

## **Alpine Skiing**



Alpine skiing is considered a highly technical sport. It requires learning to ski, good equipment, a nearby mountain, snow and can be expensive. Alpine seasons are relatively short, from December to April in the best-case scenario.

When SO skiers have learned to ski, they can be considered recreational skiers. There is a big difference between being a recreational skier and being able to compete on a giant slalom (GS) course. Few SO alpine skiers are able to compete with basic skills on a giant slalom course on a steep hill as is encountered at

Provincial and National SO Games. Often Regional Games will have a gentler slope but even in these easier conditions, few skiers are able to parallel ski down the hill with correct basic slalom technique. This is mainly due to the fact that SO programs have a “recreational” approach to SO skiing and rarely fully graduate to basic giant slalom racing skills.

### **Learn to ski: (10-20 hours)**

#### **Often associated with Regional SO Competitions**



Learning to ski is usually not a difficult task, it can be learned within 20 hours or a few full days on the hill. When SO athletes can ski the easier slopes on a hill (green), they have learned to ski. After an athlete has learned to ski, a focused approach on basic giant slalom skills is necessary for preparation to Regional, Provincial and National Games. This focused approach is not for elite athletes but for all participants that will have to compete. Giant slalom on a steep course is a highly difficult task compared to just skiing

down a green or a blue slope.

All SO competitions require a start, a number of gates (usually between 15 and 20) and a finish line. SO skiers must learn basic start technique, the correct gate approach and path from gate to gate and do all this in a ski position that maximize speed. If SO skiers are not adequately trained, starts and steep gate turns at higher speed become a very difficult task. This is when SO skiers use snowplow technique and sit well back on their skis.

Skills required for SO GS are listed in the Alpine basic skill. These sheets can be used as a guide, and when all skills are marked “yes”, skiers are ready for any SO GS competition and are ready for intermediate ski skills.

**Guidelines for using the skill sheet for alpine skiing**

1. After learning to parallel ski, SO athletes must now adapt their general skiing skills to specific slalom racing. The first element is to acquire a basic position consistent with gaining speed while providing stable and controlled turns. With varied slope gradients, changing gate patterns and speed, maintaining adequate basic position will require many hours of practice.
2. When the skier has good basic position in different slope and gate conditions, start working on turns. Ensure that basic position is maintained during turn acquisition.
3. Starts are then introduced after turns and basic position are acquired. It can take years (20-hours per skill) before an athlete is at basic slalom ski level, it is mostly dependent on how many focused snow trainings an athlete does.

**Alpine Skiing Basic Skills**  
**From Video is better if possible**

On GS course: 5 gates with a start

**Basic Skill: GS skiing position**      **YES**    **NO**      **Comments**

Sub Skills



Arm forward

☐    ☐

Knee Angle 90°

☐    ☐

Weight forward on skis

☐    ☐

Upper Body (aerodynamic)

☐    ☐

Knees ahead of toes

☐    ☐

**Basic Skill: Turns**  
**(2/3 before gate)**

**YES**    **NO**

**Comments**

Sub Skills

Turn start early  
2/3 completed before gate

☐    ☐

Looking 2 gates forward

☐    ☐

Weight on outside ski

☐    ☐

Ski parallel

☐    ☐

Close to gate

☐    ☐

**Basic Skills: Start and Skate**

**YES**    **NO**

**Comments**

Dynamic start using poles

☐    ☐

Pole Pushes (2-3)

☐    ☐

Skate strides (4-6)

☐    ☐

**When athletes achieve all “YES”, they have acquired basic skills.**  
**Expectations are critical to skill acquisition.**



## **20-hour acquisition**

### **Skill Breakdown: Examples of priority elements to focus on during practice**

#### **Spend time on each one until acquired**

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Push start:      | Planting poles – Bend knees and jump forward –                          |
| 2. Skating strides: | Balance on one ski – Skate on flat – Skate on slope                     |
| 3. Gate Approach:   | Look ahead (two gates) – 2/3 of turn above the gate -                   |
| 4. Stance:          | Pressure forward – Arms forward – Knee bent 90 ° – Aerodynamic position |
| 5. Edge:            | Right and left control – Upper body stable – Shifts                     |
| 6. Carving:         | Lean – Pressure – Ski positions – Equipment                             |

Each of these skills can be learn in 1-20 hours

**Home skill practice can be done on Inline skates during summer months:**



- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Start:  | Skating on flat – Jump forward (on snow or in-line) |
| Stance: | Pressure forward – Knee bent 90 ° (for one minute)  |
| Edge:   | Right and left edge control (on snow or in-line)    |



Practice three times per week (if possible) for one hour until each skill (focus on only one at a time) is acquired.

### **Alpine Example: Focused Basic Skills Session on snow (2.0 h)**

#### **Focus on one skill at a time: Example Gate approach with 2/3 of the turn completed before the gate**

15' Warm up and stretching in the lodge

30' Free skiing ability based groups

- Basic Position
- Turns
- Starts

45' On slalom course **(with video and examples, slow down demonstration when introducing a new skill, use hands to guide movements when necessary and visual cues such as paint on snow)**

- Gate Approach – Easy slope in racing position with focus on two gates ahead
1. Easy slope in racing position with snow paint (X and lines) to initiate turns
  - 2.



3. Steep slope in racing position with focus on gate ahead
  4. Steep slope in racing position with snow markers to initiate turns
- Shifts
    - Same as above with two gates far apart
    - Same as above with three regular distance gates

15' Free skiing

Hot chocolate

**Don't worry about quality of turn, just do as many gates as you can for the first 20 hours of practice with focus on turning before gates and using visual cues instead of verbal directions such as snow paint and markers.**

### **Alpine Example: Focused Basic Skills Session Summer (1h)**

**Focus on one skill at a time: Example Gate approach with 2/3 of the turn completed before the gate (summer)**

20' Warm up, stretching and core exercises

- Basic position
- Edges
- Turns

30' In-line skating with poles (with slight slope)

- Gate Approach - Slow ski in basic position with focus on gates ahead
5. Slow ski in basic position with markers to initiate turns
  6. Repeat with 2two – three - four gates

10' Cool down

**Do as many gates as you can in a session until gate approach is acquired. Using video and demonstrations will accelerate learning.**

### **Conclusion:**

Learning to ski is just the first step of SO alpine skiing. SO skiers must learn basic giant slalom (GS) technique to compete at SO competitions. Using the skill sheet is an excellent way to learn basic GS skills and encourage athletes to practice often. Many slalom skills can be practiced throughout the year and the more time spent on focused training, the better each SO athlete will become. Very few SO skiers have reached GS basic skill level and are on an intermediate skills program. Most are “stuck” at the recreational ski level.

**Lesson Plan**  
**Basic Skill Acquisition Program**  
(weekly or monthly)

Sport \_\_\_\_\_ Athlete Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Expectations**

**1- Weekly Practice** (attend all practices)

Day (S) \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

“What the group is working on”:

**2- Club Fit** 100% attendance (Including Functional Testing exercises)

Day \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

“What you need to concentrate on”:

**3- Basic Skill Development Homework** (4 times per week - 1 hour per day)

Skill \_\_\_\_\_

“Individual Home Practice Objectives”