

Fit Facts™

FROM THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE®

GET READY TO HIT THE SLOPES

You don't have to wait for the snow to start falling to get ready for ski season. Start your training now and you'll be sailing past those other ski bums on your way down the mountain.

Dusting the competition or showing off to friends are not the only reasons to get in shape before ski season. Skiing is an activity that requires a variety of skills: strength, endurance, balance and coordination. Hit the slopes without developing these skills and you may be in for more than a little embarrassment — you might even hurt yourself.

SPORTS-SPECIFIC TRAINING

This is where sports-specific training comes in. Generally speaking, sports-specific training programs involve focusing on the various skills associated with a particular activity. Depending on the sport, this may include health-related fitness components such as cardio-respiratory endurance, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility. A specific program may also take into account skill-related measures of fitness such as agility, balance, coordination, power, speed and reaction time. Most sports require a mixture of these components.

Skiing is a sport that relies heavily on skill-related fitness. A traditional fitness program, which includes a combination of weight training and cardiovascular exercise, will only take you so far. A specific training program to develop specific skills for skiing will take you from the peaks to the valleys in record time.

GET READY TO SKI

There are several ways to begin a sports-specific training program. The simplest way is to include several new exercises in your regular workout schedule. For example, performing wall sits that require you to "sit" against a wall will help build up the isometric strength needed for the tuck position in skiing. Squats and lunges will build lower-body strength for skiing tough terrain like moguls. Exercises such as crunches to work your abdominals are essential in creating a solid "core" for balance and agility.



It is important to train your body to withstand and absorb the impact associated with skiing. Plyometric movements, such as hopping from side to side, develop muscle power and strength as well as improve agility.

SET UP YOUR OWN SKI CIRCUIT

A great way to integrate these elements into your existing routine is to create a

circuit -raining program, which involves rapidly moving from one exercise to the next. You can set up a circuit in any large room, or at your club's aerobic studio. Be sure to place all of your stations before beginning your workout so you don't have to stop in the middle. Set a specific time limit for each exercise, as well as a set period of breaks between each station. Thirty seconds of work followed by 30 seconds of rest are common interval periods. Then, simply turn up the music and make your way around the circuit. You might even want to create your own music tape with timed intervals of music for exercise and silence for rest periods.

Try these stations to help you gear up for the slopes: use the slide for lateral training, perform one-legged squats to develop balance and strength, and use a step-bench platform to improve power. Try catching a bean bag as it drops off your forearm to improve reaction times or bounce two tennis balls to improve coordination. To improve agility, create your own slalom by running between cones. In sports-specific training, you are limited only by your imagination.

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