

# GOOD STUFF for the kids & grandkids

## Teaching children to water ski

Some of my best days on the water have been witnessing a child getting up on skis for the first time. The expression of excitement on their face is priceless.

But to a child, the thought of being pulled behind a boat on skis for the first time can be frightening. You don't want to force a child into skiing before they are ready. Even when they say they want to ski but you may get them in the middle of the river and they won't even go into the water. Children have to be confident and want to learn.

So instead of trying to talk them into skiing we practice getting the kids to jump off the swim step and into the deep water with an adult to catch them.



photo courtesy Catherine Ohl

*2-year-old Brooke on the horseshoe ski being towed in the shallow water on our beach.*

### Start On Dry Land

The first thing we do when a child thinks they want to ski is to practice on dry land. We put them on our horseshoe ski and give them the ski handle attached to the ski and drag them around for a while. We talk them through what is happening and explain to them about balance.



photo courtesy Catherine Ohl

*3-year-old Danielle being towed on an inflatable ski trainer.*

### Keep Them On Their Toes

We attempt to keep their weight on their balls of their feet. This has the effect of keeping them off their heels and consequently off their butts. It is virtually impossible for someone to keep their arms straight when the sensation of falling backwards occurs. Having the weight on the balls of the feet makes it much more difficult to fall backward. Now, as long as the knees are bent the child is not only more stable but it also gives them better control of the ski for maneuvering.



photo courtesy Catherine Ohl

*4-year-old Jacqueline skiing on an inflatable ski trainer.*

### Getting in the Water

Drill into the child's head these important things. Keep your knees bent and together, head up, shoulders back, and arms straight. If they do not get it right the first couple of times, do not get upset with them. Patience is needed.

We tend to start most kids on a towable or the kneeboard. They can just hang on while we pull them slowly behind the boat.

When they are ready to start skiing have an adult get in the water. Help them get their skis pointed forward, and hold the tails of the skis down as the driver begins the pull. If they are unsuccessful, you are right there to help them get started again. If they get up, just hang out in the water until the boat returns and stay visible to other boaters.



photo courtesy Catherine Ohl

*10-year-old Bailey being towed on the kneeboard and having a blast.*

We do not attach the rope to the tow bar right away but have someone in the boat hold it. This way, the child can start on a shorter rope and we can lengthen the rope slowing. Also when a child falls they do not want to let go of the rope. This way you can release it and reduce the risk of injury.

### Make Them A Star

Try video taping the child skiing. They will get a kick out of seeing themselves on the tube, and this is a great way to show them what they are going right. ♦