

Steer your curves!

Today, we are going to look at one of the most common tactical issues that hinder effective performance – the line we steer and how it affects our control.

Having spent many years watching skiers perform on a variety of slopes it is not unfair to say that the vast majority could dramatically increase their performance just by changing the shape of their turn.

The first step is to change the ‘mind set’. I am sure all the skiers I have watched are doing what they want to do! The jagged, rushed turns being a result of not wanting to point down the hill (fall-line) and therefore gain too much speed, or, pushing their heels out as they may, incorrectly, have been told.

The effects on their performance are many. The sharpness of the turn makes it harder to balance, the skis do not interact with the terrain and snow surface efficiently, either braking away if the texture is harder, or tripping the skier up if it is a little deeper, and speed control becomes fragile.

None of these factors create problems when the skier is in their comfort zone, when the gradient is not too steep, when the terrain is not too challenging and when the snow is complimentary. However, once the going gets tougher and the snow get firmer or deeper, the terrain gets bumpy or the gradient gets steeper, their performance breaks down.

This can all be overcome by steering positively to shape all turns into curves. Steering positively gives you a smoother, more balanced ride, it gives your skis the opportunity to do their job, working with the snow conditions and providing grip and support, or drive through different snow textures. But mainly, it gives you options.

When zig zagging down a slope you come out of the fall line at one angle and in one direction, whereas shaping ‘S’ curves you can ‘release’ the curve at any stage allowing you to go faster or slower as you decide.

An effective analogy is to compare steering your skis to steering your car. The car driver is very definitely steering into the curve and then steering out of the curve. At any stage they are placing the car exactly where they want it to be. It would be an ‘out of control’ driver who ‘threw’ the car around a corner and waited for the wheels to grip and take them off in the new direction, yet, this is what many skiers are doing in every turn they make.

Here are some drills that will contribute to more accurate steering and also increase the effectiveness of your skis.

All to be performed on gentle slopes. (Note - Develop your performance where you can focus on what you are doing and not be distracted or intimidated by the gradient, terrain or snow texture.)

1. Prevent rushing the turns and 'check' there is a part of the curve when the skis are pointing down the fall line by saying "Now" as your skis point down the slope.
2. Count around the curve. Count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 through the CURVE. 1 as you start the curve, 2 as you accelerate, 3 as you point down the fall line, 4, as you steer out of the fall line and 5 as you slow down by 'closing' the curve.
3. Breath in by pulling in your abdomen as you build speed into the fall line, and breath out slowly as you close the curve and slow down.
4. Link curves together to create continuous movement over your skis.

Enjoy your skiing!