

The Ski Day Rescue Playbook

What to do when teaching kids to ski goes Downhill

CRITICAL FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES (Must-know for every parent):

1. **If your kid starts crying as soon as the skis go on** → The day started too fast. It's time to slow everything down and reset. Play games on flat ground just in boots or with 1 ski on.
2. **If your kid refuses to turn** → Immediately back to the bunny hill or magic carpet. Turning is non-negotiable for controlling speed and direction and keeps both them and everyone else on the mountain safe. Do not go off the bunny hill until they're turning reliably ALWAYS.
3. **If your kid can't stop** → They need to go back to basics. Start with a wedge on flat ground, a gliding wedge on a very gentle slope, and then progress to the magic carpet. If they can't make a wedge shape, try an edge wedge to help develop muscle memory.
4. **If you're thinking "just one more run"** → That's your cue to stop now. The goal is to end with a smile on everyone's faces so they leave with a positive association of skiing, not to ski as many runs as possible. Don't risk spoiling that for one more run.
5. **If your kid suddenly says "I'm done"** → Listen to them. Go inside and take a break and reassess whether to end then or to reset and try more skiing. It's better to have 2 hours of skiing that end with a smile than 5 hours where the last 30 minutes end in tears.

PROGRESSION & PACING ISSUES:

6. **If your kid is fine on flats but not slopes** → You moved up to a hill too quickly. The progression should be SLOW and the slopes should be very gentle and gradually increasing. For most kids, they need about 4-5 levels of hills between flats and the bunny hill, gradually increasing steepness as they improve in their skills.
7. **If your kid panics on the hill** → You skipped confidence-building steps. Return to terrain they already are comfortable on, until they're ready to move up.
8. **If your kid picks up speed and freezes** → Their turning skills haven't caught up to the terrain difficulty. Return to gentler slopes and work on linking consistent turns before attempting steeper runs again.
9. **If your kid's form falls apart when they're tired** → You're skiing too long. Even if they're having fun, technique breakdown means it's time to stop. Bad habits formed when tired are hard to break.
10. **If your kid wants to ski blacks but isn't ready** → Set clear, objective criteria: "When you can link 20 parallel turns on a blue without stopping or wedging, we'll try a black together." Make harder terrain earned.

ENVIRONMENT & INDEPENDENCE:

11. **If your kid looks overwhelmed by the mountain** → Scale the environment way down. Start with one lift that's within their ability and start by taking lots of laps there. After several laps, suggest other similar terrain to them.
12. **If your kid suddenly won't follow you** → Let them take the lead. They'll love the independence and the chance to show off what they can do.

EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIORAL ISSUES:

13. **If your kid says "I hate skiing"** → They hate this moment, not skiing, and not YOU. Change the environment as quickly as you can. Go inside, play a game, have a snack.
14. **If your kid was fine and then melted down out of nowhere** → You missed a readiness cue. Stop and figure out what the problem is before emotions escalate.
15. **If your kid won't listen at all** → Speak their language and make it FUN! Play games, make skiing about their favorite interests. Kids learn best through play and connection.
16. **If your kid starts arguing over everything** → They feel like they don't have control of their ski day. Give them some choices on what you do next. Blue or green, trees or groomer, terrain park or slalom. When kids feel like they have choices, they're more engaged in the learning process.
17. **If you feel yourself getting frustrated** → Pause the day or ask another adult to ski with the kids so you can have a break.

PHYSICAL & COMFORT ISSUES:

18. **If your kid clings to you and won't let go** → They don't feel stable yet. Typically a problem in the early phases. Go to almost flat ground and work on the SUPER BASICS. Stomping, smears, balance, and gliding. Focus on balance before movement.
19. **If your kid keeps falling over** → The terrain is too steep or they're working on skills that they don't have a solid foundation for. Or they're too tired and need a break.
20. **If your kid keeps asking to be carried** → They're struggling physically and/or emotionally. Some kids ask to be carried because walking in ski boots is HARD. Others ask to be carried because they're nervous or overwhelmed. Both are fine. This can often be prevented by letting kids play in their ski gear at home so they're less overwhelmed on the mountain.
21. **If your kid keeps taking their gloves or helmet off** → They're uncomfortable. Fix warmth or fit before skiing more. This can be prevented by wearing ski gear at home or during snow play prior to ski days.
22. **If your kid only wants snacks and breaks** → This is usually a sign that they need a break both physically and mentally.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES:

23. **If your kid can parallel turn but keeps reverting to wedge** → Their confidence hasn't caught up to their ability or they need more skill practice. They need more mileage on comfortable terrain before the parallel becomes automatic. Don't correct constantly. Let them build confidence first.
24. **If your kid constantly wants to "race you" down** → They're prioritizing speed over control. Set games with rules to help them progress and stay in control: "Race me but you have to make 10 turns before the next trail sign."
25. **If your kid skis great on groomers but panics in powder/moguls** → They haven't developed terrain adaptability yet. Introduce variable conditions in tiny doses on easy terrain. Find one or two small moguls or powder patches on a green run and make it playful. Tree skiing is a great place to introduce varied terrain.