It is time to slide. If when you wake up, eat something good, brush your teeth, wash up, get dressed and on your way to Sugar Mt. If you love teaching, skiing or snowboarding. If coming to work at Sugar is to provide our guests with the safest, most enjoyable experience possible, treating our guests as friends. Our guests are not an interruption to our work, they are the reason we are here. If you love sliding. Please come to work. If not, please stay at home.

I love teaching, coaching, skiing, snowboarding, and being a Dad. Watching people around me learning and teaching and coaching the fun of sliding. Always “safety, fun and learning.” People come to us to have fun, and to be safe.

Think before you do, you could lose your job.

1. Going to administration without Len
2. Using your cell phone, no personal calls on our phones
3. Traffic violations in the town of Sugar Mt
4. Throwing snowballs
5. Not wearing ski passes
6. Arguing with parking attendants
7. Letting someone use your ski pass
8. Not having your name on all skis, boots and snowboards
9. The use of alcohol or drugs
10. Under no circumstances shall any employee discuss company business, policy or proprietary information with anyone.
11. Tobacco smoking is prohibited within 50 feet of Sugar Mt. Resort buildings, fences and decks.
12. Use of MP3 players, radios, cell phones is not allowed.
13. No pierced body jewelry
14. Do not give personal opinions on the slope or weather conditions. Refer to slope reports, web site or the automated phone recording.

When something “good or bad” happens it is my responsibility. We have to be safe and have fun and learn every day, to make Sugar Mt. Ski and Snowboard School something we all love to be a part of.

From the Top

By Witold Kosmala
PSIA-E Alpine, Level III

Welcome to all of you, especially all the new folks that are joining us for the first time. We, at Sugar Mountain have a PSIA Ski/Snowboard School, with many instructors already being PSIA members and certified at levels I, II, or III. If you are unfamiliar with what PSIA is all about, I encourage you to visit their website at

http://www.psia-e.org/

Our teaching at this School follows the recommendations coming from PSIA. PSIA promotes the growth of snowsports as lifetime activities through fun and fulfilling educational experiences.

Preparing your New Year’s resolutions? Good luck! It is a difficult process, and then living
them out is even more difficult. Personally, I am still working on my resolutions from several years ago. I hope that snow sports are on top of your list. Perhaps it is your next level certification, or mastering a particular drill and moving to the next level. You do not have to be in it on your own. Many of us at our School can help, whether it is from giving advice to just giving a loving hug and a supporting smile. Let us know your snow sports goals for this season, and seek help. Remember that you can learn something from everyone.

*Peak Performance* is to help all of us in many respects, and as a result to make us enjoy our work at this fabulous mountain, and that in turn will make our guests happy and returning for more. If you wish to sell or purchase something, we have a little section for that. If you make some worthy news, we have a section for that. Just let me know what and where and share a picture if you wish. We have a section for articles, for funny events, for motivation, for thinking, for teaching suggestions, for picture analysis, for health, for rules and regulations, for announcements, and sections which have not been made yet. Become a part of this project. Submit your stuff to me at

kosmalaw@bellsouth.net

All our previous publications are posted on my Web page

www.mathsci.appstate.edu/~wak/

Now I quit and let you start reading materials in this publication. Thank you to those that helped make this a “fat” issue. Let’s make Sugar Mountain’s 40th year the best year it ever had!

**Education**

**Skiing in Portillo**

*By Mike Simmons*

*PSIA-E Alpine, Level II*

For the last three Septembers, I have been going “Spring Skiing” in Portillo, Chile attending a ski camp put on by John Clendenin, a two-time former world freestyle champion from the 70’s. When the mogul competition started at the Salt Lake Olympics, John was introduced and credited along with Wayne Wong as the creators of the modern mogul competition.

Portillo is the oldest ski area in South America, and its history holds an important place in
the legend of skiing.

In 1887, the Chilean government contracted English engineers to study the feasibility of a railway through the Andes at Uspallata Pass. Two Norwegian engineers were contracted to conduct winter studies of the proposed line. They spent two winters traversing the region on skis and were the first skiers to cross the slopes of the Portillo ski area.

In 1889 the Chilean government hired 14 Norwegian skiers to transport mail between Chile and Argentina. The plan failed and was not repeated. During construction of the railroad, skiing was common among the engineers, most of whom were Englishmen who used skis in their work, and for enjoyment. Inauguration of the international railroad in 1910 brought recreational skiers who used the train to get to the top of the mountain at Caracoles so they could ski down. Thus the Railway became the first ski lift in Chile.

Ski clubs began to appear in Chile in about 1909. By 1930 skiing enthusiasts focused their efforts on developing the slopes around Laguna Del Inca (Lake of the Inca), an area known as “Portillo,” or “Little Pass”. European ski instructors then arrived, and a small mountain hut for lodging was built, known as Hotel Portillo. In 1949 construction was completed on the 125 room present hotel.

The first and only World Championship in Latin America was held in 1966. Jean-Claude Killy began his collection of medals, taking the gold in the Downhill and the Combined. Portillo continues to attract many national ski teams who come to train for world events.

I have been fortunate to have been in Portillo when the US Women’s ski team has been training, and have watched Lindsey Vonn – the #1 woman in the world – on many training runs. The terrain in Portillo is extremely challenging; the slopes so steep an intimidating. I can only describe the Andes with total lack of vegetation as looking like skiing on the moon. Conditions can be frozen in the morning, a lot like Sugar, and then we chase the corn snow around the mountain as the sun changes position. The corn snow has a different consistency than what we experience in the States. It does not deteriorate and become “mushy” at the bottom of the mountain. Once the sun goes down, however, and the snow starts to set up again, it can become a bear to ski. Because of the lack of trees and vegetation, a “white out” can be like no other you have experienced in the States…with the lack of definition. The sun is the most intense of any place I have skied. This is due to the high altitude and a hole in the ozone layer in that part of the world. Sun screen is critical. I also take “Fernblock” a pill that also helps protect from the sun and enhances the sunscreen.

We do some challenging runs that end up traversing Lake Inca. The first year the Ice was creaking underneath my skis as we traversed the lake. I was praying that it would hold me and was very relieved when we finally made it to solid ground.
This year, it had snowed eight feet in the three weeks before we arrived. The bus could only make it so far up the road, and the hotel sent vans with chains to pick us up. We were holed up for one and half days due to the mtn being closed due to a major storm. On Monday, we awoke to blue skies and three feet of new snow!

Last year, I did something that was on my “bucket list.” I got out of a Helicopter in a back bowl at 13,000 ft and skied down 5,000 ft of vertical. An all time high of my many ski adventures. Chile is a beautiful country, full of vineyards with the most incredible mountains that I have had the privilege to visit. One major advantage to skiing there, is the time is the same as ours. So there is no big jet lag like going to Europe.

The Clendenin Ski Method is all about taking your skill level to a higher plane, and creating the skills to ski especially off piste. There is a strong emphasis on skiing moguls in the camps that are offered out west in Aspen. You can check him out at www.skidoctors.com.

So if you want a summer skiing adventure, or fall “spring skiing”, South America is a place to go.

My mentors in Chile. To the left, John Clendenin, 2 time former world freestyle champion and credited as being one of the fathers of the modern era mogul competition. To the right, Chino Martinez from Argentina and a product of the famous Ski Academy of St. Christoph Austria.

Getting ready to board the helicopter...
Climbing Out on the Feedback Limb

By Gordon Carr
PSIA-E Alpine, Level II

This article is premised upon the belief that most movements a skier/boarder makes at any particular instant on any specific trail are necessary, for them to maintain balance (initiate a turn, etc.) Most skiers/boarders, especially beginners, don’t glide down trails voluntarily making irrelevant movements, adding cha-cha dances, doing inverts, or getting “air” (except maybe Will Maurny who probably was getting “big air” from day one). They are doing what they do, because they MUST do what they do…it is what their body knows as instinctive movements for this trail and these conditions to stay upright, balanced, and have eyes level. This is another way to re-state Witold’s concepts of INITIATING movements as a PROACTIVE ACTION versus a body’s instinctive REACTION to changing conditions in an attempt to remain balanced.

So what then does this have to do with feedback? In earlier articles I talked of various ways to conceptualize the feedback we provide our students. In the 2009 March Peak Performance, I suggested that what we say be geared toward the learning phase (Concrete, Associative, or Autonomous) in which we find our skiing/boarding guests. In the 2009 November Peak Performance I suggested we consider the consequences of CONCURRENT, IMMEDIATE, or DELAYED feedback. But feedback can also be dichotomized according to the effect it has upon the recipient. And it is in this sense, that the effect of feedback can have markedly different consequences depending upon whether our learning guests are initiating PROACTIVE movements or whether their movements are automatic REACTIVE movements occurring in a dynamic environment. Feedback can be either DESCRIPTIVE or PRESCRIPTIVE, a dimension which applies orthogonally to the: a.) CONCRETE to AUTONOMOUS; and, b.) CONCURRENT to DELAYED dimensions.

DESCRIPTIVE feedback starts with our observation of our students’ movements and it is our general description of what their movements are and what effect those movements have on snow tool performance. So far, so good. But from here, it is ever so easy to go directly to “Don’t do ……. (whatever irrelevant, counterproductive, goofy, inefficient movement they are currently making)! Don’t lean back! or Don’t let your shoulders twist! or Don’t look down at your…! or Don’t let yourself get going so fast! I actually once heard a “Don’t fall down so often!!!” from an instructor during a beginning class! Duh! I’m sure the beginner hoped for the same thing!” Although these may be accurate, global descriptions of events, they clearly are not instructive. Descriptive feedback about beginners’ movements as we pass on our observations to them is so very easy to translate into a “DON’T DO…..! This rarely is helpful. Often beginners already know these “Don’t dos…” from overheard comments on the slopes from friends, from hearing our previous comments as their instructor.
(and from overhearing other instructors’ comments to other classes… remember beginners hear and see EVERYTHING ANY instructor does or says. We are important; they do want to learn these thrilling snowsports. Describing the “newbie’s” inefficient, incorrect or irrelevant movements as NEGATIVES, by itself, just isn’t very helpful. There are 300 Don’t Dos… (Remember the “300 to 1: Against Us”, 2009 September Peak Performance?). If “newbies” could stand up to us assertively and look us in the eye I believe they would SCREAM: “Don’t tell me what NOT to do! Tell me WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT”!! (I already know I’m not doing this correctly from my vantage point of horizontality on the snow.)

The more helpful PRESCRIPTIVE FEEDBACK makes this connection and addresses not only the WHAT TO DO, but also HOW TO DO IT. (From here on, sorry boarders, I can’t give examples from your perspective.) An example of prescriptive feedback might be: “Did you notice how when they pointed down hill your skis went faster?... And it might have felt like they were getting away from you?... If you really kept your ankle flexed and felt your shin touching the tongue of your boot, you’d stay with your skis and that would let you feel more in balance”. (Here a demonstration of ankle flexion with thumb and finger movement…and have the student deliberately dorsiflex the ankle and feel the pressure on the tongue of the boot, then relax and let the ankle “open”, and then dorsiflex, etc…to get the feel. Or BOTH of these!)

The focus on giving prescriptive feedback also forces us, as instructors, to make specific and very accurate movement assessments of our guests skiing or boarding movements. It requires us to focus on KEY and relevant movements, because we are going to “prescribe” what to do and how to do the more correct or more efficient movements to effect the snow tool performance we are trying to have the student achieve. Beginners make all sorts of weird hand and arm movements (there is an ubiquitous both arms out to the side, with one rotating clockwise to the front and one rotating counterclockwise to the rear movement which many young children make when they try to turn their feet or legs…ever notice that…ever wonder why?). Mostly, however, if you can get the stuff below the waist working correctly by focusing on the feet feelings and ankle flexion feelings, you can direct the student to movements which will help improve their balancing skills. [Here is an experiment for you: take your shoes off, stand straight with legs straight, knees locked and try to balance on one foot. Most people find this fairly hard to do and wave their arms and feel their feet pronating and supinating (like you have worms wriggling in your feet). Now slightly flex your ankle and let the knee, hip and spine naturally react to this ankle flexion and try the one footed balance. For most people this one legged balance challenge now becomes both possible and easier.]

So maybe focus on the moves to keep the ankles flexed and ignore the “Don’t wave your arms about so much” (one of those descriptive feedback negatives). Also, the “Don’t lean
back!”, the ski instructor’s perennial lament, becomes, “Keep up with the glide of your skis by keeping your ankle flexed and your shin touching the tongue of your boot!” It is hard for students to see your ankle flexion, so I think hand and finger demos and then turning sideways to the student and showing knee and hip consequences of your ankle flexion helps as a demo. Also, having the students rock forward and aft and describing the feeling of opening and closing the ankle joint until they “feel” it is very important.

On the ankle flexion example with really young kids who have to use whole leg bracing and a power wedge because they lack muscular strength, ankle flexion exercises and focus presents a challenge. But I’ve been impressed with the instantaneous change in her skiing when a little tyke, finally, discovers the effects of ankle flexion! The stooping and jumping games are very helpful for this. You know, the “Duck under the limb, now jump up to grab the apple” gig.” After a couple of these, ask the kids what they have to do to make these moves happen and help them label the actions and feelings. Watch their skiing change!

Anyway, a good exercise for us is to imagine all the examples of “Don’t do….!” we use or hear others use. Then in the comfort of our chair, in front of a warm fire, with soft music playing, a nice glass of wine in hand and our arm around our…oops! Got distracted there!... anyway, try to change each DON’T into a non-judgmental description followed by a what TO DO and HOW TO DO IT statement. I see the difference in my students when I can stay focused and AC-CEN-TU-ATE THE POS-I-TIVE, E-LIM-IN- A-TIVE…Oops! Got distracted again! Time to quit. I’m sure you’ll notice the difference in your students when you become more prescriptive in your feedback.

TURN DESCRIPTIVE FEEDBACK INTO MORE POSITIVE PRESCRIPTIVE FEEDBACK.

(I went out on a limb with some specifics of this article, but I did get the …Bark to …Back.)

So, What About the Toes?

By Witold Kosmala
PSIA-E Alpine, Level III

When you are skiing/riding, do you ever think about your toes? You should. Toes play an important part in all sports. Here we will focus on skiing.

Let’s go back to the previous question. When skiing, do you think about your toes? Are they just sitting around, perhaps getting cold, or are you actively using them? Do you pressure them down or lift them up? Do you pressure your big toe while lifting the little toes, or the other way around? Are your movements abrupt or slow? What do you do and when? If you
want to improve your skiing, you will need to focus more on your toes and blending of their pressure and movement. It makes sense since they are so close to the skis. You can definitely see that in skiing your fingers are less important than your toes. But, how much more time do you spend correcting position and movement of your wrists and fingers versus your toes? Your toes are inside your boot and hard to see, but your skiing shows vividly what your toes are really doing, or not doing.

For example, when you finish your turn, it is not unlikely that you have a tiny bit more pressure on the heel than the ball of your foot. What are your toes doing at that moment? So, now you are in the transition and ready to start your next turn. What should your body do? Yes, pressure your toes down, but how? And yes again to pressuring the little toe on the future inside leg. But again, how? Is it a fast application of pressure or not? If you are not sure of the answer stand up and apply very abruptly pressure to your toes. See what happens to the rest of your body. Go ahead, do it now, I will wait right here.

OK, so what did your upper body do when you abruptly applied pressure to your toes? I hear you. Yes, that’s right, it moved back. Is this what you want in the transition? No, you are correct. So, in the transition the movement to your toes has to be less abrupt. Remember, speed is a relative word. Sometimes very fast is still not considered “abrupt,” and here we are talking in generalities. The bottom line here is that by either moving your upper body at a diagonal down the hill, or moving your feet back, you must put pressure on your toes which will remain on your toes until at least the time you reach the fall line.

Next. Let’s suppose you are skiing down a steep slope that has a very firm cover, icy. Your skis have hard time holding edges and tails keep sliding out from under you. You blame the slope for being too slick and edges of your skis for being too dull. Both of those may be the case, but chances are there is something wrong with your technique. So you say, “but I put a lot of pressure on my outside ski, almost my entire weight is on it, and edges are so high that they can’t be any higher.” Well, that’s just it, perhaps it is your excessive pressure that is massing you up. If not applied correctly, it is destructive. If you pressure your outside ski down, the angle you use to apply this pressure is too close to the angle of the slope. And, chances are that due to the speed of your travel, this angle is not straight down but even closer to the angle of the slope. And, if you put all your weight on it, the ski will slip out because nothing is holding it up. So, what should be done in order for skis to follow the turn
without excessive skid – you ask? There are many things in the skiing technique that need to be refined to prevent slipping on steep terrain and/or icy conditions. One of those improvements lies in your toes.

The idea is to apply pressure on the outside leg that is directed INTO the hill as we MOVE thru the turn. Yes, this pressure is not down and vertically into the hill, but into the hill at the highest possible angle. It is done by a muscular pressure into the hill with the shin of your downhill ski. This pressure is encouraged by pressing the big toe of your outside leg down and pressuring your other toes up against the roof of your outside boot. So your large toe actually pressures the bottom corner of the boot with its side since your foot is a little “tilted” at that moment.

With these two examples you should see that toe technique is of vital importance to skiing mastery and finesse. Therefore, a good question is how to improve on toe action, other than thru awareness. My recommendation is to improve skiing on one leg. This is actually a whole new topic and I will address it separately in the future issue of Peak Performance. The fact is that those little guys at the end of our feet play an integral part in our skiing performance.

My Skydiving Story

By Doug Washer
PSIA-E Alpine, Level II

What's The Difference Between a Bad Golfer And a Bad Skydiver?
A Bad Golfer Goes “Whack. Dang!”
A Bad Skydiver Goes “Dang! Whack.”

One of the “things to do” on my list was to fall out of airplane and try to land in one piece. In October, I was closing in on my 50th birthday, and decided it was as good as any to give it shot.

I first contacted Skydive Carolina Parachute Center in Chester, SC, and got an appointment for a jump on the Sunday before my birthday. My birthday fell (no pun intended) on a Monday, and they typically do jumps on weekends, except for special groups. So I put it on my calendar, and started counting the days.

But, as it turned out, I had to be in Las Vegas the week prior to my birthday, for a business call. After I flew in, and checked into my Las Vegas hotel, I happened to glance at the rack of tourist brochures near the elevator. Interesting! There were two companies that ran skydive centers in the Las Vegas area. Why not? I got to my room and called the company.
that was a little closer to my location, at the south end of the Strip.

The guy on the phone said “Great! Come on down tomorrow morning. It’ll be windy, but we’ll have one session in the morning.” I decided to have steak dinner that night, in case it was my last meal. Surprisingly, I slept pretty well, but had wild dreams of skydiving all night.

The company, “Vegas Extreme Skydiving,” runs a van shuttle from the Strip to their airstrip at Jean, Nevada, which is about 15 miles south of Las Vegas, near the California-Nevada state border. However, I had rented a convertible, and in the morning I drove down to the airstrip with the top down, along Interstate 15. It was intensely windy, and somewhat cold with the wind chill. But my mind was on the upcoming jump, and I was worried it might be canceled due to the high winds. I guess it is how the shuttle astronauts feel when the launch is postponed—you are ready to go, and you don’t want to waste your “go for it” feeling.

Once I arrived at the airstrip, I was the first “student” there. The guy at the desk was obviously a jumper, but not exactly a “people person.” Maybe he had had too many dangerous jumps over war zones to give a damn about one more foolhardy tourist from back east. He gave me a clipboard with pages of legal releases to sign, and led me to a small room to watch an introductory video.

Cool video! It consisted of about 15 minutes of some guy that looked like Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top, sitting behind a desk, talking frankly about all the ways to die in a skydiving accident. As I watched the vid, I was filling out the paperwork. I signed or initialed about 50 different places. Was I having second thoughts? Maybe just a little. Mostly I was thinking that my wife would probably not be able to collect on any of my life insurance policies—and I had not yet told her of my plans to jump. But I knew she could raise a little money by selling my old ski and snowboard equipment.

The student group grew larger, ending up with 12 customers total. We all got suited up and given about 3 minutes each of “instruction.” The jump was to be a “tandem”, with an “instructor” attached at four points behind the “student”. The student group included a couple of guys from Aruba, a young newlywed couple from Ireland, a couple of Japanese guys, a single woman from Virginia, and four guys from Scotland. I was the oldest one by about 20 years, I guessed.

We lounged around the comfortable lobby on some sofas, watching a big screen TV with a video of some spectacular skydiving. I also picked up a skydiving magazine from the coffee table and read some fun articles about skydiving accidents from around the world. The first group went out, while we waited about 20 minutes for their return.

I was in the second group—four students and their instructors. Scott was my instructor. I
figured I would be paired with the smallest guy, since I was the largest “student” (I knew I shouldn’t have eaten that last biscuit). Scott was very energetic, and friendly. I trusted him, but really didn’t have much choice at this point.

As we walked around the small building to the jump aircraft, Scott was videotaping us with a small camcorder strapped to his wrist. I had paid extra for the video of the experience—which was definitely worth the money. I would assume that 99% of their customers pay for the video option. It gives you “proof” of your jump, and lets you “re-live” the experience (if you live the first time).

We boarded the aircraft and took our seat, by straddling one of two wooden benches running lengthwise inside the door. This was it! I was so focused on what the freefall experience was going to be like, that I didn’t realize that we were facing to the rear of the aircraft. When we started to roll, I thought for a split second we were going “backwards”. I kind of laughed at myself for being so distracted.

It took about 10 minutes of flight time to climb to 15,000 feet. The view was spectacular as we circled higher and higher. Las Vegas was about 20 miles away; and Lake Mead and Hoover Dam were not too far; Death Valley was visible in the far distance. Mount Charleston, at 11,916 feet elevation, is the highest mountain overlooking Las Vegas, and was also in our view.

On a scale of 1 to 10 of nervousness, I can honestly say that I was about a “3” all the way up to this point. I had confidence in my equipment (I had bungee jumped once, many years ago), and I also knew that the odds were in my favor. But then came “jump time.” The first three groups were out the door in less than 30 seconds. I got to the open door and reached for the upper grab bar. Scott gently brushed my hands off the bar, and I resumed the proper position of arms folded across my chest.

Scott had told me during the instruction that I needed to arch my back as I jumped, but I think I forgot that in the excitement of falling out. I immediately hit a “10” on the nervousness scale in those two first seconds, as it certainly felt like jumping off a bridge or something—there was no turning back. But, as instructed in our pre-jump training, Scott then tapped me on the shoulder to let me know to move my arms from in front, to the outside position. At that moment, I came back to reality—the reality as I was living it at the time.

The wind noise was INCREDIBLE! Extremely loud! We were falling at about 125 miles per hour directly over I-15, with the large expanse of high desert on either side of the road. Scott made us spin around a couple of times, and I was just along for the ride. When the first spin happened, I thought maybe he had passed out, and we were now out-of-control. But I did my best to enjoy the free-fall, and looked in all directions around me, to take in the view.
After about 60 seconds of free-fall, there were two very quick successive tugs as the chute opened. The relief was extreme, as I now figured I had a much better chance of getting to the ground alive. The sound was now pretty quiet, and we could talk between us. But the wind seemed to be ruffling the chute pretty intensely.

Scott had me take the two control straps, and I quickly learned that the chute is very, very responsive to the directions you make. As we descended, Scott took the controls back, and put us into a “flat spin” that made me feel that we were completely horizontal to the ground. After a couple of spin events, I wanted to say “thanks, but that’s enough for one day.” Prior to the landing, Scott warned me he would be unhooking the bottom two attachment points. I was ready for this.

I saw the landing zone below us, which was a dirt circle located right beside the interstate. The other folks had landed or were landing, and we came in with everyone looking up at us. The landing was so smooth I never felt anything. The student puts both feet out in front, and basically “sits,” while the instructor lands on his feet. (The entire chute portion of my jump was about 4 or 5 minutes).

Mission accomplished! The shuttle van was waiting, and we all crawled in and sat with the chutes all around us (the van had just a carpeted floor and no seats). We were back at the jump center in about 3 minutes. The third and final group went immediately after us, while we waited and watched more skydive videos.

Once the last group finished, the videos were quickly processed, and we received our DVD. It was very good quality, I was happy to see. They use a very wide angle lens to capture the whole scene from loading to landing.

Scott got a generous tip for keeping me from pancaking into the ground, and seemed genuinely happy I had a good experience. I’d definitely do it again, if someone else pays for it.

After my morning jump, I drove off for a couple days of vacation. Driving northwest, along the southwestern edge of Nevada, I made my way up to Lake Tahoe, and flew home from Reno. I saw some cool stuff along the way, such as the famous silver mining town of Virginia City. I also passed through the town of Hawthorne, which has the world’s largest military ammo depot—thousands and thousands of acres of munitions stored out in the open desert, in widely spaced bunkers.

The weather was fairly chilly, but I kept the convertible top down the whole drive, over two days. Saw about a foot of fresh snow at Mt. Rose Summit pass, between Lake Tahoe and Reno (8,911 feet). The wind was whipping up waves on Lake Tahoe, as big as ocean waves.
The ski resorts were not yet open (this was the third week of October). It was fun trip (and the business portion worked out great too—we got a commitment from the customer to move their business to us from our competitor).

I kept my little secret about the jump until I returned home to Blowing Rock, at a family gathering for my birthday. I inserted the DVD into the player without any prior comment, and everyone got to see the jump in its entirety. My wife watched with her jaw dropping, but thought it was pretty cool—but I know she would have preferred some insurance money instead (whether I died or not).

Oh, and my favorite thing to see in Vegas? Fremont Street Experience in the downtown area. And eating at In-N-Out burgers!! Or try The Peppermill, a kitschy diner used as a film location in the “Casino.”
Teaching Tips

The Turning Wedge - The Beginnings

By Witold Kosmala
PSIA-E Alpine, Level III

and

By Ross McNeil
PSIA-E Alpine, Level II

Purpose

The purpose of the turning wedge is to begin to teach the student speed control through the means of turn shape. Turn shape is essential for speed control. This keeps the student at a safe speed without having to increase the size of their wedge. The goal is for the student to be able to identify different size and duration of turning in order to maintain a constant rate of speed.

The aspect of turn shape is important because it is how we control our speed in any type of skiing. Mastery of this skill will allow the student to progress through other skills quicker and easier than students taught in an alternative manner. It is vital that the learner does learn speed control through turn shape rather than the size of their wedge.

Technical Aspects of the Gliding Wedge

Balance

The ski stance for a turning wedge is the exact same as the gliding wedge. The skier is to remain in a balanced position over their skis. The skier will move with the skis as they turn and balancing will become more active in order to remain over top of the skis while turning. This is the first time the skier will feel these active movements while balancing and will take some adjusting.

Edging

The amount of edging is going to be minimal. The skier should be on the inside edges of their skis, however only to a slight extent so they will be able to rotate and pivot their skis on the snow. Try to keep edge angle minimal, because too much edge angle tends to decrease the range of motion of the hips, knees, and ankles. Also large edge angles will make it more difficult to steer the ski on the snow. A good gauge of edge angle is the outside edge of the ski being less than one inch off of the ground.

Pressure

The skier is going to place equal pressure on each foot. The skier should be able to feel their weight on the balls of their feet, with their shins contacting the front of their boots. The
student should not shift their weight or redistribute their weight before, during or after turning. The weight distribution of the skier is going to be the exact same as the gliding wedge.

**Rotary Movements**

Rotary movements in each foot are going to be what make the wedge turn initially. Each foot will pivot around the ball of the foot in order to get the ski to change directions. The rotary motion will be made with the ankles and the hips. Therefore it will feel like the steering motions are coming from the big toes and the knees.

**Teaching the Turning Wedge**

**Terrain**

Ideal terrain is going to be the same as the gliding wedge. Slight pitch that fades into flat terrain is ideal. This gives the skier just a chance to practice the turn without having to worry about gaining too much speed. This is also a great place to begin turning because the skier is able to begin to learn speed control through turning.

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A great game to play with lessons is to see who can go the shortest distance without increasing the size of the wedge. Make the game fun and exciting. With younger lessons (especially in groups) you can make this game a big deal, and compare it to the winter Olympics to get the kids excited about trying to turn. Use this game to reinforce the idea about turning as a way to control speed.

**Lesson Progression**

I like to wait until the skier is roughly 80% competent in a gliding wedge before moving on to the next lesson. The first attempts at teaching turning are best done with out ever discussing turning. See if you can force an “accidental turn” out of the lesson. Try drawing a line in the snow with your ski pole. Have the line go straight and a very slight turn to the left or right. Challenge your lesson to keep their ski tips on each side of the line. As they follow the line you may get an “accidental turn”. You want the turn to be big enough where they can feel the sensations, however small enough where they do not really see the turn, and instead it looks more like a mistake. If you are teaching a lesson without ski poles, have the lesson to follow you down the slope. As you are skiing make this accidental turn and see if the lesson follows you. Again, the turn should be very minuscule.

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The reason for teaching this “accidental turn” is to eliminate any pre-conceived notions about turning. Many first time skiers come into the beginning lesson with ideas about how to make the turns work. In many other sports when turning, one leans into the turn in order to turn. This feeling of leaning in can be felt on a bike, rollerblading, skate boarding, or even a slight degree in running. Also this feeling can be felt or seen in NASCAR, riding on a rollercoaster, motorcycle, water skiing, driving in a car, and even in more advanced skiing.

The big reason about keeping the first turn a secret is to eliminate the preconceived notions about turning that may be the skiers may have. This reduces the chances of the skier hearing the word “turn” and responding by leaning or other bad habit. However this is the opposite of what the beginning lesson needs. Therefore by getting an accidental turn out of the lesson, and then showing them the turn they made allows the lesson to potentially flow easier, and eliminate the bad habit of leaning into turns.
Be sure to point out the “accidental turn” the lesson made. Show them that they did well in getting their skis to go where they wanted. Next do the same thing with the line except make the turn a little more distinct. The turn should be a gradual change in direction and appropriate for the beginning lesson. Be sure to address turning for all three learning styles. For the visual learner practicing keeping the line between their ski tips is great. This allows them to see their tips are moving on the snow and steering to turn.

For the verbal learner, explain how the big toes and knees steer the skis. Finally for people who learn by feeling and doing discuss how you can feel the big toes pointing the direction they want to go. Their feet are going to feel like they are standing on a bar stool (that spins), a Lazy Susan (middle of some dinner tables that spin), or any other object that has the ability to spin. The turns are going to feel like the skier is standing with both feet on a bar stool, with the pivoting axis (what the bar stool would spin on) between their feet. This feeling of spinning either to the left or to the right mimics a turn in the wedge.

Begin to link turns together. The easiest way of teaching the lesson how to turn both directions is very simple. Have the lesson make a turn one way, and then ski straight, and then make a turn in the new direction. Be sure to give visual learners a demonstration, and emphasize the three directions (left, straight, right). Kinesthetic learners will be able to feel their feet turn one direction and then straight, and then another. Verbal learners may need some further explaining about the extent of turning, skiing straight for a few feet and then the new direction.

Often many skiers struggle with comprehending with turning left and then turning back to the right. By having the lesson ski straight after making one turn, it allows the lesson to “reset” their skis. This “resetting” of their skis, places the lesson back in the neutral skiing position of the gliding wedge. Another advantage of this “resetting” is that it will naturally begin to turn the skis into the fall line and help in initiating that next turn. Most skiers struggle with initiating that next turn, so by using the fall line to start the turn, the beginning skier will be able to finish the turn.

For lessons who may struggle with turning, there are other ways to teach this skill. One way that is especially helpful for lessons that are more visually orientated and children is to show the skis actually pointing different directions.

Before starting, label each ski. For older lessons, right and left is sufficient, however younger kids may need an “x” on one ski and an “o” on the other oppose to right and left (also different colored stickers work well).
Now that you have your lesson beginning to make well rounded turns in each direction, continue to focus on the quality of movements. Be sure that your lesson has a solid foundation of ski basics. Try to prevent and erase bad habits that may occur. Bad habits tend to reappear down the road in skiing, and will be more challenging to stop after more “mileage.”

Another way to help skiers understand turning is with the visualization of an arrow. If they can pretend that their skis form an arrow. Wherever they point that arrow is where they will turn. However they must full point the arrow, and move the arrow with pointing their toes and knees in that direction. Be sure that both skis are rotating when the skier points their arrow, instead of only one ski. This seems to work well with older skiers who may not enjoy the analogy of the “flashlights on the knees”.

Common Bad Habits, Their Possible Causes, and Ways to Break Them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skier lacks confidence</th>
<th>Some beginning skiers may have a lack of confidence in their skiing and themselves. This feeling may be a result of a non-athletic background. Some people suffer from a lack of confidence because of the pressure being placed on them by their family and peers.</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Do not add to these feelings. Reassure the skier and be sure to give them positive and corrective feedback. Negative feedback is the worst and will only create setbacks in their learning. Introduce task slower and be sure to keep it simple. Engineering task that will allow the skier to experience success is a great way to boost confidence. For instance allow them to practice for longer amounts of time on flatter terrain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skier is nervous and scared</td>
<td>Often when skiers are panicking it is because of all of the new sensations their bodies are feeling at once. Many skiers who are scared initially is because they are looking at the ground perceive that they are moving at a high rate of speed. Try and get their minds off of the task at hand. Have them look at your hand as you flash different numbers up on your hand. Make the skier call out what number you are holding up. This will help remove the skier’s thoughts from negative panicky ones, to ones that pull their minds off the task they are performing. Have the skier sing a song (in their head or out loud). Even join in as the instructor if it relaxes the lesson. Many other similar tasks will help alleviate the thoughts that are blocking the skier from performing the action.</td>
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</table>
### Stiff and Rigid
Most of the time when a skier is skiing stiff it is because they are lacking confidence or are nervous. However there are few beginning skiers who just ski very stiff. This stiffness will throw them into the back seat and all over as the pitch begins to vary.

A good way to loosen up these skiers is as they slide have them bounce off the front of their ski boots. By having the lesson bounce off of the fronts of their boots, they are forced to begin flexing their ankles and knees, opposite to locking them out in a bent position. Another task you can have the skier perform is just like the nervous skier. Have them sing or dance or anything that forces them to loosen their muscles.

### Skier is Not Balanced
When skiers are not balanced it generally means they are leaning too far back. However skiers can sometimes favor one leg over the other. A way to prevent this is just like how you would help the stiff and rigid skier.

Have the skier bounce off of the fronts of their ski boots, with equal pressure on both ski boots. In order for the skier to bounce off of the front of their ski boots they must be in the balanced position. This motion gets the skier practicing flexing their hips, knees and ankles in a manner and the skier can begin to learn what it feels like to be in this balanced position. This begins to build muscle memory in the skier, and will also give them a task to practice on their own after the lesson is complete.

### Hands Throw Skier Off Balance
Some skiers may have a balanced position over their skis; however they lose this positioning as they throw their hands all around.

Be sure to demonstrate where they might be struggling except show what the hands are doing during the skill. Show how the heights of the hands remain extended around the same height of the navel. The wrist should be slightly wider than the elbows. The arms should remain relaxed, putting the elbow a few inches from the abdomen. The wrists are relaxed and the tips of the poles fall around the heel of the foot.

If the problem persists you may want to temporarily remove the person’s poles. Try and get the skier to hold their hands still in the desired position. The lesson may want to pretend like they are carrying two full cups of water (or coffee, hot chocolate, etc.). If this does not resolve the problem have the learner just place their hands on their upper legs. Giving the task of asking them to feel what their upper legs are doing while sliding should have the lesson calm their hand and shoulder movements.

### Struggle with the Rotation of the Foot
Beginning skiers may struggle with the coordination of twisting their feet. They may not have had to ever separate certain body parts in this manner prior to stepping onto the slopes. Giving these students a physical barrier to aid them in twisting of their feet can be monumental in helping them gain this skill.

An example is to take your poles and place it to the inside of the ski tip. Have the lesson practice tapping the pole with the tip of their ski. Next add another ski pole outside of the tail of the same ski. The poles should be of equal position from the ski. Have the lesson practice tapping both poles at once with their ski. By doing this you can help train their foot to move in this manner.

Perform this with both skis separately. Then if there are enough ski poles available, practice both feet at the same time. This aids in teaching the amount of rotation necessary for the ski to perform the wedge, along with the desired timing and distance the ski travels.

Also watch for knees being too close together making skis tip on the inside edges too much.

### Outside Edge Hinders Ski Rotation
Skiers may have the outside ski edge stop the rotation of the ski. This is because there is more pressure on the little toe than the big toe.

Demonstrate how the outside ski tip does remain in the air. Show the little space that exist under the little toe. You can always ask the skier to pick up their little toe so you can slide just the end of your ski pole under the ski. Talk about how the skier should be feeling the snow with their big toe and the ball of the foot. The reverse of these feelings would be the skier feeling their little toe off of the snow.
Steering Self Test

Wedge turns can be a wonderful way for more advanced skiers to check their steering ability. Here are two quick ideas for steering self-check.

1. On a green slope draw with a pole a line 15 – 20 feet long, which is at first 60 degrees to the fall line and gradually goes down the slope until it ends up being parallel to the fall line. Now get yourself to the top of the line on the downhill side of it, with the closest leg to it being one foot away. Now ski down in a wedge to the end of the line without erasing it with the tails of your skis.

2. Find almost a flat spot on the hill about 15 – 20 feet long. Try making two wedge turns in such a way that the loose snow “hops” on top of the front of the outside ski.

| Lean into turn | Generally skiers who lean into turn have the preconceived notion about what turning is and what it looks like. Go back and practice the accidental turn. Be sure to emphasize equal weight on both feet. One thing to have the skier think about while they turn is that they have weight scales under both feet and they have to be sure and keep the weight on each scale the same. Many times by giving a skier a challenge similar to this one will eliminate their preconceived notion of turning, and set them up in the proper body alignment |
| Too much weight on leg | The scale analogy will also work for this one. Have the skier think about while they turn is that they have weight scales under both feet and they have to be sure and keep the weight on each scale the same. Another thing you can do is have the skier practice redistributing their weight. Whichever leg the skier is favoring, have them put all of their weight on that leg. Lets call this much weight a “10” and the other leg has a weight of “0”. Now have the skier switch the “0” and the “10” to the opposite foot. So now the “10” leg is a “0” and the “0” leg is a “10”. Okay now that you’ve done the extremes with both feet, make the dominant (the leg the skier was favoring) an “8” and the other leg a “2”, and then switch. Then go to a “6” on one leg and a “4” on the other. Finally work your way down to both legs carrying a “5” on each. By teaching the skier what the extremes are of weight distribution, you can begin to work your way down to both legs carrying the same amount of weight. |
| Twisting of the torso | Simply inform the skier of what they are doing with their upper body when they turn. Make sure skier’s hips do not sway out. Another way to eliminate this is for the skier to use their ski poles like they are holding a drink tray. The pole must remain level otherwise the “drinks” would slide off of the tray and spill. However they also must hold the “drink tray” over their legs. This can often provide a great visual for the beginning skier. If your lesson does not have poles have them practice bending their knees and placing pressure on the front of their boots. Then have the lesson as they do make a turn place both of their hands on their outside leg. Be sure that the hands remain there as this will minimize their ability to twist. If they do twist they will not be able to keep their hands on their leg. |
Thoughts for the Month

• The more forward lean ski boots have, the more pressure skier will put on the front of their skis, true or false?
• The steeper the hard-packed terrain, the faster one has to ski it, true or false?
• For snow sports participants, fitness matters, true or false?

Answers are on the last page.

Announcements

• Happy Anniversary! Sugar Mountain Resort begins its 40th season on Nov. 27.
• Sugar's Preseason Ski Clinic is Dec. 11-13. 1994 Olympic Gold medalist & 1992 Olympic Silver medalist, Diann Roffe and two-time Olympian Krista Schmidinger top the list of this season's Preseason Ski Clinic staff.
• Consumer Demo Days at Sugar are Dec. 12–13.
• New during Sugarfest this season - Watch 1992 Olympic Figure Skating Silver Medalist, Paul Wylie dazzle us with his amazing talent followed by an on ice skating clinic and a meet and greet session Saturday, Dec. 12, 10 am and 1 pm on Sugar's ice rink.
• There are several special days in December in addition to the Christmas celebrations. Dec. 1 is a National Pie Day; Dec. 4 is a National Cookie Day; Dec. 6 is St. Nicholas Day, (you should find out why, find out how some places celebrate this day, and how it is related to Santa Claus;) Dec. 8 is a National Brownie Day; Dec. 21 is the first day of winter; and Dec. 28 is the National Chocolate Day. Enjoy all these as well as all other days, in addition to the New Year’s Eve. Just remember, you are responsible for ALL your actions!
• Please remember, plastic bottles are banned from the landfills in NC, so do your part, and recycle those bottles! Below are some waste reduction tips:
  1. Use less stuff!
  2. Double-side copy when you can and use old copies for scratch paper instead of notepads
  3. Minimize paper use by distributing information electronically
4. Buy recycled content products
5. Reuse notebooks, folders and hanging file folders, among other items
6. Reuse cardboard boxes before recycling them
7. Use a reusable cup or mug instead of disposables
8. Pack lunches in reusable containers
9. Shop with reusable grocery bags
10. Donate unwanted items to a local thrift or charity

I know that the America Recycles Day was November 15, but PLEASE PRACTICE THE 3 Rs — REDUCE, REUSE, and RECYCLE TODAY AND EVERYDAY!

Newsmakers

• Gordon Carr provided a winning caption to the Spring photo in a PSIA publication of Fall 2009 issue of 32 Degrees. Gordon, you are great with words. Congratulations!

• John Holder this season is at Appalachian Ski Mountain. Some of his duties will be to build up their Snowboard School program. John will be their seasoned Mentor, he will be App's PSIA/AASI Area Rep, he will be helping with coaching the ASU Snowboard Team and will be supervising all the ASU Snowboard classes. You can contact John at 295-4434, cell 773-0572, and by e-mail at holderpartyof5@charter.net.

• This book chronicles my experiences as a Crew Chief and Door Gunner in the Vietnam War. I hope to offer truth and perspective routinely omitted from textbooks and the mass media and to pay tribute to all servicemen and women who ensure our freedom. To read excerpts, you may log into: MissionsOfFireAndMercy.com. You can also order a copy there if you would like. Have a terrific ski season! Happy holidays to each of you and your families. Bill Peterson

Answers: F, F, T