

SAFETY for the slopes

A safe trip requires careful planning

Here are important steps you can take to prepare for a safe trip outside US.

There is so much to love about skiing—the speed, the feel of the wind in your face, the spectacular mountains.

But skiing can present some very real dangers, from frostbite and sunburn to blown knees and head injuries. Follow these safety tips to learn how to stay safe on the slopes.



photo courtesy Jackson Hole

Why Skiing Safety

Skiing involves moving at high speeds down steep hills past other skiers through natural and man-made obstacles. Falls, regardless of how good a skier you are, are relatively common.

As your lift ticket states—skiing and boarding are inherently dangerous due to snow conditions, natural and man-made obstacles, other riders and variations in terrain.

And since skiing takes place at high altitudes in the winter, there is a real danger of frostbite, sunburn, hypothermia and exhaustion. The weather can range from sunny and bright to bitterly cold and cloudy and change drastically from one minute to the next.

Gear Up

As anyone who has skied on a cold day can tell you, it's no fun if you don't have enough warm clothing. On the other hand having too many clothes on a warm day can make you sweat leading

to you getting cold when the sun dips behind a cloud or the mountains.

The best way to tackle this situation is to dress in layers that you can shed or put on depending on the temperature.

Here's a rundown on what sort of clothes you should wear when you ski.

- As with all ski clothing, **thermal underwear** should be made of wool or a synthetic fabric such as polypropylene rather than cotton. The best long johns will fit snugly against your skin to form a warm base layer that your outer layers can fit over easily.
- Thicker is not necessarily better when it comes to **socks**. A sock that is too thick will make your boots too tight making your feet uncomfortable and cold. Choose socks that are the right thickness for your boots and reach up your leg to just below your knees.
- Fleeces or sweaters, used as **intermediate layers**, should be made from wool or synthetic fabrics. The newer fabrics can be warm and thin.
- **Snow pants** should be the right size while allowing your legs to move freely. Be sure to get a pair of pants that are windproof and waterproof.
- The best **jackets** will have plenty of pockets to store your gear. While down jackets tend to be the warmest, thin shells with extra intermediate layers can work just as well. As with the pants, all ski jackets should be windproof and waterproof.
- On really cold days, you'll want to have a **neck gaiter** that covers your neck and can be pulled up to cover your face. The best ones will also have a hood to go under your helmet.
- Remember, you lose a lot of heat through the top of your head, so

keeping your head warm is the first step to keeping the rest of your body warm. Wear your **helmet**.

Other Useful Items to Bring

- Hand & boot warmers
- Walkie-talkies
- Sunscreen
- Lip balm with SPF
- Water and snacks

Before You Go

One of the most effective ways to prevent injuries while skiing is to make sure you're in good shape before you ski. Stronger muscles will not only help you maintain control, they'll also make skiing more fun.

Be Smart

Always ski with a friend.

No matter how good a skier you are, it's good to have a buddy to help if you get lost or fall and hurt yourself.

Know your limits.

Be honest with yourself when it comes to your skiing ability. Skiing terrain that is beyond your ability is not only no fun, it's also a good way to get hurt.

Follow the rules.

Never venture past the ski area boundary or ski into a closed area. These areas are off-limits for a reason. Also, pay attention to any warning signs you might see.

Practice skier etiquette.

Remember that skiers in front of you have the right of way. Never stop in the middle of a trail or anywhere where you can't be seen from above, such as below a drop-off. When entering a trail, look uphill to make sure no one is coming. If you're passing another skier on a catwalk or narrow trail, let them know you're coming up behind them.

Have a great time.

Skiing is fun—lots of fun. ■