



ACTIVITIES / PARENTING / SPORTS / WINTER FUN / FEBRUARY 1, 2016

How To Not Introduce Your Child to Skiing



Perhaps I was foolish to think my 4-year-old son would learn to ski in just one day. I thought he might take a slide or two down from the magic carpet, a newfangled rope tow replacement system that is like a bunny hill conveyor belt, and find himself hooked into the blissful magnificence of downhill skiing. Spoiler alert: that didn't happen. In fact, no skiing happened at all for my little guy that day.

Let me back up a bit. I love to ski. I have fond teenage memories of sailing down Tahoe's finest runs, my Walkman blaring R.E.M.'s "I am Superman" as I felt a sense of power and freedom that is hard for any young person to fully achieve. I also have a vague memory of learning how to ski when I was 9 years old, after just one lesson. I wanted our son to capture that same feeling.

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I wanted him to pick up the sport younger than I did. I had visions of family ski vacations and playing hooky from school to head up to the mountain. I don't know why I thought he could do all that with only one day's worth of instruction. But I did.

We left Portland for Mt. Hood pretty early, two and a half hours before the ten o'clock lessons. My husband was also scheduled for a morning lesson. The last time he strapped on downhill skis he was a teenager, and he wanted to give downhill skiing another shot. Even though we left home with what seemed like plenty of time, we had to park in a snow bank in a lower parking lot and take a shuttle up to the main lodge. Between that, navigating the rental counter and a storm that ended up dumping 24 inches of snow in 24 hours, my husband and son missed their morning lessons.

I left the guys to fend for themselves and find their way to their afternoon lessons and went looking for my long lost ski legs. In the intervening years since my R.E.M. ski soundtrack, I have become an avid cross-country skier. I love the quiet of the trails and watching our dog romp through the snow. But there is something about the swoosh of a downhill ski run — once it creeps into your system, the addiction to go fast and fly down a mountainside never really goes away. I skied all over Mt. Hood Meadows, on the more mellow south side, later adventuring lower down the mountain on the Hood River Express lift to avoid some

Suggestions for New Skiers of All Ages

I spoke with Mt. Hood Meadows Ski Instructor Brian Beardsley about some strategies to help make skiing fun for beginners. Here are a few of his suggestions:

- **Leave earlier than you think you need to.** We learned this the hard way. It takes a while to get up to any of the Mt. Hood ski areas. Give yourself a cushion of at least a half-hour more than you think you need.
- **Dress warmly and in layers.** There is nothing worse than being cold on a snow-covered mountain. Make sure you have on layers of warm clothes and goggles or sunglasses to protect your eyes. It is a lot easier to take off a layer than to add one that you left hanging in your closet at home.
- **Ski midweek.** If you are learning how to ski and want to take a lesson, midweek is a great time to do it. There are no crowds, rental lines are short or nonexistent and the entire experience will feel more mellow. You won't have to park in a snow bank in the lower parking lot because there will be plenty of parking next to the lodge. And playing hooky is good for your soul.
- **Take advantage of spring skiing.** March and April are great times to ski on Mt. Hood. According to Beardsley, there is often a

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of the stinging wind. I felt a little like a teenager again and it felt great.

Sadly, our son didn't get a whole lot of skiing in. The one other kid in the group got scared and cried the whole time, so there wasn't much skiing. Our son did a little bit of sliding around on the skis while holding the instructor's hand. I found the three of them standing next to the magic carpet, my son's brand new goggles slipping off his face. He looked happy and warm in about a thousand layers of clothes (okay, only five layers). After a few choice photos, everyone was ready for some hot chocolate.

The look on my husband's face after his lesson was nothing short of pure glee. His years of cross-country skiing had paid off and he felt comfortable on the downhill skis. He was excited and ready to test his skills the next time we make it up to the mountain.

So our 4-year-old didn't learn how to ski in one day. But he does know what it feels like to wear many layers, to strap the boots on. And he has a sense of how to glide on skis. It was a great start and a perfect introduction to the world of downhill skiing — just without the skiing part.

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heavy snowpack in the spring and few crowds because everyone in town has shifted their focus from cold-weather to spring sports.

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