



MAKING TIME TO DO DRILLS

HOW TO FIT DRILL WORK INTO YOUR FREE SKIING TIME AND HAVE FUN IN THE PROCESS

I hear it said often by skiers. They'd like to improve their skills, but they just don't have the time to do the training required to make it happen. Many only get to ski a couple weeks a year, as vacation skiers, and just can't justify wasting the the scant hours they have to ski working on drills.



Sound familiar? I bet some of you even relate to that line of thinking, and thus refrain from engaging in tedious drill work yourself. The problem with carrying that negative outlook on doing drills is that those who hold it usually end up stuck on what's known as the "intermediate plateau", never coming close to realizing their personal skiing potentials. Yes, they do improve early in their skiing lives, from just free skiing around the mountain, but only up to a point. That "on-the-job" learning process quickly comes to a screeching halt, and the days of enjoying rapid improvements fade away. These unfortunate skiers stagnate, with a virtual cap placed on their ability to improve further, and

they never come to experience the greater rewards and fun the sport of skiing carries the potential to offer.



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My intention in writing this article is to inform skiers that drill work is not the mundane activity many envision it to be, and that doing it does not have to come at the expense of time free skiing the mountain with family and friends. There are ways to easily incorporate training time into your free skiing time, and doing so will enhance the fun you have on the slopes for remainder of the years you're involved in the sport.

In addition to the concept that drill work infringes on free skiing time, the lack of motivation to engage in a skill building program can also be born of an ignorance of what is possible, and what greater forms of fun lie beyond the ability level at which one currently resides. I regularly get ecstatic Email from my Building Blocks students, raving about how their training in our program has elevated their skiing to a level they never dreamed possible, and how much more fun the sport has become for them.





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One of those students, Chris, from the midwest United States, sent the following letter depicting the story of his own change of heart about his previous aversion to doing drill work, and the positive results that came from that transformation.

“So, I'm looking back at last ski season, and this season to date, and it seems obvious to me what an important role your Building Blocks DVDs have played.

The beginning of last season was the first time I had EVER spent any snow time doing drills. I had received your first two DVDs, watched them, studied them, made notes and went to the small hills of Michigan and worked diligently performing the drills. I got the next two DVDs for Christmas and quickly got busy on the new drills.

Later in the winter when I traveled to Colorado I definitely felt a marked improvement in my skiing. I want to thank you for providing the right information in the right format for me to understand, practice and implement into my skiing.

A few short years ago I thought that spending time on the hill practicing drills was just for coaches, instructors and competitors. I felt that I always had fun when I was skiing so what was the use of replacing 'fun time' with 'drill time'. Now I understand that mastering your drills leads to better, more efficient technique which leads to more confidence on the most difficult terrain and thus, MORE FUN!

Now I'm looking forward to my next opportunity to get out on some easy slopes and.... drilling!”



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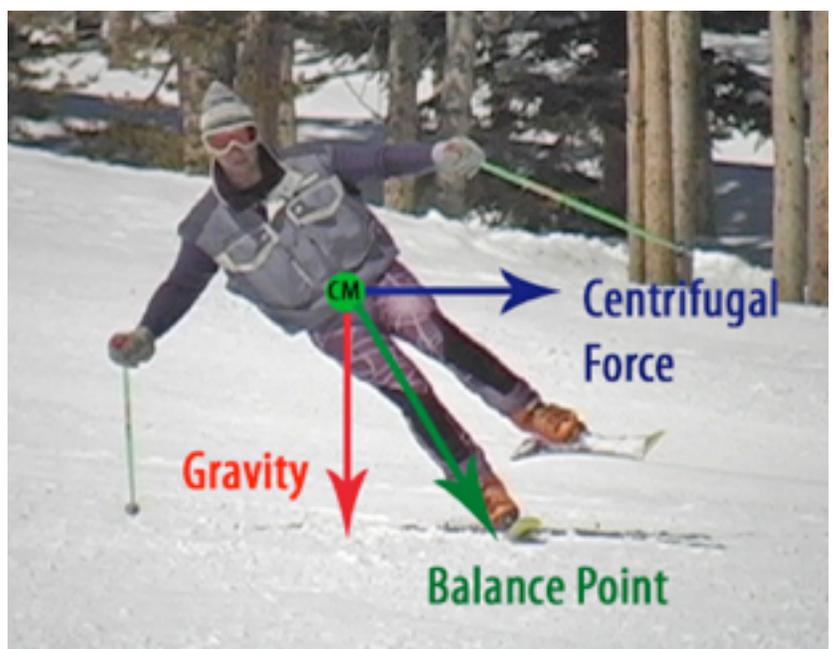
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Chris's story parrots countless others my students have shared with me. From years of coaching skiers to the highest levels of expertise, I know the power of skill building, and the enjoyment it can bring to those passionate about the sport. That knowledge is what initially motivated me to produce my Building Blocks DVD Instructional program, and what currently motivates me to continue on this crusade to spread the word.

Now, let's get down to the meat of this article. How can you incorporate drill work into your time on the slopes, and still have fun? Let's begin with a brief discussion of what drills are, and how they work to improve a persons overall skiing.

To many, expert skiing seems a mystery, reserved for the athletically gifted. In reality, expert skiing is easily explained. It's simply a menagerie of individual skills, melded into a symphony of movement that appears elegant and effortless. Drills are nothing more than specific ways of skiing, which focus, one by one, on each of the individual skills expert skiing is composed of.





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By using drills to isolate individual skills, a skier can dedicate full attention to practicing and refining the specific skill each drill addresses. As more and more individual skills are learned and perfected, a skier eventually develops an assortment of technique options they can use to tackle any terrain on the mountain. That level



of expertise is reached through advanced drill work, where individual skills

already learned are practiced in specific combinations. This helps skiers learn how to meld groups of individual skills into fluid movement patterns of various types. It's the process of learning to execute these specific combinations of skills by which techniques are born, and expert skiing is attained.





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Once skiers reach that point in their learning journey, they gain a whole new appreciation of what the sport can be, and they experience a whole new level of fun on skis. It's a level that most skiers never attain during a lifetime on the slopes, sadly not because they don't possess enough innate athletic ability, but rather because they simply have no knowledge of the road that will get them there. It's a road built of skills and drills.



Hopefully by this point, I've clarified what drills are, and convinced you of the importance of doing them. Now, let's discuss how to fit them into your time on the mountain.



Because drills are in actuality nothing more than specific ways of skiing, they can be done anytime you're on the slopes, on any terrain on the mountain. You can be skiing with your friends and doing drills at the same time, as you all enjoy skiing your favorite slopes. Your ski buddies will probably not even notice. In other words, you can do drill work whenever you desire, anytime you're out on the

mountain. It doesn't matter if you're skiing with others, or out on your own.



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While the above is true, there are some specific guidelines for employing drill work into your ski time that will allow you to derive the most benefit from it. Let's discuss them.

Drills you're trying for the first time should be initially attempted and practiced on easy terrain. When I say "easy terrain", I refer not only to the steepness, but also the nature of the snow surface. Ideally, a green, or easy blue slope, that is freshly groomed, and has no ice, is the best environment for introducing new drills. Whenever you happen to be skiing on your own, it's a good time to head for such terrain to begin working on new drills. It's best to do new drills while skiing alone, because the process of



learning a new drill includes the execution of partial or single turns, which slows your pace down the slope. Doing it while skiing with friends would most likely leave them waiting for you at the lift for extended periods of time, while you're still up on the trail diligently doing your drill work. Not good skiing etiquette.



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Once you begin developing some competence with new drills, it's time to take them to slightly more difficult terrain, and continue to hone your proficiency with them. This can be a good place to begin including that particular drill to your time skiing with others. If you find yourself on a moderately pitched, groomed slope while skiing with your mates, it's a good opportunity to work on progressing with one of the newer drills you're working on.

With these drills, you've already developed the ability to execute them relatively well within the context of a series of turns. That gives you the ability to practice them on slightly more difficult terrain while skiing with family and friends, and not hold everyone up. Continuing to practice them here, furthers the process of honing your proficiency with them, and embedding the movement patterns they require more deeply into your muscle memory.



As you continue to expand your skill level at a certain drill, your confidence with doing it will grow, and the most difficult terrain will become a playground for practicing that particular drill. These are the drills you want to work on when you and your friends decide to head for the steep and gnarly. They'll be fighting their way down that terrain, struggling to remain upright, unaware that you're not only skiing this extreme stuff, but

are simultaneously focusing on honing your skills and refining your technique.



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Employing those 3 general stages of drill work,

- 1) Introduction on easy terrain while skiing alone.
- 2) First stage refinement on moderate terrain while skiing with friends.
- 3) Final stage refinement on difficult terrain while skiing with friends.

provides a good strategy for incorporating drill work into your time on the mountain. No matter what the situation you find yourself in, you'll have a drill to work on that suits the terrain you're on and the company you're with.



Finally, consider the lift ride between runs a perfect opportunity to plan your drill implementation strategy. If you know the nature of the terrain you'll be heading for on your next run, you can choose an appropriate drill to work on. That decision process can be done in the privacy of your own thinking, while also engaging in the casual conversation taking place with your friends. Of course, if the conversation were to sway towards this stealth practice session you've been engaging in all day, it's certainly allowable to clue

them in on what you've been doing, and explain the origin of the noticeable improvement they've been seeing in your skiing lately. Who knows, it just may be the catalyst they need to embark on a similar training journey.



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I hope I've been successful in inspiring you to pursue expert level skiing. It's not an unrealistic goal reserved only for the unusually athletically endowed. It's a level of skiing available to almost anyone who holds a passion for the sport. With each new skill learned, your enjoyment of the sport will escalate, and your love of it will grow even stronger. I encourage each of you to begin this learning journey. The moment you develop your first new skill you will experience a leap in the level of confidence you feel on your skis, and you'll come to intimately understand for yourself why people get hooked on training. A whole new vision of what this sport can be emerges, and the motivation to continue improving mushrooms. I wish you all much enjoyment as you embark on that journey into the world of expert skiing.



Note:

The strategy for improvement explained in this article deals only with the implementation of drills into your ski time, not the drills to be used, or the order in which to practice them. For that I suggest the use of our Building Blocks DVD Instructional series. It provides a comprehensive, step by step program for self training your skiing skills to the highest levels of expertise.



Building Blocks DVD Series



Building Blocks Drill Cards