

KIDS' korner

GOOD STUFF for the kids & grandkids

Preparing children for the slopes.

by Lisa Mercer excerpted from *Livestrong.com*.

Teaching kids to ski is similar to parenting. Few experts agree about the best methods. Children's age, location and training aids discussions often lead to heated debates, but despite these differences of opinion, certain children's teaching methods are consistent.

The Professional Ski Instructors of America have a special children's accreditation program. These instructors must pass an exam that displays their knowledge about child physical and cognitive development, as well as child-specific safety measures and motivational techniques.

Time Frame

While some children learn as early as 2 years old, most ski schools will not accept kids until they've reached age 3 or 4. Instructors prefer to work with



photo courtesy Big White

Be sure your child is ready for skiing.



photo courtesy esp La Pagne

children who are potty trained and are able to keep their balance while walking.

Preschoolers have loose ligaments, which easily leads to fatigue and younger children also have shorter attention spans. Children's balance and attention span improves by age 7 or 8.

Mental Considerations

It is important to be aware of your child's unique psychological makeup. For young children, ski school may be the first time they have ever been away from their parents. Preschoolers who have not attended nursery school or camp may be unaccustomed to socializing with large groups of children.

Children who have never seen snow or who have never experienced gliding and sliding movements may be overwhelmed. Begin with a shorter lesson before arranging for a full day at ski school.

Planning

Many ski areas get bombarded with children during spring break and holidays. Classes during this time frame are often enormous. While expensive, private lessons or family lessons, which teach parents how to ski with their kids, may be a better option.

Images

Instructors use "pizza" or "French fries" to

help children visualize what they should be doing. Pizza refers to the wedge position, and French fries refer to parallel skiing. Children respond better to these images than they do to technical explanations of the snow plow and parallel skiing.

Instructors use a group exercise called the eraser to teach turning. The instructor descends the slope, imagining that they are drawing lines in the snow with a pencil between their toes. The next skier follows, imagining that he has erasers on skis, which erases the line. This is an effective way to teach turn shape.



Preparation

Prepare your kids for a day at the slopes.

- The stork stand involves balancing on one foot for 10 seconds at a time.
- The foot-to-foot is a hopping exercise, which teaches kids ski-specific weight transference.
- Side-by-side drill teaches kids how to side step up a hill. ◆