

Freestyle Specialist Manual



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Credits

This manual was compiled by a committee of PSIA-NW members with the endorsement of the Board of Directors and the approval of the PSIA-NW Education, Technical and Certification Vice Presidents and the Education & Programs Director. The committee was chaired by Terry McLeod who was supported by Shawn Semb, Lane McLaughlin, Dustin Semb and Chris Hargrave. The Chair of this committee wishes to express his gratitude to those who contributed. This Manual would not have been possible without their help and without the support of the ETC and the E&PD.

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Introduction

Northwest Mission Statement

Provide high quality educational resources and well-defined standards to aid our members in improving their teaching skills to better satisfy the needs and expectations of their customers in the enjoyment of downhill and Nordic winter sports.

Purpose of This Guide

With the growing popularity and availability of freestyle terrain (more than 80% of resorts have designated freestyle terrain) there are increasing opportunities for PSIA and AASI instructors to become educators in the use of terrain parks and freestyle skill development. While freestyle skiing has many safety and performance concepts common with skiing/riding anywhere within the resort's boundaries, there are additional points of information and awareness unique to freestyle terrain. An instructor who wishes to provide the best service possible to their customers in terms of a positive freestyle learning experience should be familiar, knowledgeable, practiced and skilled in freestyle concepts and terrain park usage. The NW Freestyle Education Program is designed to educate instructors on the essential safety and performance aspects of freestyle riding and teaching, help set goals, measure participant's current level of understanding and skill and to foster opportunities for members to share knowledge and best practices from resorts and schools throughout the Northwest.

Through the increased level of interest in freestyle education a wider variety of online and written educational resources are becoming available to members. As well, educational and specialist events are increasing in popularity and participation. With concerns over safety and risk exposure of freestyle terrain, learning centers and school operations are putting an emphasis on training and education as a method for validating who on their staff is qualified and permitted to take guests into terrain parks. This guide is intended to provide members, directors, training directors and divisional staff with a complete description of what PSIA/AASI-NW offers in the way of educational resources, educational events within the freestyle specialist programs.

Contacts

Just as freestyle parks and park riding continues to evolve, so will the PSIA/AASI-NW Freestyle Specialist Education Program. Evolution comes easier with the advice and feedback from you, the member, in expressing to us your needs and the quality of experiences you have with our products and services. Make sure your voice is heard and submit your feedback and ideas to the following players:

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2.0 Educational Resources

The curriculum for NW freestyle events and specialist program is based in large part on the concepts that are shared by instructors and industry experts throughout the country. Since freestyle tricks, skills and culture are ever progressing, and there's a wealth of local knowledge within each resort and park community, we recognize that it's almost inappropriate to say there's a right way, wrong way, national way, etc. when it comes to freestyle. However, to provide a common ground of understanding and communication within the instructor community, and to provide a framework from which schools and learning centers can build freestyle learning programs, and to share best practices and success stories from across the country, PSIA AASI provides and utilizes the following resources to you. A PSIA-Northwest-AASI member has full access to all of these resources and can expect that the ideas, concepts and fundamentals expressed in them will be explored in training events and evaluated at specialist courses.

Park and Pipe Instructor's Guide

The Park and Pipe Instructor's Guide is an essential resource that is being used among PSIA/AASI instructors across the country. This first-edition guide examines and explains freestyle terrain features, etiquette, class management, skill progressions, tricks, etc. and emphasizes coordinating with all the players who design, maintain and ride the park and pipe. Teachers and coaches are given visual cues to assess students' readiness for freestyle terrain as well as practical ways to help them transition there from all-mountain riding. Designed for all Snowsports riders—whether alpine, snowboard, or Nordic—this resource shows how to progressively move to larger features and tricks, and ultimately develop personal style. Also includes an extensive glossary of basic and new school terminology.



32 Degrees: The Journal of Professional Snowsports Instruction

The national mag is stuffed with up to date content from national team members and other members throughout the country about freestyle progressions, teaching tips, jargon and more. Watch your mailbox for your next issue and tear through it looking for some freestyle scoop. The same can be said for your Northwest newsletters – look for frequent contributions from clinicians and coaches throughout the Northwest.

PSIA | AASI Web Sites

The national web sites for PSIA (www.psia.org) and AASI (www.aasi.org) have a Freestyle/Pipe & Park section within their Members Only sections. This information is a subset of the information found in the Instructor's Guide and some of the content is free to download for personal use. Online copies of the 32 Degrees magazine is posted here as well, so when your hard copy gets crumpled at the bottom of your wet boot bag you can get online and print another copy of that article you want to go drop on people in your school.

Smart Style

Essential information to supplement the how-to, is the how-to-do-it-safely. You are responsible for creating a safe learning environment for your guests and transferring your knowledge of safety to them so they can be safe and knowledgeable terrain park citizens when they leave your tutelage. NW follows the practices described by NSAA's (National Ski Areas Association) Smart Style. Members are expected to learn, practice and promote these same practices. You can get your hands on all the information as well as downloadable materials from www.terrainparksafety.org.

Northwest Freestyle Mission Statement

Develop the best possible program to educate and recognize PSIA-Northwest-AASI freestyle instructors.

The intent of the NW Freestyle Specialist program is to help members develop an understanding of, and special talents in, the freestyle arena. It is open to any Level I member in good standing.

Freestyle Specialist

We currently recognize three different levels in our Freestyle Specialist Program:

- FS-1 – Foundations of Freestyle
- FS-2 – Progressive Freestyle
- FS-3 – Advanced Freestyle

These levels are described in detail in this guide.

Foundations of Freestyle (FS-1)

The Foundations of Freestyle (FS1) is accomplished by attendance and participation in the curriculum of a one day educational clinic focused on coaching park, rails and pipe and your ability to ride them. The goal of this clinic is to provide a baseline understanding of park and pipe and give instructors a solid foundation for teaching entry-level freestyle lessons. Participants will receive feedback on their skills and goals for the future. The completion of this level is a prerequisite for attending the Progressive and/or Advanced Specialist program.

Foundations Process

This is a one day clinic with no formal evaluation component. Participants are expected to participate in introductory maneuvers on all three park features (half pipe, boxes/rails and jumps). A high level of performance is not needed or expected, in fact, no prior park experience is necessary but you need to be prepared (both physically and with your equipment) to participate in very basic park riding. Twin tip skis are recommended. Time will be spent outside of the terrain park as well as in the beginner park or on the smallest features available with the focus on introducing students to basic park skills. Roughly, the curriculum consists of:

- Outside-in coaching (tactics for coaching outside the park and then moving inside)
- Smart Style
- ATML
- Ranges of Motion (ROM)
- Speed, pop, spin, sensory contribution
- Roughly equal amounts of time spent on rails, jumps and the pipe

This is a one day event, and to receive credit you must participate in the ***entire*** day. Skiers and snowboarders participants may be combined if there aren't enough numbers for separate groups, or if ability levels are better matched by combining.

Evaluation

All those who attend the *entire day* and participate fully will receive their Foundations (FS-1) and certificate of completion.

Progressive (FS-2) & Advanced (FS-3) Freestyle Specialist

The following are the current NW Freestyle Specialist Progressive (FS-2) and Advanced (FS-3) standards and policies. The information here provides a training focus and represents a minimum competency for each level of understanding within the specialist program.

The premise for the standards is based upon the concepts of “levels of understanding” which define stages of learning in degrees of understanding. This program will measure participants understanding, through its levels of evaluation. Candidates will be held to the knowledge and performance standards of the level at which they are testing as well as the criteria for all preceding levels.

The Progressive or Advanced participant is one who has demonstrated commitment and dedication to the teaching in the freestyle environment and to his/her own personal development. These members are considered qualified to provide valuable instruction to a majority of Snowsports school guests requesting a freestyle focus. A Progressive or Advanced instructor demonstrates the ability to relate movements and skill areas to movement outcomes and to apply that knowledge to teaching situations common to intermediate through advanced zone riders on all three terrain park elements. These instructors have a global understanding of the Snowsports industry and are able to classify their responsibilities as a part of the resort team.

The following materials contain more detailed descriptions of the characteristics of a Progressive or Advanced instructor, but a brief synopsis of the levels is: The **Progressive** instructor is skilled at teaching and demonstrating an introduction to park and the use of all basic/low end park features. They can explain, provide information and direct the activities of other candidates during the training. The **Advanced** instructor is skilled at teaching and demonstrating on virtually all park features including large jumps and combination rails/boxes. They can coach and lead the other candidates in such a way that it significantly raises their level of performance during the event.

Riding Skills – Progressive and Advanced

Freestyle is just another part of skiing/snowboarding and therefore all the fundamentals/movement patterns apply and can be utilized for knowledge and technique toward all freestyle teaching and coaching. Technique in the pipe & park is not different from technique elsewhere on the mountain. Core skills and Fundamental Movements apply here as they do anywhere else. All candidates are expected to meet the riding requirements of a Certified Level One instructor in their discipline.

Tactics. Tactically, riding the park and pipe is different from the rest of the mountain. This is the main challenge for those not well-versed in park/pipe skiing and etiquette.

- ✦ **Park Preview:** Always take a preview run in which you and whoever is with you reads the signs, knows the entry and exit points and gets a look at the features and traffic patterns
 - > Every park is different
 - > Parks change overnight and throughout the day with conditions & traffic

- ✦ **Park Rules & Etiquette:** Parks have some rules in common, yet there is no national standard, so there are differences between areas. In addition to rules, there is an “accepted etiquette” among the riders who live there. While this etiquette is not formalized in any way, its roots lie in safety and consideration of others.
 - > Respect traffic patterns and flow
 - > Call your drops
 - > Do go if you don't know

Technique: Everything we know about riding still applies in the park and pipe. The ways in which our bodies move, or are capable of moving does not change. The background sports and previous experiences of our students may make them more or less predisposed to doing well.

- ✦ Body Movement options/possibilities don't change
- ✦ Tactics is where it's at
- ✦ Style

Depth of skill level: The wider range or greater number of tricks/maneuvers you show is an indicator of your degree of development or mastery of park riding. At a more basic level, being able to do 4-5 different grabs, all four 180's, switch and/or unnatural entries onto low boxes shows good accomplishment. At higher levels those 4-5 grabs will be connected to 360's or 540's, straight 360's will go all four ways, and a variety of 270's going on and off moderate boxes and rails are some examples. Because our end goal is to meet the needs of whatever guest we're working with, it's more desirable to own a wide variety of more basic maneuvers than to have one or two rock star tricks that we always do.

Teaching Application

The practical application of teaching concepts takes years to master. However, focusing on tactics commonly used by good teachers speeds the acquisition of teaching skills and promotes valuable learning experiences for students. The ATS Teaching Model and Teaching Cycle were developed with these ideas in mind. In particular, the seven steps of the Teaching Cycle promote quality lessons. When conducting a lesson - whether at work or in an assessment - remember these key ideas:

Student Centered: the student is the focus, teach to the student. Instructors often continue on a game plan that is unrelated to their student's needs. Is the student performing the exercise correctly? Is the student ready to move on through the teaching progression? Does the student understand the objective? Is the lesson helping the student meet personal goals?

Outcome Based: your lesson should be objective oriented. What are you trying to accomplish? What will your student understand or be capable of doing after the lesson that they were not capable of doing before the lesson?

Experiential: help people learn by doing. Riding is a motor skill. Although it is necessary to give clear explanations, people need time to practice and experiment with movements - and instructors need time to observe student performance to accurately evaluate the success of a lesson.

These concepts - focusing on student needs, working toward identifiable outcomes, and providing opportunities for practice and performance evaluation - are the elements most commonly missing from assessment and real-life teaching situations.

As you work to develop your coaching skills, practice the following steps:

- Describe the value of introducing a learning segment and what might be included in the introduction.
- Describe several ways to assess student needs and expectations.

- A goal is generally thought of as a long-term ambition. “I want to win a gold medal at the Olympics.” An objective is a plan of action that will help reach the goal. “After participating in this lesson I will be capable of landing switch off a box.” Describe the steps necessary to determine appropriate goals and plan lesson objectives.
- Describe several ways to present and share information during a lesson.
- Describe when and why an instructor uses practice in a lesson and describe the different ways an instructor can incorporate practice.
- Describe several ways an instructor can check for understanding during a lesson.
- Describe the purpose of a lesson summary and several topics that should be covered during the summary.
- Describe sequences for teaching basic, intermediate, and advanced maneuvers on boxes/rails, jumps, and in the halfpipe.
- Compare the steps of your most recent lesson to the steps of the Teaching Cycle. Did your lesson fulfill all the elements of the Teaching Cycle? If not, what parts were missing and why?
- If your last lesson did not cover all the stages of the Teaching Cycle, how could the lesson be modified to fill in the gaps?
- Compare lesson content, instructor behavior, and student behavior from a lesson which went really well to the same elements of a lesson which was not successful. Were there differences? Why?
- Working with a group of your peers, teach and coach a variety of basic to advanced maneuvers.
- Have a trainer observe you teaching an actual class. Have the trainer critique your teaching on the basis of the steps of the Teaching Cycle.
- Have a trainer observe you some of your peers on a topic of your choice. Have the trainer critique your teaching on the basis of the steps of the Teaching Cycle.
- Practice giving feedback to a group of your peers. Include:
 - ❖ What do you see (desirable and undesirable movements)? What do you want to change?
 - ❖ Why do you want to change what you see?
 - ❖ How will you help them change?
- Practice determining lesson goals and objectives in actual teaching situations and in practice teaching situations with peers. Complete this sentence for each teaching situation: “By the end of this lesson, my student will be capable of...”

Here are some additional pieces of teaching knowledge to have in your arsenal.

1. Knowledge of Park & Understanding Terrain Features: Line selection, safety, group management, directions, use of terrain, etc...
2. Knowledge of Pipe and common features...
3. Creating and Understanding Progressions: Intro, movement analysis, setting goals, create plan to improve movements of fellow candidate(s).
4. Accurate Demonstrations
5. Accurate Communication
6. Age Awareness and Development Conscious: CAP, knowledge of human body and development, coordination, range of correctness/capabilities
7. Movement Analysis: Can recognize and relate specific body movements to performance
8. Quick action plans for public/Progression

Progressive and Advanced Specialist Process

The “Progressive” (FS-2) and “Advanced” (FS-3) are attained through an evaluation process. The Freestyle Specialist 2 and 3 will be run all together and candidates will be evaluated at the appropriate level of coaching and riding performance (candidates don’t sign up for a specific level) they show. The clinic leaders will determine what level each rider is at and provide a written evaluation form to each candidate at the completion of the two days.

The specialist program is comprised of two days in which your riding, coaching and freestyle knowledge skills will be assessed. The first part will be somewhat more of a clinic style format where the clinician will take a more active role in focusing the group on safety, procedures, expectations, skill improvement, and how to work the environment. The remainder of the time will be a continuation of this but with the group members taking more of a role in peer coaching once riders are familiar with the terrain and each other.

Your active participation (within your safety and comfort zone) during the event is expected and this is how the clinicians will make the necessary observations to write your feedback sheets. You will receive coaching from a variety of sources, including the clinicians, and you will most likely see improvements in your riding and coaching performance. Included in this guide are descriptions of the performance characteristics of a Progressive, and Advanced instructor, and whichever one most accurately describes your participation is how your final level is determined.

Part of the learning process is to expand one’s comfort zone. Clinicians and coaches will make recommendations for progress but ultimately each participant must decide what his/her own limitations are. No one will be forced into any riding scenario and participants must take responsibility for their own actions. Be aware that riding outside of your abilities can lead to injuries, as with any sport. It is our goal to keep everyone safely progressing but please, ride with respect for others and pride for your own abilities.

Freestyle Workbook

Prior to attending the on-snow education event you are responsible for completing, in its entirety, the NW Freestyle workbook. Doing this ahead of time will prepare you for the material that will be covered on-snow, as well as give us a reference of your background and level of understanding regarding freestyle elements. During the event there may or may not be time spent indoors going through the responses, so it is important that it be completed prior to your arrival. Workbooks will be collected on the morning the Progressive/Advanced program begins. Although they are not necessarily graded, your responses will be part of how we determine what level to evaluate you at. Incomplete or illegible workbooks will result in no level being given.

Evaluation

For each portion of the evaluation (riding, coaching/teaching and knowledge), candidates will be given a level of accomplishment which indicates their level of understanding, coaching and ability. The following marks are used: **(F)** Foundations, **(P)** Progressive, **(A)** Advanced. Each section of the specialist program must achieve the same minimum grade in order to receive the level. For example, if Riding and Coaching/Teaching are given A’s, and Knowledge gets a P, the candidate will receive their Progressive specialist. Higher scoring sections will not carry forward to the next event; at each event you must meet the same level in all three sections.

Specialist Format

The morning meeting is designed for candidates to be introduced to the clinicians, outline the day and ask any questions they might have prior to the heading outside. The groups meet indoors in the morning, barring any unusual circumstances and complete any necessary paperwork. At this time the clinicians will arrange for the on-snow meeting time and location.

There will be a midday break for lunch, and the on-snow portion will end by 3:00 pm.

The results will be handed out no later than 4:30pm on the second day, and will be available from your clinician. Candidates may also have their results mailed the following week. Any candidate is invited to stay and speak with their clinic leaders about their feedback.

Areas of Evaluation

1. Riding Skills, Halfpipe, Rails/boxes, Jumps, Jibs/flatland
2. Coaching/Teaching Knowledge
3. Technical and Professional Knowledge

Outlined below are skill descriptions of a Progressive rider and an Advanced rider and descriptions of a coach/teacher. This isn't comprehensive, nor is it used as a checklist to be gone through trick by trick, but it gives an overview of the type of riding expected at each level.

Progressive Freestyle Specialist Skills Overview

(Ride smooth and stable; show some flow.)

General Riding skills needed:

- ✦ Use good park etiquette
- ✦ Comfortable riding, taking-off and landing both forward and switch
- ✦ Variety of single movement skills
- ✦ Be able to adapt riding based on coaching suggestions

Jib/Balance skills:

- ✦ The ability to manipulate both body and board in balance to perform a variety of tricks
- ✦ Able to press and balance on the nose and/or tail
- ✦ Demonstrate ollies and nollies
- ✦ Able to perform simple rotations
- ✦ Able to perform a variety of maneuvers switch and regular
- ✦ Show the ability to combine maneuvers together

Jump skills:

- ✦ Comfortable performing tricks on moderate (10'-25' in length) jumps
- ✦ Comfortable hitting intermediate (20'-35' in length) jumps
- ✦ Ride a variety of features; hips, step ups, step downs, table tops, etc.
- ✦ Comfortable with air required to reach prepare landing zone/surface
- ✦ Show a variety of single rotations such as 180's and 360's
- ✦ Able to bring the feet up toward the body for a variety of grabs with either hand and/or edge(s)
- ✦ Show a variety of tricks with single movement or rotation

Pipe skills:

- ✦ Comfortable getting to the lip or above on both walls consistently
- ✦ Comfort in both entering and exiting the pipe from both walls
- ✦ Ability to use the transitions while riding switch
- ✦ Perform single movement tricks/rotations above the lip of both walls
- ✦ Ride a full run from drop in to finish with flow and variety

Box skills:

- ✦ Comfortable riding a variety of moderate boxes for their full length (up to 20')
- ✦ Show a variety of landings and exits, forward, switch, unnatural, frontside, backside, lipslide, boardslide, 270 off, etc.

Rail skills:

- ✦ Comfortable riding onto moderate rails
- ✦ Show a variety of balanced exits
- ✦ Slide length to end of easy rails

Advanced Freestyle Specialist Skills Overview

(Show some flow, bro. Able to be show proficiency of advanced-expert park riding and tricks.)

General Riding skills needed:

- ✦ Use good park etiquette
- ✦ Comfortable riding, taking-off and landing both forward and switch on intermediate to advanced features
- ✦ Ability to show a variety of multiple movement tricks
- ✦ Be able to adapt riding based on coaching suggestions

Jib/Balance skills: all progressive skills but at a higher level of performance

- ✦ Will have the ability to manipulate both body and board in balance to create a variety of tricks
- ✦ Able to press and balance on the nose and/or tail
- ✦ Demonstrate ollies and nollies
- ✦ Will perform simple rotations
- ✦ Must be able to perform a variety of maneuvers switch and regular
- ✦ Show the ability to combine maneuvers together

Jump skills: all progressive skills and...

- ✦ Comfortable performing tricks on intermediate (20'-35' in length) jumps
- ✦ Comfortable hitting advanced (30'-55' in length) jumps
- ✦ Ride a variety of features; hips, step ups, step downs, table tops, etc.
- ✦ Comfortable with air required to reach prepared landing surface of large jumps
- ✦ Show a variety of single rotations such as 180's and 360's on intermediate jumps
- ✦ Show a variety of tricks with double movements or rotations; 540's, grabs with spins, off axis, 720's, etc.

Pipe skills: all progressive skills and...

- ✦ Comfortable getting 3-6 feet above the lip on both walls consistently
- ✦ Spin and alley-oop above the lip
- ✦ Ability to make a full run while riding switch
- ✦ Perform single and double movement tricks/rotations above the lip of both walls
- ✦ Ride a full run from drop in to finish with flow and variety of direction (rotation as well as travel), difficulty and tricks

Box skills: all progressive skills and...

- ✦ Comfortable riding all boxes for their full length
- ✦ Show a variety of landings and exits, forward, switch, unnatural, frontside, backside, lipslide, boardslide, 270 off, etc. on all types of boxes

Rail skills: all progressive skills and...

- ✦ Comfortable riding and jumping onto most rails
- ✦ Able to balance the length of most rails
- ✦ Able to show a variety of entries and exits on moderate rails

Coaching/Teaching Format

Coaching/teaching may be assessed by the following methods:

- ⊕ Observing the coaching comments given as the group rides and works different features
- ⊕ Take some or all of the group, provide a clinic on a specific feature or maneuver
- ⊕ Lead the group's activities during one or more runs, developing and delivering a lesson plan that is relevant to their riding and teaching

Candidates should be prepared to teach more than once and should make a point of being verbally involved throughout the event. Coaching/teaching segments may last in length from 15-30 minutes. If a clinician asks a candidate to wrap up the session, it is NOT a reflection of the quality of the coaching or the teaching; do not assume you are doing poorly, it could be a number of other factors the clinician has to keep in mind. Do not assume you have done something wrong! The clinician will have a limited time schedule, and it is important to keep the process moving. Please ask for clarification if you have concerns.

Candidates will work with the group and develop a lesson based on group goals and desires, observations of the skill deficiencies in the group and group needs, or an assigned feature/maneuver. Using tasks and drills in a progressive fashion, the candidate will lead the group until the riding goals have been accomplished, the clinician asks you wrap up, or the material has been fully covered. The lesson plan may be as short as 15 minutes or as long as 30 minutes. It is not necessary to fill the entire time. It is imperative to follow the evaluation criteria on the score card, and give a good lesson.

The difference between a Progressive coach and an Advanced coach is a combination of several elements including: the complexity/difficulty of what was taught, the degree of group rider improvement attained, the clarity and accuracy of feedback and how well the items on the Coaching score card were executed.

Technical and Professional Knowledge

This evaluation is determined by what the candidate says about technique and the development of riding skills. Clinicians will gather information concerning the candidate's professional knowledge by facilitating group discussions, creating a movement analysis situation, listening to coaching points and feedback, and/or possibly using on snow or indoor video. The divisional staff member may ask specific movement analysis questions. The depth of your responses in the workbook will also give the clinicians insight into your level of professional knowledge.

Candidates should know a variety of progressions and be knowledgeable of all Freestyle concepts covered in the PSIA/AASI Park and Pipe Instructors Guide. The ATML Model, Smart Style, outside in coaching, and ranges of motion should all be used and understood. Candidates should be able to accurately describe cause and effect as it relates to different riders in different maneuvers and on all three terrain elements. Other categories from where professional knowledge may be discussed are: mechanics, dynamics, and equipment knowledge, human development and teaching/learning styles.

Have fun.