Your Guide to becoming a Ski or Snowboard Instructor

A must read guide to choosing the right ski or snowboard training program & successfully entering the industry

Including:

→ Answers to common questions about ski or snowboard training programs
→ 5 mistakes to avoid when choosing a ski or snowboard training program
  → Why you need to get instructional experience
  → What is it like working as an instructor?
→ A checklist to ensure you make the right choices
→ Your personal budget planner
INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome!

This guide has been put together by industry experts, examiners and advice from ski schools. It is designed to help those thinking about becoming a ski or snowboard instructor, working in the industry and/or doing a ski or snowboard instructor training course. It does this by answering some common questions and providing some real facts on the ski and snowboard industry.

This guide will provide you with information and tips that will give you the confidence to make sound judgments and pursue your dreams with the best chance of success.

Taking part in a ski or snowboard training program can be great fun and very beneficial. An ideal training course will offer you the opportunity to:

→ Gain recognised qualifications that show discipline and people skills
→ Make life long friendships with people from different countries
→ Travel and explore new and exciting locations
→ Become more employable and enhance your CV
→ Gain work experience and evidence for your new skills and talents
→ Ski or ride world-class snow for a full season!
→ Take a step out and gain some focus and direction in life!

There are many choices to make and various options to choose from when attempting to acquire all of the above benefits.

This is why we recommend you read this guide thoroughly, take action where required, and contact people you trust where you need more information.

All the best from the team at EA Ski & Snowboard!

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ANSWERS TO SOME COMMON QUESTIONS...

1. Do all programs guarantee me a job?

This is a common misunderstanding. Completing a ski or snowboard training program and obtaining a teaching certificate is no guarantee you will gain a job as an instructor.

It is a harsh reality that most ski and snowboard schools require practical experience if you are to be considered for instructing work. In some cases the particular qualification you have may not be held in high regard by the resort you are looking to work at. Some training organisations state they will be able to get you a job in the industry after completing their course. Unfortunately, this is typically not true, or possible because the critical factor in gaining instructional work is having practical experience under your belt.

“Our Snow School receives hundreds of instructor applications every season but we don’t look at any unless they have a level 2 certification and at least one season experiences behind them.”

2. Are all qualifications made equal?

No, not all qualifications are made equal. The following table shows equivalency of some of the world’s most well known ski and snowboard instructor qualifications.

If you are looking for a career-break or gap year then level 1 training will give you a great start into the world of skiing or snowboarding as well as providing a structured platform to improve your own skills.

If you are looking to establish a long-term career in the ski & snowboard industry we recommend you aim to obtain an ‘Intermediate’ level instructional certificate because this will greatly improve your chances of employment internationally.

The International Ski Instructors Association (ISIA) is the world body for professional ski instructors. The following table shows the level required to become a member of the ISIA. In general it takes a minimum of three years training and teaching to reach ISIA level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ski Association</th>
<th>Snowboard Association</th>
<th>Highest</th>
<th>ISIA Equivalent</th>
<th>Intermed.</th>
<th>Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>NZSIA</td>
<td>SBINZ</td>
<td>Trainer</td>
<td>Level III</td>
<td>Level II</td>
<td>Level I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>PSIA</td>
<td>AASI</td>
<td>Examiner</td>
<td>Level III</td>
<td>Level II</td>
<td>Level I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>BASI</td>
<td>BASI</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Level III</td>
<td>Level II</td>
<td>Level I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>APSI</td>
<td>APSI</td>
<td>Trainer</td>
<td>Level III</td>
<td>Level II</td>
<td>Level I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>AADIDE</td>
<td>AADIDE</td>
<td>Trainer</td>
<td>Level III</td>
<td>Level II</td>
<td>Level I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>CSIA</td>
<td>CASI</td>
<td>Level IV</td>
<td>Level III</td>
<td>Level II</td>
<td>Level I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 International Instructor Organisations, ISIA and equivalent levels

Email: sstraining@educatingadventures.com  www.easkiandsnowboard.com
3. Am I really guaranteed to pass?

Through most well operated training programs the chances of passing your entry level – level 1 qualification are high, however there is no guarantee you will pass any instructional exam.

The philosophy behind instructor organisations is that all exams are equal – so don’t believe the hype if an instructor company tells you there is a higher chance of passing with them. The familiarity your trainers have with the exam organization material, and your relationship with the trainers are keys to your success in any exam.

Level 2 exams are a considerable step up from the level 1. Some organisations such as BASI require signed proof from a ski school that you have completed a certain number of hours teaching experience. All organisations recommend that you have some instructor work experience before attempting the level 2 exam.

By choosing an internship program which offers training and certifications in addition to a job offer to teach for the full season you have the opportunity to obtain this necessary experience which does give you more certainty of a pass result for the level 2 standard.

4. How much prior experience do I need?

For most programs it’s not essential that you are an amazing or expert skier or snowboarder but you should be able to comfortably link turns on at least intermediate level terrain.

Your prior experience will determine how easy or hard it will be for you to pass the skiing or snowboarding portion of an instructional exam. However, this is only one part of becoming a successful instructor and most entry-level instructor qualifications have a greater emphasis on a candidate’s ability to ‘teach’ others. For those with good interpersonal skills and an outgoing nature this is easy!

5. How can I be sure I’m getting quality training?

It is essential that the training you receive is going to set you up to ensure you reach your goals. If these goals include passing an instructional exam (they should be ☺) then your course trainers need to be certified to an appropriate level. This should be level 3 or 4 in most circumstances (refer to table 2.1). It is also important that your trainers have experience in the same ski or snowboard organisation in which you will be sitting the exam.

The best way to ensure the training you receive will be to the standard you require to attain your goals, is to ask questions of the training provider such as “what level of certification do the trainers have”? and “how many training hours or days per week will there be?”
6. Are all training programs created equal?

There is a great deal of variety when it comes to instructor training courses and the price you pay. When comparing it is important that you look at what is included. Things to watch for:

- Accommodation, including the standard and location
- Transport to and from the mountain (if required)
- How many training days there will be per week
- Lift passes and whether a season pass is included
- Exam costs including affiliations to the national organisation
- Flight costs and any required domestic transfers
- The opportunity to earn money during the course (or after)
- What else is included; such as a resort job offer and/or opportunities to interview
- Support during the program – is there a designated company representative on the ground?
5 MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN CHOOSING A SKI OR SNOWBOARD TRAINING PROGRAM

1. Beware of hidden costs

You do not want to get caught short when funding your training program. There are many costs involved, so we advise being realistic and drawing up a budget. Refer to our budget planner in this guide. Be sure to include all costs such as program fees, flights, insurance, equipment and living costs. You can also include income you will earn if doing an internship program where you teach and earn money. Your course provider will be able to offer assistance here in terms of the amounts you should use as approximates.

2. Don’t pay too much!

Compare program options to determine what is on offer and the components you are paying for. As commented on above it is important to compare the program options you are looking at including all the inclusions and exclusions. It is more important to look at what you want out of a program rather than a price you want to pay, as some will offer on-the-job training and the chance to earn money during the season.

3. Don’t do a program if it doesn’t guarantee you a job offer!

The main focus of this guide is to give you insider secrets from the industry direct, ensuring you the best possible entry into the world of becoming a ski or snowboard instructor. If you think you may wish to instruct in a future season the first mistake you can make is signing up for a program that does not provide you with a guaranteed job offer.

Most programs on offer include training and certification opportunities however most fall short when it comes to ‘real’ on the job experience or even better – a job offer to instruct for a winter season.

Most ski and snowboard schools do not hire new instructors unless they have prior experience, which is why we are often asked “but how do I get this experience in the first place?” Yes - a classic chicken and egg situation. However **it IS possible** to have minimal experience and come through a program having obtained an instructing qualification (or two!) as well as a job instructing - all in the same season. This is the ultimate set up and you should not settle for anything less if this is your goal.

4. Always research the location you are going to

The program location is one of the most important factors to consider! If you want to ski or ride deep powder, hit up great parks, or get your tree skiing fix then you should ensure the destination you choose offers the best chance of this. You should talk to others who have been there, look at photos, blogs or videos and consider what other resorts are close to where you are training or working.
5. Ensure you set yourself up to achieve future goals or your next job

The best way to learn, improve and develop your skiing or snowboarding skills is ‘on the job’ experience. It is for this reason that many qualification organisations do not allow people to sit more than one certificate level without practical instructional work experience. Working as an instructor also provides valuable experience for any job you may go on to do. A written reference from an employer at an international Snow Sports School will go a long way to assist here.

WHY YOU NEED INSTRUCTIONAL EXPERIENCE

→ Learning on the job is the ultimate training – no amount of instructor training can provide practical experience and experience is everything!

→ You get to do a full winter season (and increase your chances of getting powder) and help to be able to afford it by earning money.

→ Create an employment history and improve your resume for future jobs - in the snow sports industry or not.

→ Get an inside look into the location you choose, be part of the culture and get to know the locals!

→ Make friends with other instructors from all over the world

WHAT DIRECTION IS BEST FOR YOU?

You are not sure if you will ever work long-term in the industry...

If your goal is just to make the most of the time and money you invest in a ski or snowboard training program, you should ensure you will obtain ‘real’ experience as a ski or snowboard instructor. This shows to ANY future employer that you have put your skills to use and can handle the task you have trained to perform.

You want to work as an instructor for a number of years...

If you plan to be employed in the ski and snowboard industry many resorts require that you can show at least one season’s prior experience as an instructor. This can be a bit of a ‘catch 22’ situation because you cannot get a job instructing without experience but cannot get experience without the job! Instructor internship programs are perfect as they allow a streamlined path directly into training, certification and employment as an instructor.
THE “NITTY GRITTY” - WHAT’S IT’S LIKE WORKING AS AN INSTRUCTOR?

Working as a ski or snowboard instructor is a road to riches for some - there are tales of those who have been tipped cars, holidays, wads of cash and slink effortlessly from the pow with their perfect goggle tan to pick up their next girlfriend from the après ski bar.

The reality for most is that as a new instructor there is lots of hard work and long days. We don’t like to sugar coat things here at EA. Ski towns are notoriously expensive to live in so being at the whim of the weather and ski school bookings can be tough at times, especially on the finances so we always recommend new instructors are prepared for this.

Rest assured instructing is the best way to have an epic winter, ski and ride amazing snow, get to know the locals and make a heap of new friends from around the World.
THE GUARANTEE YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR AND THE CHECKLIST TO GET IT RIGHT

You are going to invest considerable time and money so it is important that the company you choose provides the essential ingredients. The following checklist will ensure you choose the appropriate ski or snowboard training provider and set yourself up for success.

- Ensure the program provides a guaranteed instructor job offer.
- Ensure the company provides information and assistance with any required work visas.
- Ensure the company provides certified and experienced trainers - those that have experience in the curriculum of the specific exam organization.
- Ensure that if you want to continue in the industry that you can train towards an ‘intermediate level’ certification.
- Choose a company that offers options for other related qualifications while working and training to ensure you can most of your time away.
- Ensure you are not paying too much for your course and you get value for money.
- Ensure you pick a location that is right for you.
- Ensure the company can provide financial stability e.g an ATOL membership and appropriate liability insurances.
- Track record – find out how long the company has run instructor programs and ask to speak to / see real videos of past participants.
- Check what support you will receive once you land in country.
- Take action! Once you have found the right program get in and make it happen!
YOUR WINTER SEASON BUDGET PLANNER

The following is a budget planner that we suggest you use in getting ready for your ski or snowboard training program. You will need to do some research and calculations to ensure you can afford to take part. For assistance with obtaining the information to complete this you should contact your course provider.

### Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average hours work per week</td>
<td>hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of work weeks in season</td>
<td>weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hourly rate of pay</td>
<td>per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Income (hours x work weeks x rate of pay)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips &amp; Request Hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note – as first year instructor (and as stated above) these figures will be approximate.

### Savings & Assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Savings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance from family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Savings and Assistance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Program Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Fee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ski or Snowboard Gear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa Fees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Program Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Living Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of weeks during season</td>
<td>weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent per week</td>
<td>per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental costs (number of weeks x rent per week)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and entertainment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Living Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong> (from above)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plus: Total Savings &amp; Assistance</strong> (from above)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Less: Total Program Costs</strong> (from above)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Less: Total Living Costs Total</strong> (from above)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= <strong>Net Position</strong> (surplus or funds required)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THANK YOU AND GOOD LUCK!

Well done! Taking the time to read through this guide shows great preparation and information gathering. This is the first step in ensuring you attain those dreams of becoming a real life ski or snowboard instructor and/or a winter of epicness!

We hope this guide is useful and can provide assistance while you work through the decisions required to get the most out of your time in the ski and snowboard industry. Be sure to use all methods available to you; the internet, school careers advisors, friends and family and reputable organisations.

Talk to lots of people and ask lots of questions. You are embarking on an exciting adventure so enjoy it, and don’t forget to charge your camera batteries!

For further information on ski and snowboard training and employment opportunities provided by EA Ski & Snowboard Training please feel free to contact the team.

Good luck!

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ABOUT EA SKI & SNOWBOARD TRAINING

EA Ski & Snowboard Training will ensure your experience is smooth, worthwhile and a positive life changing experience.

EA Instructor Internship Programs offer an all-inclusive early season instructor training program including a guaranteed job offer to work as an instructor one of our top global partner resorts in the USA, Canada, Japan, Switzerland or New Zealand.

EA also run world certified training programs for those looking for 3-11 Week Program.

Contact us to find out more about what a program with us includes and read some testimonies below.

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TESTIMONIES

"I had always wanted to work in the ski industry for my GAP year but all of the programmes I had searched only offered training but no work experience. EA provided me with the answer. The programme was awesome, I developed my personal skiing, met some great friends and passed my PSIA level one exam - and now I am putting all this to use with a job as an instructor in Canada!"  Guy Martin, United Kingdom

“I participated in the snowboard training and examination program in Lake Tahoe and it was the best time of my life. I learnt so much and met some great people along the way. It’s been a great experience and I am looking forward to getting further involved in the industry. I would recommend the course to anyone as it gives you great confidence and self esteem, and it is a lot of fun!” Peadar Maloney - Ireland

"The internship in Japan was just epic. I learnt so much during my course and met heaps of awesome people. Firstly Japan was just such an amazing experience. The snow... UNREAL. I was a bit freaked out about going to a new culture but we had our little EA team bubble and our clients were all English speaking. Now I am a level one certified snowboard instructor! I am so glad I took this opportunity; it has been amazing and an experience I would recommend to anyone with a passion for the snow!” Olivia Munro, New Zealand

I just wanted to say on behalf of 2 parents’ thank you very much EA the experience you have given Robert has been amazing and is exactly what you state on your publicity. The guaranteed work after qualification is an incredible package. Our son has a friend who foolishly used another organisation for a similar experience in Canada, to date he has obtained his Level 1 but couldn’t get any work, his parents forked out more money so he could obtain his level 2 and still he couldn’t find any work and they are now having to send him money to cover the rent on an apartment he had to find himself, he is currently stacking shelves in a supermarket to make ends meet and is thinking of coming home. All I want to say is EA have been a thoroughly professional organisation and have done everything they said they would. This has been the experience of a life time for our son and he has made so many new friends from all over the world that I’m sure he will never loose contact with. Ian Chitty - Parent - England