whole of PSIA/AASI.

This study guide and portfolio does not contain all the ‘data’ needed for certification, however, it does reference it. You will be expected to research and learn from other sources such as:

- PSIA/AASI Core Concepts for Snow Sports Instructors book
- PSIA/AASI Discipline specific technical manuals
- PSIA/AASI Online “Matrix” (PSIA/AASI website)

Your division will also have various materials available for your research and study. Your local resort snow sports center will be your first and main point of contact to help you with your training.

We recommend you reach out and meet others locally who are also working towards their Level 1. In this industry, you will find that we all work and train together ALL the time, so WELCOME AND HAVE FUN!

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# I Introduction

## A. Statement of Purpose

This study guide/portfolio is intended for use by the new ski instructor who is pursuing Level 1 Certification.

To be most useful for you, the entry level instructor, the information is organized into five main categories:

1. Knowledge about the organizations - the nine divisions, national, and ski areas
2. Common standards and pathways of the certification process
3. Professional knowledge about the sciences - people sciences as well as physical sciences - basic and valuable for instructing any snow sport.
4. Concrete performance guide - putting it all together on the snow and instructing a 'lesson'
5. Continuing to Learn - Teaching and Clinic Logs/Portfolios

## B. PSIA/AASI: What the Organization Is

PSIA/AASI - The Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) and American Association of Snowboard Instructors (AASI) are nonprofit associations dedicated to promoting the sports of skiing and snowboarding through instruction. With more than 31,000 members, PSIA-AASI establishes certification standards for snow sports instructors and develops education materials to be used as the core components of instructor training.

**Vision:** Inspiring lifelong passion for the mountain experience

**Mission:** PSIA/AASI supports their members, as a part of the snow sports industry, to:

- Develop personally and professionally
- Create positive learning experiences
- Have more fun

Members range from full and part time instructors to alumni members, who are retired from teaching. Many of our members come from professional backgrounds such as contractors, small business owners, pilots, doctors, lawyers, and teachers. They all bring a passion for snow sports to share with others.

ASEA (American Snowsports Education Association) is the umbrella organization of PSIA/AASI.

ASEA (PSIA/AASI) [www.thesnowpros.org](http://www.thesnowpros.org)  
133 S. Van Gordon, Suite 200, Lakewood, CO 80228  
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PSIA/AASI consists of nine divisions:

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P.O. Box 243491 Anchorage, AK 99524-3491  
Email: [mist@thesnowpros.org](mailto:mist@thesnowpros.org)  
Phone: 303-987-9390

States: Alaska  
Central: [www.psia-c.org](http://www.psia-c.org)  
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Email: [info@psia-c.org](mailto:info@psia-c.org)  
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States: CA, NV

## **1. HISTORY**

PSIA was founded in 1961 to develop a standardized system for teaching people and to unify instructors throughout the country. Since then the ASEA has grown to include 31,000 members nationwide.

The early days of ski instruction in the United States were typified by a variety of programs and techniques, many of which were brought to this country by European ski instructors. Teaching principles varied across the country, as did the process of instructor certification. This was due in part to an assortment of regional associations responsible to liability requirements of the U.S. Forest Service which owned much of the land the ski resorts were located on.

PSIA was incorporated in the fall of 1961 by a group of seven committed instructors from various parts of the country, Bill Lash, Jimmy Johnson, Paul Valar, Doug Pfeiffer, Don Rhinehart, Max Dercum, and Curt Chase. By 1964 a truly American ski technique had taken shape, described in PSIA's first manual, *The Official American Ski Technique*. In 1971, thanks to PSIA President Jimmy (Judge) Johnson, an Austrian named Horst Abraham took the position of Education VP of PSIA. Horst assembled an eclectic group of experts in the fields of sports psychology, experimental mathematics, physiology and scores of avant-garde practitioners to build the National Education Committee. In conjunction with a crack team of extraordinary ski instructors (PSIA-Demo Team) Horst's brain trust began cranking out an extraordinary array of material on skiing and ski teaching and developed the American Teaching Method that was student-centered and skills based. Their work revolutionized the ski instruction industry around the world. PSIA/AASI's current methodology and material, though it has developed and evolved to be current with the equipment, is still based on this early work.

## **2. CERTIFICATION / ACCREDITATION**

### **a. What is a certification?**

Certification is based on a set of standards developed and defined by PSIA/AASI National. These standards are divided into four disciplines (alpine, snowboard, nordic, adaptive). Each of the nine divisions follows these guidelines but can customize their own process to suit the individual needs of their division. Certification is not required in order to work as a snow sports instructor or to be a member of PSIA or AASI. However, most instructors choose to pursue certification in order to improve their own knowledge and skills as well as be recognized by snow sport schools across the country, which often pay more for certified instructors. Membership and certification can include benefits such as professional discounts on equipment, clothing and accessories.

Becoming a certified instructor requires a commitment to self-training, resort in-house training and PSIA/AASI education clinics in your division. Your motivation to train and use of all the published educational materials will help prepare you for the certification modules. These modules are your opportunity to be validated as meeting the national standards for certification. A dry land training program should be incorporated into your training for certification. Nutrition should also be considered as your certification nears. Proper diet and rest can assist you in becoming successful. Read the certification guidelines listed within each discipline and each division on their web sites for further details on recommended training.

**b. What is an accreditation?**

Accreditations are specialty certificates that signify special training for instruction in specific disciplines and/or specific age groups. Many accreditations have prerequisites of a certain level of Certification.

**c. Certifications and accreditations are offered by each division.**

The basic certification categories are:

(Level 1 being the entry level)

- Adaptive Level 1, Level 2 , Level 3
- Alpine Level 1, Level 2 , Level 3
- Nordic Level 1, Level 2 , Level 3
- Snowboard Level 1, Level 2 , Level 3

Accreditations vary by division. The basic categories are:

- Childrens Specialist
- Senior Specialist
- Pipe and Park/Freeride

**C. Relationship of Instructor to Snow Sports Resorts**

Not all mountain schools/snow sports centers are PSIA/AASI affiliated.

As an instructor, you will either be working directly for a school or 'center' operated by the ski resort, or some 'concession' school or group which as the legal rights to teach lessons at the ski resort.

In some other countries, being a fully certified instructor is basically a license to teach, however, in the U.S. this is not the case. In most states, teaching snow sports lessons at a ski resort, by individual instructors not affiliated with an 'approved school' at that resort, is not legal and known as "theft of services".

**Study Questions**

1. When was PSIA founded? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How does the PSIA/AASI “Vision” align to your future goals? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What about the PSIA/AASI “Mission Statement” strikes you as most important in your life? - explain why.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## II BECOMING A LEVEL 1 CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR

### A. Instructor Job Description

What is a ski/snowboard instructor? What do they do? It will depend who you ask. As a PSIA/AASI instructor and you may get a list similar to this:

- Area Guide
- Coach
- Therapist
- Companion, Social Guide
- Teacher, Motor Skill Developer
- Disciplinarian, Drill Sergeant
- Historian
- Environmentalist/Nature Guide
- Baby Sitter
- Lift Line Cutter
- Unique Experience Creator
- Mentor
- Encourager/Cheerleader
- Business partner
- Epiphany Engineer
- Fun Facilitator

Why so many hats? Why so many various ‘duties’? It is because needs differ from one person to the next and we wish to create a guest-centered vacation environment. Rather than making assumptions about why the guest is taking a lesson, ask and find out. (As an instructor, what you do in a ‘lesson’ will depend upon the guest/s.)

- Teaching snow sports is so much more than the result of mechanical guidance of the student.
- Every Snow-Sport School director will educate her/his instructors to the specific reputation a winter sports center wishes to gain or uphold. Ultimately, the lesson content will be directed by the guest’s stated wishes.
- Many pros all too quickly assume that the main purpose why people take lessons is to learn to ski or ride. By failing to ask key screening questions they may miss important primary social and emotional needs that are rarely offered up at first contact.
- While learning to ski/ride may be the desire of many guests, skiers/riders can also learn much about themselves and life balance, requiring a vast repertoire of skills on the part of the instructor.
- Unlike golf or tennis, sport activities that measure success with a score sheet, snow sports are all about mastering control and enjoying the outdoors.

Becoming a snow sports instructor is taking on a lifestyle. We hope we can help train and inspire you to entertain professional methodology as you learn and explore this lifestyle.

## Study Questions

1. What did you think an instructor was or did prior to reading the previous descriptions?
- 

## B. Certification - Common Standards and Requirements

The Certified Level I process consists of an assessment of basic skiing skills, teaching skills, and professional knowledge (which refers to technical and mechanical knowledge as well as to knowledge of guest service, PSIA, the ski industry, and risk management).

The exact pathway to certification varies slightly with each division. However, the following are the general requirements that you will find in most divisions:

1. Become a member of the division
2. Study and take the required clinics/courses
  - Collect all the national as well as divisional educational materials
  - Plan to have extra time to 'practice' on-snow as well as indoors
  - Find a 'mentor' or trainer in your snow sports school
  - Work with others also going for their Level 1
3. Do any required workbooks, portfolios, logs or self-assessments
  - Compile and save these for your continued professional development and reference.
  - Ask questions and discuss the materials so you can 'own' the information and learning.
4. Meet the minimum teaching/clinic hour requirement
5. Collect any required signatures on forms and other material
6. Register and pay for the exam (sometimes a minimum age requirement)
7. Pass the exam!

## C. National Standards for Level 1

Please refer to the “teaching” National Standards for Alpine, Snowboard, Nordic and Adaptive.

## Study Questions

1. What is the time line for your goal of achieving Level 1 Certification? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Write down 2 questions you want to learn more about regarding the National Standards:

A. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### III Entry Level Professional Knowledge

#### A. Resort Operations and Risk Management

##### 1. Resort Operations

###### a. Departments

A resort is organized into various departments. Employees at ski resorts work in one or more of these departments such as:

- Administration
- Lifts
- Grooming
- Food Service
- Human Resources
- Snow Safety
- Plant Management
- Mountain School (Learning Center, Snow Sports Center, etc.).

It is important to understand how instructors are often viewed by other employees. Consider this: instructors arrive late, leave early and spend most of the day on the snow with the guests - they are 'users' of the ski resort. It is of utmost importance to always be mindful of this and behave with respect and gratitude to the other employees.

*Advice: The lift operators can do the most to help you with your daily 'lessons'. Cultivate their friendship and try to help them at their job.*

###### b. Facilities

- As a professional employee at the resort, find out about the following:
- Dispatch phone number to call in case of emergency
- Emergency procedure to follow
- Location of ski patrol clinic
- Location of restrooms
- Location of restaurants
- Location of 'lost and found'
- Location of Human Resources
- Location of child care facilities
- Location of Guest Services

#### Study Questions

1. Get a map of your area and highlight the above locations.
2. Put the dispatch number into your cell (if cell phones work at your resort!).
3. Obtain and review the emergency procedures of your mountain school. Write below what you do first:

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## **2. Risk Management**

Our first duty to our students is to their Safety. Before students can have Fun or Learn, they must feel safe.

### **a. Mountain Environment**

#### **1. Terrain:**

As a new instructor, you need to learn about what terrain is available at your resort for your use while instructing as well as any special hazards that exist, such as cliffs, avalanche areas, etc.. Always make use of appropriate terrain for your guests. Be especially aware of the 'crowdedness' of the slopes and any cross-traffic.

#### **2. Conditions:**

Conditions will always vary, not only from day to day, but throughout any given day and in any given location on the mountain. Be aware that conditions can sometimes turn an easy green run into a 'black' run for some people!

#### **3. Weather:**

As mountain weather can change quickly, always be prepared for what may be coming. Check to make sure that both you and your clients are comfortably and appropriately attired.

### **b. Guest/Client**

#### **1. Equipment**

Boards, skis, bindings, safety straps, boots, poles adjusted and in working order?

Dangerous loose clothing?

Proper eye protection from elements?

Helmet (if used) fitted properly?

Sunscreen?

#### **2. Physical Condition**

How athletic?

Adaptive needs?

Current health concerns/medications?

Previous injuries?

Fatigued?

Hydration and food?

#### **3. Psychological Condition**

Motive for lesson and skiing/boarding?

Fears or anxiety?

Goals?

### **c. Responsibility Code**

- Always stay in control, and be able to stop or avoid other people or objects.
- People ahead of you have the right of way. It is your responsibility to avoid them.
- You must not stop where you obstruct a trail, or are not visible from above.
- Whenever starting downhill or merging into a trail, look uphill and yield to others.
- Always use devices to help prevent runaway equipment.

- Observe all posted signs and warnings. Keep off closed trails and out of closed areas.
- Prior to using any lift, you must have the knowledge and ability to load, ride and unload safely.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Write down in order of easiest to more difficult the first 5 runs at your area for teaching a first time student (Green to Blues).
- 

## **B. Teaching Skill Foundations - Basic People Skills (People Physics)**

### **Learning about guest service.**

*Only when a Vision is complemented by a Strategy are overarching aspirations achievable.*

To learn and grow to the level of ‘master’ instructor, it will require your sustained interest and effort, study and practice. Much like anyone pursuing excellence, the hunger to improve will have to become part of your DNA.

### **1. People Skills**

As an instructor your primary mission is your skilled and empathetic interaction with guests. Treat them right and they will keep you in business and even become life-long friends.

As an instructor, your social skills are the basic price of entry. Technical skills, psychological acumen and pedagogical competence will round out your portfolio. All the above will require constant updating and renewal. When your learning stops, your career will atrophy and your personal energy will dissipate. Engage in life-long learning and your career will soar well into a ripe age!

As you are preparing for you Level 1 certification, become more aware of your own learning style and the manner in which you process information. Assessing your own profile will help fuel your understanding how to connect with and help others.

While Level 1 certification does not require a doctorate degree, effective instructing will require some broad and pragmatic understanding and skills in how to communicate, motivate, manage, inspire, influence and teach others. PSIA’s “Core Concepts” book contains valuable information about many of some of these subject areas:

#### **a. CAP Model (Cognitive/Affective/Physical) - Core Concepts, other research**

Discussion: In the “Core Concepts” and other manuals, you will find discussion about how, as human beings we operate in three main domains, cognitive, affective and physical. However, there are also two other domains that some believe we operate in - the spiritual domain as the domain of the will - hence CAPS and CAWPS.

People learn more easily when they are fully engaged; i.e. their whole being is attending to the learning. A positively charged emotional environment accelerates both learning and retention. Besides it’s more fun! Safety-fun-learning. If someone feels safe, and is having fun, then they might learn.

1. What does CAP stand for? \_\_\_\_\_
-

2. Briefly describe each domain:

---

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3. As you are free skiing/riding, take a moment to observe a lesson for a while. Be aware of the emotional environment. What indicators are you observing that tell you whether it is positive or negative? When you teach, always be aware of such markers.

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**b. Maslow Hierarchy**

Discussion: In the “Core Concepts”, you will see the triangular diagram of Maslow’s Hierarchy describing the hierarchy of needs, showing how needs stack up as we reach for self-actualization (develop to their full potential). If your guest feels safe, has fun, and has learned, there is a greater chance that he/she will return.

1. Describe four ways that you will keep your guest safe: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. If you are teaching a diverse group, how might you develop cohesiveness and camaraderie within the group? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Sincere encouragement motivates. Insincere encouragement does not. Instead of looking to diagnose deficiencies in your guests skiing/riding performance, strive to always look for what your guest is already doing well and build on that. In the beginner skier, list a few performance indicators that you might look for: \_\_\_\_\_

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**c. Brain Hemisphere Dominance - Right/Left**

Discussion: Are you right or left brain dominant? Most of our population is left brain dominant. Being aware that we are not all wired the same way, will help you both understand people, as well how to communicate with people.

Your right hemisphere has the spatial, intuitive and synthesizer capacity that enables you to ski. It tends to get confused by logical, linear and abstract description of how to ski. Give instructions that are in sensory language: Visual (Image), Auditory (Sound), Kinesthetic (Feeling), language that requires no translating, language that can be acted upon immediately.

1. Describe how a new skier/boarder might respond to a lengthy detailed, intricate explanation of the physics behind making their first turn.

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**d. Blooms Taxonomy - Core Concepts, other research**

1. Read and research “Core Concepts”. Regarding Bloom’s Taxonomy, as a learner, do you have to ‘understand’ the physics of making a turn, in order to be able to turn? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Consider this statement: When you learn a motor skill, you process ‘understanding’ through your ‘body intelligence’ using sensory detail. Write down how you might communicate to a new skier/boarder what they may want to ‘feel’ when they are tipping or flattening the ski or board. Remember you can use verbal as well as non-verbal communication. \_\_\_\_\_

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**e. Piaget**

1. In the “Core Concepts” and elsewhere, you will find information regarding Piaget and the stages of development. As a newer instructor, to a large extent, you will be most likely working with children. Many ski schools have very excellent and well developed programs for children. PSIA/AASI offers special accreditations for children. What is the single most important fact that you think will help you be successful working with children and why? \_\_\_\_\_

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**f. Learning Styles - VAK-E, Thinker/Doer/Watcher/Feeler**

Discussion: People also have various learning styles. There are many learning style models, however, the ones that PSIA/AASI uses the most are the VAK(E) model, Kolb’s Thinker/Doer/Watcher/Feeler model, McCarthy’s Active/Reflective/Big Picture/Parts model.

For the snow sports instructor, being aware that not all of us approach new learning the same way is essential. Being adept at adapting to your guests will facilitate both fun and learning for you.

1. On the internet are many ‘tests’ that you can take to learn more about how you learn. Try some and write down what your dominant learning style. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What does VAK stand for \_\_\_\_\_

3. Exercise: We learn through our experiences. Engineering learning experiences is the work of instructors. Thoughtful composition of terrain, snow conditions, simple, unambiguous instructions defining experiential ‘territory’ is the challenge the instructor needs to creatively develop. Debriefing and learning from such experiences is the shared task of both instructor and student.

For the skier/rider, spending time in focused practice is essential. One variable at a time, the student explores possibilities and registers cause and effect resulting from his efforts.

VAK-E is the language of the learner, leading experimentation with:

- a clear image to pursue
- a sound the ski makes on the snow, if applicable
- a sensory feeling to learn to differentiate, and
- an intensity level with which to engage in the practice

Practice VAK-E with your training partner.

### **g. Stages of Learning**

As an instructor (facilitator of learning), there are many teaching models that explain the path of learning. One very simple model is helping the student move from a level of:

1. Unconscious incompetence to... (it’s not working and I do not know why?!)
2. Conscious incompetence to ... (I get it, this is what is not happening yet)
3. Conscious competence to ... (I know what I am doing and it is working)
4. Unconscious competence to ... (I am good and do not need to think about it)

Considering the above in the context of your own performance as a skier/rider, an instructor. What stage of development are you in at this point? What do you need to do to get to the next level? Often times, it is easier to work with people who know that they do not know. However, many times, you will find yourself working with people who think they know, but they do not really know. What skills will you need to draw on and employ to be a facilitator of learning with such people?

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### **h. Teaching Styles**

Discussion: Just as there are various learning styles, there are also many teaching styles. The instructor’s teaching style is governed by the student’s learning style, requiring of the instructor style agility and seamless shifting form one student’s learning style to the next. Let us resolve in **this text** to use ‘teaching’ and ‘facilitating’ interchangeably even though there are differences. What is important to note is that effective teaching/facilitating is a process in which instructors actively collaborate with their students in achieving their goals.

1. What is the teaching style that you are most comfortable employing and why?
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2. What is the teaching style that you are least comfortable employing and why?

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3. In the “Core Concepts”, you read about flexible modes of teaching and flexible modes of learning. Which mode of teaching do you think you will use most with beginner skiers/riders and why? \_\_\_\_\_

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## 2. TEACHING SKILLS

*“It is not theory and concept we are feeding our students, but in order to function as a teacher/instructor on a highly effective level, we (the instructor) need to understand at least some of the most basic theories, concepts and frameworks in order to serve one of our basic functions as a teacher: designing a learning environment within which the student can and will learn, and do so without the shackles of a mostly 'convergent', technique focused approach to skiing.... It is the instructor that needs to understand concepts so the experiences he/she can design and facilitate serve the learning process optimally.” - Horst Abraham*

Ski industry literature has many teaching process models and teaching cycle models. Master instructors utilize a variety of these, however, there are certain skills that they all share.

**a. Observation/Awareness Skills** - Certainly, as a snow sports instructor, you need to be able to observe someone skiing or riding and understand what you see. However, that physical observation of motor skills is only a small part of your development as a master instructor. You will also need to observe your clients cognitive and emotional state as well as their motivations. Search through your training manual and find examples that employ observation skills:

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**b. Communication Skills (Verbal and Non-Verbal)** - While all of us speak and communicate every day, such practice may not render us necessarily skilled in this practice. Do a self-check on your communication skills. Ask a friend, spouse, family member about how they perceive your communication skills. Are you a good listener? Do you make yourself clear in a minimum of time? Are your verbal and non-verbal messages mostly congruent? How is your communicating energy? Too bubbly? Monotone? Screechy voice? Energized? What is the balance between positive, encouraging and critical messages? Since **affect** is so powerful, what is the feeling you tend to leave behind when completing a conversation? Can you use simple, clear language to describe desired outcomes? Can you put someone at ease when they are scared

to death? How well do you listen to ‘what is not said’, but emoted? Are you comfortable with pauses in communication after asking a question, or do you, when answers are not quickly forthcoming, fill in the blanks? Often the most important communication is contained in the white spaces (i.e. between the lines).

Practice, practice, practice with other instructors. Ask for help when things are not clear to you, and be sure to balance ‘tell’ and ‘ask’ at about a 50:50 ratio. Be open about asking for clarification when you don’t understand something.

Sincere, heart felt communications will go a long way not only in transmitting data, but also in developing a relationship of trust with your client.

When meeting someone for the first time, describe what you do to open the conversation.

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**c. Analytical Skills** - Analytical skills depend on knowledge and understanding on the subject matter. This also leads to confidence. As an instructor, you need to know not only about the discipline you will be working in (i.e. the physics and bio-mechanics), but also about people, what motivates us, how we all learn, etc. As a new instructor, you will not be expected to know ‘everything’, however, now is a good time to start to analyze your current knowledge base and what your short term and long term goals are. Peruse and research the PSIA and other material. Rate yourself in the following areas:

|  | Very<br>Knowledgeable    | Somewhat/<br>Need to Learn | Totally New<br>to Me     |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Psychology/Sociology<br>(People Physics) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Physics/Bio-mechanics                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Learning Process                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Teaching/Facilitating Learning           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

What/when is your first goal? \_\_\_\_\_

**d. Organizing/Goal Setting/Planning Skills** - The human mind is a goal seeking mechanism. Setting goals is a prerequisite to achieving goals. The clearer and the more compelling a goal, the greater the chance of reaching the goal.

Fundamental achievement goals emerge from the conversation with the guest where her/his reason for taking a lesson are explored.

Beyond that, the instructor will have to help set goals that are learning and performance oriented, as the student may lack insight into setting realistic goals for her/himself.

Lesson planning and goal setting are core competencies of any instructor. Lesson planning

represents a skill-set that needs to be practiced, honed and developed, much like practicing skiing/riding skills. In the absence of paying attention to lesson planning and goal setting, lessons become ‘problem solving’ lessons rather than goal achieving lessons. While there are many possible paths to achieving a goal, customizing the methodology to the student’s body type, learning style, time available, environmental conditions, is the mark of an effective instructor. A ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach is a tell-tale of a highly limited and limiting instructor.

For any goal, there are also a myriad of possible approaches, but only a select few approaches will best suit the student in question.

While the instructor will take the lead in setting developmental goals at first, the objective should be to increasingly make goal setting and goal getting a collaborative effort. This will often necessitate spontaneity and improvisation along the way! Human beings are not machines.

As you study the literature and research online, look for S.M.A.R.T. goal setting as a source for help in this matter. Is one of the S.M.A.R.T. points more important than the others? Why?

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**e. Entertaining/Performing Skills** - As an instructor, you are ultimately the ‘one’ responsible for the guest’s experience. To make the guests experience a pleasurable one, you will have to wear many hats. In that sense, you will have to seamlessly multi-task most of the time while conducting lessons, always sensing which of the roles you are playing is needed most. In multi-person lessons, this capacity will be tested to the hilt, as each person may have different needs at any give time.

This is indeed an area where the more competent you are, the more confident you will be and the better you will perform.

While in training, we have the luxury of attending to each of the roles we play separately - a highly recommended practice; during lessons we need to constantly have our radar going to determine what is needed most right now with whom. While this multi-tasking proposition may be a daunting challenge for instructors in the early development phases, keen observation of human behavior and the study of such will quickly allow you to gain confidence in this regard.

Attention to detail in interpersonal relationships can be exhausting, far more so than any physical exertion during a day of teaching. Pay attention not to get distracted by your own ‘curriculum’ to missing important clues from the students.

One key to enhancing performance in this arena is by developing routines that help you stay abreast of both the general development plan, as well as paying attention to the guest and student. Rehearse routines for when you first meet and greet your guest. Develop other routines for setting goals, periodically assessing the process/practice focus; taking stock of what has been learned; checking on pace and time; checking for motivation and energy; etc.

Play is indeed a powerful way to learn. Play is generates energy as it taps into man’s natural instinct to ‘explore’ and learn. So, play and have fun! Isn’t ski instructing wonderful!

Remember one of your first and your most recent experience on the snow with a client. Have you changed or developed your performing skills? In what way? Would you like to change anything?

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### 3. Teaching Process and Learning Cycle

Good instruction is based upon developing a reliable partnership with the guest and student. Create a shared understanding about the role you, the instructor, will play; identify the role the student will have to play; identify collaborative functions you and the student will have to engage in; introduce the importance of goal setting and learning about the motivation the guest brings to the lesson. Why are you taking the lesson? What results do you hope to achieve? What will achieving these results enable you to do?

Also start with the heart by connecting with the guest on more than a 'skiing level'. Who are you? What turns you on/off? What excites you? What are things you have done that helps me understand you better? Here are some things I want you to know about me!

While the neophyte instructor limits himself to teach skiing in a very mechanical way, the more effective instructor connects with the student on many levels.

As you read through the PSIA and other materials, you will find good material on the teaching process and learning cycle. There are many teaching/learning models many of which share the following basic characteristics:

- 1) Meet, greet, rapport
- 2) Determine the desired outcome-goal
- 3) Assess - analyze the current reality
- 4) Design - goal setting
- 5) Focus Practice - with adjustments
- 6) Feedback & Celebrate Successes (acknowledge progress - catch the student doing something right)
- 7) Re-calibrate and repeat

Use the "Core Concepts" to help you develop a solid understanding of suggested teaching processes along with the practice examples for each specific development target. While these recommendations instruct you to a step-by-step approach to teaching skills, don't allow this linear progression/teaching process to derail you from realizing that learning is not necessarily a linear process. Debrief yourself at the end of each lesson and note (yes, notebook) what you have learned from each lesson.

Write the steps of a 'teaching cycle' model that you will use and beside each step, write down the skills you will need to fulfill each step:

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## C. Basic Physics/Dynamics of Snow Sports

### Learning about the physics of sliding and motor skills development.

As a snow sports instructor, there are some basic physics with biomechanical concepts that are universal for all snow sports. These concepts revolve around how the human body utilizes the 'tool' (board/ski) to control the tool/snow interaction.

#### 1. Skills Concept

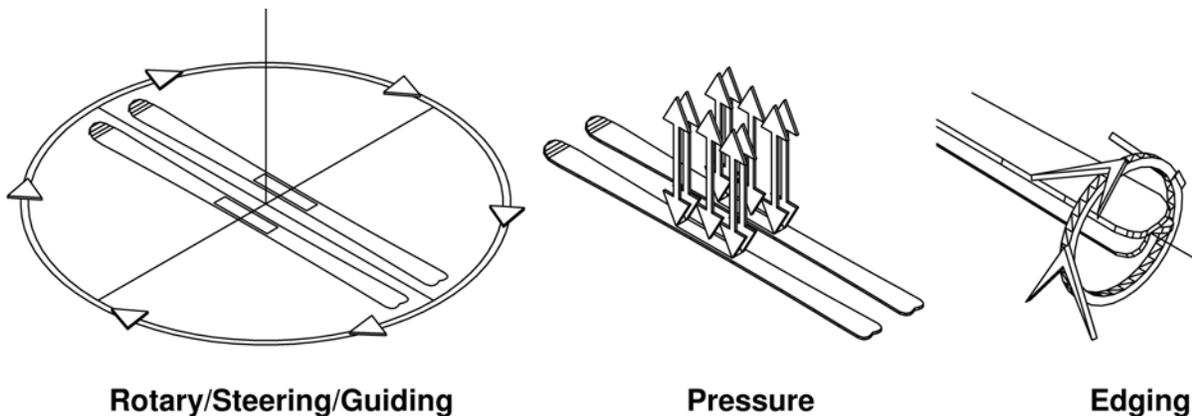
The skills concept identifies three primary functions by which a skier/rider interacts with the snow: (*Note: Snowboarders also have the ability to twist or torque the board. This will be discussed further in the discipline specific study guide.*)

Rotary Skill: Directional guiding and steering the skis/board

Edging Skill: Tipping the tool from edge to edge about the long axis of the ski(s)/board

Pressure Control Skill: Regulating the pressure of the ski/board on the snow accomplished by vertical movements of the skier/rider

(Balancing - a function of rotary, edging and pressure control; the result of ongoing interplay of these three skills along with sensory functions of the skier/rider activating deliberate and unconscious bodily movement)



(*Note: The above diagram shows skis only for clarity.*)

Some of the most important things in snow sports cannot be taught, but they can only be learned; i.e. learning to improve balance can often be assisted by deliberately disturbing balance in a controlled environment. For the new and beginner rider/skier, improving balance along with controlling speed is a top priority. Let us elaborate:

1. Spatial awareness is an important part of 'learning to learn'. Many students will require extensive awareness practice to gain a better sense of space and time.
2. Sensing when we are in/out of balance is a given mechanism, but the speed and nature of our responses to sensing ourselves to be in/out of balance is trainable. Strength, agility, flexibility, response options are basic elements we can train students in.
3. Exercises improving balance in the spirit of the above include, but are not limited to,

learning how to carry arms - our balancing poles; practicing push-over while standing, learning experientially to adjust our way of standing by contracting our core muscles and flexing all joints.

Proprioceptive Awareness x Muscular Strength = Equilibrium.

The one variable that is innate and cannot be changed is the time required to signal disequilibrium to the muscle response. THAT is a birth given reaction time that can only be optimized by increased awareness and the directed strength of the muscular response. The wiring/inner ear sensory mechanism is a given from birth.

In your discipline/s, which do you consider to be the first skill that can begin to be mastered and why? \_\_\_\_\_

Which do you consider to be the most difficult to master and why? \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Basic Physics

Gravity and friction are the basic physical forces that effect you on the snow. They are your 'engine'. You spend your time 'playing' with these forces as they effect your body on your 'tool'.

Turning is what defines both skiing and riding. Gravity and friction and your body mass in motion down the inclined plane produce the forces that you manage with the three basic skills of rotary, edging and pressure control on your tool. Gravity and friction create momentum that you manipulate as you turn necessitating managing also centripetal force.

*[Note: The nordics also go uphill and along the flats. The Nordic Study Guide will elaborate on that!]*

You can make this as complicated or as simple as you like and you will find much in the literature discussing this as you continue your study.

However, understanding at a basic level how forces are generated as well as diminished is at least helpful. Fundamentally, whenever you two forces are in the same direction, the resulting force increases; i.e. in the lower part of a turn, after the gravity line (alias falline), when gravity is pulling you down the hill, if you resist gravity by also pushing against your edge/s at that time, you increase the force on you and your 'tool' - what you feel is an increase in pressure on your board/skis. Conversely, if at that same moment, you move with the force of gravity with your body mass, you will decrease the total force and you will feel less pressure on your board/skis.

Research and continue to think in terms of forces and what you feel at other points of the turn. What is going on at the apex of a turn?

What about when you are heading across the hill on your edges? \_\_\_\_\_

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What about when you are sideslipping down the hill? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **IV Putting it all Together - What a Snow Sports Instructor Does**

### **On the snow with the guest.**

With all the background you now have on the psychology of learning and teaching, how to diagnose the situation, not just movement, how to use ‘enabling language’, how to provide ‘feedback’ effectively, how to manage group dynamics, how to develop collaborative learning environments, how to plan for lessons... you are ready to put it all together and have some fun with the guest/s! Remember to look for where the guest is already skillful and to build on that!

### **A. Guest Contact**

#### **1. Introductions**

As a snow sports instructor, you are one of the employees on the mountain that spends the most time in direct contact with the guests. Often first impressions set the stage for future success. What will be your basic framework or model when you first meet the guest?

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#### **2. Creating Group Cohesion**

Many times as a new instructor, you will be instructing in group lessons. Describe how you might be able to draw out each guest and begin a dialogue amongst those in your group.

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#### **3. Developing Trust**

You will find that developing trust is discussed many times in the literature. One of the primary concerns of most of your guests will be safety. A common apprehension in the beginner skier is the ‘new’ factor. They do not know much about skiing and that can be worrisome, for adults as well as children.

As you begin to interact with your guests and you begin to develop a level of trust, explain how you will encourage them to feel safe and be more eager rather than apprehensive. Explain how

this will help develop a trusting relationship. \_\_\_\_\_

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## **B. Lesson Planning**

### **1. Observation/Assessment - CAPS (CAWPS) data input**

Observation begins even prior to actually greeting your guests. It continues as you follow through the initial introductions. You ‘dig’ deeper as you ask more questions and possibly even take a warm-up run, if the group can indeed already ski. Practice by writing some of your ‘always’ questions below:

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### **2. Setting Goals - the "DO" plan**

Your skills as an instructor relate to your ability to create and manage a learning environment collaboratively with the guest.

#### **a. Including the guest**

After you have collected enough data about and from the guests, you will need to make a plan as to what to do. Why is it important to include the guest in this planning process?

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#### **b. Goals for the day**

Remember S.M.A.R.T. goal setting. The daily goals will vary and be based the guest/s abilities as well as their expectations and desires and needs. What will you do when you achieve the goals?

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What will you do if you do not achieve the goals? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **c. Longer term goals**

Many times long term goals will facilitate return business and a long term learning partnership with your guest. Under what circumstances would you not discuss such long term goals with your guest and why? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **C. Dealing with class skill and personality diversity**

Quite often, when instructing a group, you will have not only varying personality types, but also skill levels. Many snow sports schools have an arrangement for moving guests around in the groups at the beginning of a lesson, however, this is not always possible. How will you arrange the learning environment so that each individual will end up feeling like they received their own private lesson?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **D. Prudent Snow and Terrain Selection**

Terrain selection will depend on the snow conditions. Familiarize yourself with your choices at your resort for the various skill levels. Fear generally inhibits learning. Aside from the inherent difficulty in the terrain and conditions, what other factors will you consider in making a terrain choice? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **E. The Game - What you “Do” on the Snow**

#### **1. Full Engagement**

Once you know what you are going to do and where you are going to do it, you start doing it! Safety, fun, and learning are foremost. This is the time we help create ‘memorable experiences’; this is the time that ultimately is about ‘life balance’ and engaging in the lifestyle that are the snow sports. This is the time that we spend together, but ultimately also within our own selves as we “Do It - Feel It- Be It”.

Full engagement refers to the whole spirit, soul (mind/emotions/will) and body. The more successful both your guest/s and yourself will be, depends on full engagement. Research the literature and online and learn about what this entails. Explain what your goal regarding full

engagement: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## **2. Oscillation**

In our world here on earth, there are rhythms in every living thing: we breathe in and out, our heart pumps, the tides flow, the sun rises and sets, we are awake and we sleep, we run and we rest, we concentrate on study and we relax, we play and we relax. As you spend time with your guest, executing your 'plan' and adapting, learning to sense when to change, to stop, to start will help you develop into a master instructor. If you are not aware of oscillation in human behavior, the challenge now is to become aware of it.

## **3. Energy Management**

Often when we speak of energy management in snow sports, we only think of pacing in regards to the physical realm. However, learning how to manage our energy within our beings is a critical aspect to nurturing full engagement with maximum performance with 'flow'.

If you are scratching your head now regarding the previous sentence, add this to your oscillation challenge - research, ask and learn.

## **4. Flow**

Learning how to use enabling language, enabling non-verbal language, creating an enabling environment to produce maximum performance, 'brilliant' (thank you Weems) skiing/riding, 'flow' is perhaps the 'holy grail' of snow sports instruction.

Olympic bump skier Shannon Bahrke Happe (the pink haired young lady) relates how she would prepare herself for a competition run. As she would stand in the starting gate, she would first look up and gaze at the mountains, then down on the crowds, scanning for her parents, then finally at the course and go. She was in the moment, with her whole being, she could flow.

Curious about 'flow'? You know what to do.

## **5. Adaptation**

While you are with your guests, you will need to be adept at adapting your action plan to your goals, or even adapting your goals to reality. This is where the 'art' of what an instructor does comes into play - and literally it is often 'play' (play energizes - it releases and even creates energy).

Consider the above mini-discussions about full engagement, oscillation, energy management, flow and adaptation. What is your response? Thoughts? Plans for yourself? Your guests?

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# V Continuing to Learn

## A. Teaching Logs *(Note: Make as many copies as needed)*

| Date   | Number of Guests | Age Group | Experience Zone |  | Hours    |
|--|------------------|-----------|-----------------|--|----------|
|  |                  |           |                 |  |          |
| Guest goals/<br>expectations/needs:  |                  |           |                 |  |          |
| Lesson Review: (Guest's skills, lesson goals, focus, process, fun? safe? what next?) |                  |           |                 |  |          |
|  |                  |           |                 |  | Trainer: |

| Date   | Number of Guests | Age Group | Experience Zone |  | Hours    |
|--|------------------|-----------|-----------------|--|----------|
|  |                  |           |                 |  |          |
| Guest goals/<br>expectations/needs:  |                  |           |                 |  |          |
| Lesson Review: (Guest's skills, lesson goals, focus, process, fun? safe? what next?) |                  |           |                 |  |          |
|  |                  |           |                 |  | Trainer: |

| Date   | Number of Guests | Age Group | Experience Zone |  | Hours    |
|--|------------------|-----------|-----------------|--|----------|
|  |                  |           |                 |  |          |
| Guest goals/<br>expectations/needs:  |                  |           |                 |  |          |
| Lesson Review: (Guest's skills, lesson goals, focus, process, fun? safe? what next?) |                  |           |                 |  |          |
|  |                  |           |                 |  | Trainer: |

**B. Clinic Log**

| Date | Hours | Topic | Comments |
|------|-------|-------|----------|
|      |       |       |          |
|      |       |       |          |
|      |       |       |          |
|      |       |       |          |
|      |       |       |          |
|      |       |       |          |
|      |       |       |          |
|      |       |       |          |
|      |       |       |          |
|      |       |       |          |

**TOTAL HOURS:**

Teaching: \_\_\_\_\_

Clinics: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Grand Total: \_\_\_\_\_

**Long Term Goals:**

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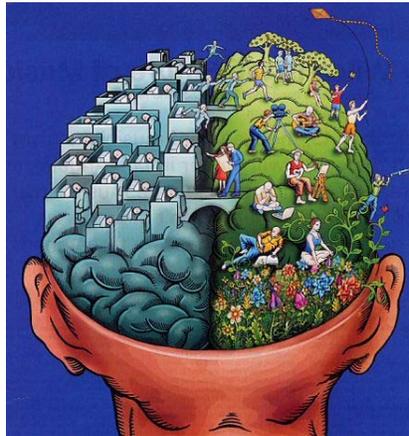
## Appendix 1 - Core Teaching Competencies List

- " Values and demonstrates respect
- " Listens well (not just to what is being said, but also what is emoted)
- " Reads students through the intangibles of tone of voice, body language, listening beyond spoken word.
- " Empathizes well.
- " Able to connect using non-verbal communication
- " Able to develop trust (listen and relate and connect) with both guests and peers
- " Exercises sound diagnostic skills = mechanics, emotional state, understanding needs and motivations
- " Deals with the full reality of the student.
- " Exudes self- confidence without arrogance.
- " Explains things in brief and easy to understand language, both verbally and non-verbally..
- " Shows skillful ability to weave social- with instructional communication.
- " Shows a working understanding of building and working lesson plans.
- " Demonstrates skilled goal setting/goal getting coaching.
- " Customizes lessons according to gender, learning style, energy, culture.
- " Offers diverse methodologies and solutions fitting diverse learning styles.
- " Uses terrain, snow conditions and other environment 'aids' such as quiet places, in support of desired goal achievement.
- " Attends to mental, physical and emotional development tracks in coordinated manner.
- " Uses sound exercise lines to achieve desired goals.
- " Able to promote challenging but supportive learning environment.
- " Uses experiential learning/learning by doing (create experience-reflect-generalize-apply-experience)
- " Able to enjoy, play, and use humor.
- " Understands how to motivate students.
- " Able to encourage
- " Creates a relaxed interpersonal relationship and collaborative environment.
- " Creates and manages productive, collaborative group dynamics.
- " Balances 'ask' – 'tell' in the instructional process.
- " Manages 'stretch' - task difficulty well.
- " Manages pace of lesson.
- " Produces and manages positive energy (Self and other)
- " Shows working understanding of 'oscillation'.
- " Knows how to bring about FLOW conditions in the instructional process.
- " Productive feedback - share what doing "right" and next goal, not focus on what is "wrong"
- " Is able to move from instructor- to self- provided feedback.
- " Is aware of her/his own emotional 'wake'.
- " Readily can assess his/her own learning at any time about self and others.
- " Exercises real time self-observation while teaching.
- " Sound conflict management - positively, with confidence
- " Generates return business through the strength of interpersonal skills.

## Appendix 2 - Know Thyself Links and Other Information

1. Right-Left Brain: [http://www.intelliscript.net/test\\_area/questionnaire/questionnaire.cgi](http://www.intelliscript.net/test_area/questionnaire/questionnaire.cgi)

2. Right-Left Brain: <http://www.thersa.org/events/video/animate/rsa-animate-the-divided-brain>



2. Learning Styles: <http://www.businessballs.com/kolblearningstyles.htm>

(Also see links at the bottom of this link for Blooms, VAK, Kirkpatrick and others)

3. Motivational Survey: <http://www.gifttest.org/survey.html>

4. National Standards: Alpine Adaptive Nordic Snowboard (links to be added)

5. More to be added!



*Go For It! - Do It-Feel It-Be It!*

**Coming Next - Alpine Technical Common Study Guide/Workbook**

**Equation Of Skiing :**

$$\frac{V^4}{g^2} + r_t \frac{2V^2}{g} \sin \alpha \cos \beta + r_t^2 (\sin^2 \alpha \cos^2 \beta + \cos^2 \alpha) = K^2 \cos^2 \alpha$$

**Worked Example : Computing  $r_t$  (turn radius)**

**Ski Geometry Constant (side cut radius)  $K = 195$  ft (205 SL ski)**

**Slope gradient  $\alpha = 30$  degrees**

**Speed  $V = 66$  ft/sec (45 mph)**

**Gravitational acceleration  $g = 32$  ft/sec<sup>2</sup>**

**Traverse angle  $\beta = 45$  degrees**

$$18530 + 64 r_t \cos \beta + r_t^2 (0.25 \cos^2 \beta + 0.75) = 28518.75$$

**Quadratic equation :  $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$**

$$r_t = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

$$a = 0.9375$$

$$b = 45.255$$

$$c = 18530 - 28518.75 = -9988.75$$

**The negative result is the Upper Quadrant : 130.14 ft**

**Lower Quadrant : 81.87 ft**

$$\text{Ratio} = 130.14 / 81.87 = 1.59$$