Basic Skills
Challenge Series

Learn to Ski Basics

The basics of how to accomplish your first water ski experience.
**Hand Signals**

1. **Speed up:** The "thumbs-up" gesture indicates that the skier would like the speed increased.
2. **Slow down:** The "thumbs-down" gesture indicates that the skier would like the speed decreased.
3. **OK:** If the set speed or boat the path is good, the skier may use the OK signal.
4. **Turn:** When either the skier or the driver wants the boat turned, a circle motion with the arm over the head with one finger in the air is used. It is usually followed by pointing in the direction of the turn.
5. **Back to the Dock:** A pat on the head indicates that the skier would like to return to the dock.
6. **Cut Motor/Stop:** A slashing motion with the hand across the neck indicates the boat is to stop immediately. This signal can be used by the skier, driver or observer.
7. **I’m OK** (after a fall): This important signal indicates that a skier is OK after a fall. It consists of both hands clasped over the head. It should be used every time the skier falls.

**Important safety rule:**

*Always wear flotation*

**Rule 1:** Always wear flotation. A properly fitted personal flotation device is designed to fit snugly, so that it won’t slip up on the body during a fall. The recommended type is a jacket or vest that covers the chest, abdomen and back.

**Rule 2:** Always be sure your equipment is in good condition. Your personal safety and enjoyment depend on the equipment you use. Check your equipment regularly. Be sure that your skis do not have sharp or protruding surfaces that could cut or scrape the skier. Check towropes for frayed areas or broken bridles and handles. Repair or replace damaged or unsafe articles.

**Rule 3:** Don’t give the starting signal until ready. Make sure you are ready, the slack has been taken out of the rope and you are clear of any dangerous obstacles around you. Keep your ski tips up.

**Rule 4:** Do not ski near docks, pilings, other boats or swimmers. Always look ahead and be sure you are aware of your surroundings and where you are going at all times. Many water ski injuries result from collisions with docks or other solid objects.

**Rule 5:** Never put any part of your body through the handle or wrap the line around yourself in any way.

**Rule 6:** Never ski in shallow water or an area where there may be obstructions above or just beneath the surface.

**Rule 7:** When a fall is inevitable, try to fall backward or to either side. A forward fall increases the chances of contact with the ski.

**Rule 8:** Know and use the skier hand signals. It is particularly important to use the skier’s "I’m OK" signal after a fall if you are all right.

**Rule 9:** If you fall in an area where there is other boat traffic, lift one ski half way out of the water. This will signal to other boats that there is a skier in the water.

**Rule 10:** Never ski to the point of excessive fatigue.

**Rule 11:** Always ski during daylight, from sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

**Rule 12:** Never ski directly in front of another boat.

**Rule 13:** Always use equal length ropes when skiing double.

**Rule 14:** Always ensure that the motor is “off” when a skier is entering and exiting the boat.

**Rule 15:** Always have an observer in the towboat.

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**Water Skier’s Safety Codes**

**Level 1**

On land, demonstrate:
- The seven skier hand signals
- Placing feet in and adjusting bindings
- Holding the handle properly
- Proper body position for starting
- Proper body position while skiing

Explain five of the 15 Skier Safety Codes.
Proper Body Position For Starting

Initially remain in the chair position. This will ensure proper posture. You should have your arms straight, shoulders up and knees flexible. Once comfortable, bring your hips underneath your shoulders.

Proper Body Position While Skiing

Demonstrate proper cannonball body position on land before entering the water to get the proper feel. Hold the handle and have a partner pull on the rope slightly to help pull you up. This will give you the feeling of being pulled up by the boat. While practicing this task, make sure your knees are together at all times, and stay in the cannonball position as shown in the picture. Let the boat do the work for you rather than trying to do the work yourself.

Helpful Tip

How To Properly Hold The Handle

For two skis, use the knuckles up grip; for one ski, use the baseball grip (with either hand up).
Level 2 Two-Ski Starts
Complete a deep-water start and maintain the proper two-ski body position for three seconds.

Place the rope and handle between your skis. When ready, signal the driver to begin accelerating. Let the boat slowly pull you up. DO NOT try to pull yourself out of the water by pulling in with your arms. When you feel the boat begin to pull you up, slowly rise to a sitting position using your legs. Once up, maintain the proper body position of arms straight, knees bent and flexible, and keep your head up, looking toward the boat.

Practicing on land will speed the learning process

IMPORTANT Level 2 Tip:
Keep your Arms Straight, Knees Bent, Head Up

Level 3 Two-Ski Balance
Maintain proper two-ski body position for 20 seconds.

Place emphasis on the proper two-ski body position: head up, arms straight and knees bent, and put some downward pressure on the handle.

**Suggested Towboat Speeds**
Speeds are listed as a guide for the boat driver and will vary depending on the skiers experience and comfort level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Weight Of Skier</th>
<th>Less than 50 lbs.</th>
<th>50 to 100 lbs.</th>
<th>100 to 150 lbs.</th>
<th>150 to 180 lbs.</th>
<th>180 lbs. or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-Ski Speeds</td>
<td>13 mph</td>
<td>16 mph</td>
<td>18 mph</td>
<td>21 mph</td>
<td>24 mph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Ski Speeds</td>
<td>16 mph</td>
<td>20 mph</td>
<td>24 mph</td>
<td>27 mph</td>
<td>32 mph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Level 4 Two-Ski Steering
Steer back and forth in control inside the wakes.

Initiate each turn by putting more pressure on the inside edge of the ski opposite to the direction you want to go. Example, to turn right, lean slightly to your right and away from the boat and apply more pressure on your left ski.

Releasing pressure on one foot while placing pressure on the other foot will allow you to go in the direction you want to go. For example: unweighting the left foot while placing pressure on the right foot will allow you to turn toward the left wake.

Level 5 Two-Ski Wake Crossing
Cross over to the outside of the boat wakes on one side only and return to the center of the wakes.

Cross the wakes by turning both skis at a sharp angle to the wakes and bend your knees to absorb the shock. Crossing one ski at a time with not enough angle will result in a fall.

Try to cross the wake at an angle. Turn toward the wake and keep pressure on the ski closest to the boat (furthest away from the wake) until you are well over the wake. Trying to go over the wake slowly will result in a fall.

Level 6 Two-Ski Wake Crossing
Leave the center of the boat wakes on one side and cross the wakes one time.

The most common mistake for a skier is to pull on the handle while crossing the wakes. Keep your arms straight, and knees bent and together. Continue to maintain the proper body position.

Level 7 Two-Ski Wake Crossing
Complete seven wake crossings in 60 seconds or less.

Continue to emphasize proper body position.

Congratulations! You have learned to water ski on two skis. You can find instruction on how to take the next step to skiing on a single ski in the USA Water Ski Basic Skills Learn To Slalom brochure.
Additional Learn To Ski Aids For The Young Beginner

Aquaint the young beginner with the fun of gliding along the top of the water

Using an EZ Ski trainer makes it easy and fun for young children to learn to water ski – the perfect prelude to learning on a pair of water skis.

- Easy to board
- Builds confidence
- No fighting with rope or skis in the water
- Immediate success and enjoyment

The EZ Ski Teaches Basic Skiing Fundamentals

- Proper stance
- Balance
- Weight Shift for turning
- Handle position

Steady the EZ Ski when the child climbs aboard. It is easy to board from the swim platform, when alongside the boat or from the water.

Pull the child across the water by hand to get him/her used to the feeling of motion.

The child can sit or stand on the EZ Ski whichever feels more comfortable.

Hold the rope in your hand - do NOT fasten to the boat. Release the line in case of a fall.

Speed for the EZ Ski Trainer should be no more than 10 m.p.h.

Slowly increase the speed up to 10 m.p.h. Slow when crossing wakes. Avoid sharp turns.
Tubing
Riding in a dtube can be a very positive experience for a young child and non-athletic older children including teenagers. To ensure that the tube rider has a positive initial tubing experience certain safety precautions must be observed. Drive a gently curving boat pattern at a speed of 10-15 mph for young beginners. Do NOT use excessive speed or drive in an erratic pattern in an effort to throw the child off the tube.

Caution, excess speed is likely to scare a young first-time rider.

Two can go at the same time.

Caution, excess speed is likely to cause injuries.
Congratulations!
You have learned to water ski!

You can find instruction on how to take the next step to skiing on a single ski in the USA Water Ski Basic Skills Learn To Slalom brochure.