

II Teaching Skill Foundations - Basic People Skills (People Physics)

Learning about guest service.

Only when a Vision is complemented by a Strategy are overarching aspirations achievable. - Horst Abraham

To learn and grow to the level of 'master' instructor, it will require your sustained interest and effort, study and practice. Much like anyone pursuing excellence, the hunger to improve will have to become part of your DNA.

1. People Skills

As an instructor your primary mission is your skilled and empathetic interaction with guests. Treat them right and they will keep you in business and even become life-long friends.

As an instructor, your social skills are the basic price of entry. Technical skills, psychological acumen and pedagogical competence will round out your portfolio. All the above will require constant updating and renewal. When your learning stops, your career will atrophy and your personal energy will dissipate. Engage in life-long learning and your career will soar well into a ripe age!

Become more aware of your own learning style and the manner in which you process information. Assessing your own profile will help fuel your understanding how to connect with and help others.

While snow sports coaching does not require a doctorate degree, effective instructing will require some broad and pragmatic understanding and skills in how to communicate, motivate, manage, inspire, influence and teach others. PSIA's "Core Concepts" book contains valuable information about many of some of these subject areas:

a. CAP Model (Cognitive/Affective/Physical) - Core Concepts, other research

Discussion: In the "Core Concepts" and other manuals, you will find discussion about how, as human beings we operate in three main domains, cognitive, affective and physical. However, there are also two other domains that some believe we operate in - the spiritual domain as the domain of the will - hence CAPS and CAWPS.

People learn more easily when they are fully engaged; i.e. their whole being is attending to the learning. A positively charged emotional environment accelerates both learning and retention. Besides it's more fun! Safety-fun-learning. If someone feels safe, and is having fun, then they might learn.

1. What does CAP stand for? _____

2. Briefly describe each domain:

3. As you are free skiing/riding, take a moment to observe a lesson for a while. Be aware of the emotional environment. What indicators are you observing that tell you whether it is positive or negative? When you teach, always be aware of such markers.

b. Maslow Hierarchy

Discussion: In the “Core Concepts”, you will see the triangular diagram of Maslow’s Hierarchy describing the hierarchy of needs, showing how needs stack up as we reach for self-actualization (develop to their full potential). If your guest feels safe, has fun, and has learned, there is a greater chance that he/she will return.

1. Describe four ways that you will keep your guest safe: _____

2. If you are teaching a diverse group, how might you develop cohesiveness and camaraderie within the group? _____

3. Sincere encouragement motivates. Insincere encouragement does not. Instead of looking to diagnose deficiencies in your guests skiing/riding performance, strive to always look for what your guest is already doing well and build on that. In the beginner skier, list a few performance indicators that you might look for: _____

c. Brain Hemisphere Dominance - Right/Left

Discussion: Are you right or left brain dominant? Most of our population is left brain dominant. Being aware that we are not all wired the same way, will help you both understand people, as well how to communicate with people.

Your right hemisphere has the spatial, intuitive and synthesizer capacity that enables you to ski. It tends to get confused by logical, linear and abstract description of how to ski. Give instructions that are in sensory language: Visual (Image), Auditory (Sound), Kinesthetic (Feeling), language that requires no translating, language that can be acted upon immediately.

1. Describe how a new skier/boarder might respond to a lengthy detailed, intricate explanation of the physics behind making their first turn.

d. Blooms Taxonomy - Core Concepts, other research

1. Read and research “Core Concepts”. Regarding Bloom’s Taxonomy, as a learner, do you have to ‘understand’ the physics of making a turn, in order to be able to turn? _____

2. Consider this statement: When you learn a motor skill, you process ‘understanding’ through your ‘body intelligence’ using sensory detail. Write down how you might communicate to a new skier/boarder what they may want to ‘feel’ when they are tipping or flattening the ski or board. Remember you can use verbal as well as non-verbal communication. _____

e. Piaget

1. In the “Core Concepts” and elsewhere, you will find information regarding Piaget and the stages of development. As a newer instructor, to a large extent, you will be most likely working with children. Many ski schools have very excellent and well developed programs for children. PSIA/AASI offers special accreditations for children. What is the single most important fact that you think will help you be successful working with children and why? _____

f. Learning Styles - VAK-E, Thinker/Doer/Watcher/Feeler

Discussion: People also have various learning styles. There are many learning style models, however, the ones that PSIA/AASI uses the most are the VAK(E) model, Kolb’s Thinker/Doer/Watcher/Feeler model, McCarthy’s Active/Reflective/Big Picture/Parts model.

For the snow sports instructor, being aware that not all of us approach new learning the same way is essential. Being adept at adapting to your guests will facilitate both fun and learning for you.

1. On the internet are many ‘tests’ that you can take to learn more about how you learn. Try some and write down what your dominant learning style. _____

2. What does VAK stand for _____

3. Exercise: We learn through our experiences. Engineering learning experiences is the work of instructors. Thoughtful composition of terrain, snow conditions, simple, unambiguous instructions defining experiential ‘territory’ is the challenge the instructor needs to creatively develop. Debriefing and learning from such experiences is the shared task of both instructor and student.

For the skier/rider, spending time in focused practice is essential. One variable at a time, the student explores possibilities and registers cause and effect resulting from his efforts.

VAK-E is the language of the learner, leading experimentation with:

- a clear image to pursue
- a sound the ski makes on the snow, if applicable
- a sensory feeling to learn to differentiate, and
- an intensity level with which to engage in the practice

Practice VAK-E with your training partner.

g. Stages of Learning

As an instructor (facilitator of learning), there are many teaching models that explain the path of learning. One very simple model is helping the student move from a level of:

1. Unconscious incompetence to... (it's not working and I do not know why?!)
2. Conscious incompetence to ... (I get it, this is what is not happening yet)
3. Conscious competence to ... (I know what I am doing and it is working)
4. Unconscious competence to ... (I am good and do not need to think about it)

Considering the above in the context of your own performance as a skier/rider, an instructor. What stage of development are you in at this point? What do you need to do to get to the next level? Often times, it is easier to work with people who know that they do not know. However, many times, you will find yourself working with people who think they know, but they do not really know. What skills will you need to draw on and employ to be a facilitator of learning with such people?

h. Teaching Styles

Discussion: Just as there are various learning styles, there are also many teaching styles. The instructor's teaching style is governed by the student's learning style, requiring of the instructor agility and seamless shifting form one student's learning style to the next. Let us resolve in **this text** to use 'teaching' and 'facilitating' interchangeably even though there are differences. What is important to note is that effective teaching/facilitating is a process in which instructors actively collaborate with their students in achieving their goals.

1. What is the teaching style that you are most comfortable employing and why?
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2. What is the teaching style that you are least comfortable employing and why?
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