

Tips for Beginner Skiers

The tips below may be repeated in the warm chalet before the first lesson but please read them beforehand since we do not know yet what the covid rules may be with the new variant. I would like you to be well prepared to start your lesson in a small group with an instructor who will start with the basics of cross-country skiing on snow. Remember that the more you ski the faster you will improve. So just get out there.

SKIS AND BINDINGS

If you are renting or buying skis make sure you do not get beguiled by “Racing Skis” or training skis. They may be too stiff for you even if they passed the “paper test” in the shop and you will have problems starting off. For a beginner the softer the ski the better you will get on. For waxable skis make sure the bases have all the old wax taken off before coming for the lesson. I use Varsol and paper towel for this as an alternative to expensive ski wax cleaners. I make sure the skis are not sticky with old wax and are dry to the touch. For no-wax skis with plastic bases or the new skis with skins for grip just make sure they are clean and dry. Make sure you can attach you in your boot to the binding in the comfort of your home. It is surprising how many folk have not worked out how to do this when they first put on their new skis on snow.

POLES

Your pole should come up to your armpit while the tip is on the floor. Longer poles will be a liability when learning the diagonal stride. Make sure you know how to hold the pole. Your hand should come up through the pole and then grasp the pole and the pole strap. The arm action transfers your force to the pole through the strap and you do not have to hold the pole tightly since that costs energy.

WAXES

If you have waxable skis you will need a basic set of waxes. Green is for temperatures less than -10C, blue is for temperatures between -3 and -10C, purple between 0 and -3C, and red for use around 0C. For beginners having good grip is paramount to skiing well, and especially skiing uphill in good style; I usually wax the whole ski. This is especially true with newly bought skis which may actually be too stiff for you even though they have passed the “paper test”. As you get more proficient you need only wax the “wax-pocket” under the foot. The waxes are cleverly designed to give grip when your ski is momentarily stationary when you “kick” off it, but they do not slow the ski down too much when it is gliding. The instructors will have worked out the wax of the day for you.

CLOTHES

I usually dress in layers, say undershirt, shirt, sweater and wind breaker or anorak and a woolly toque. As I get hotter I can remove layers. Do not wear jeans since they are made of cotton. If you get them wet falling in the snow they do not dry well and you will get chilled. Nylon or wool pants are best. Do not wear a heavy quilted jacket or quilted down-hill ski pants. You expend quite a lot of energy cross-country skiing and will get much too hot (and sweaty!). Thin nylon over pants and jackets work well as windbreaks. If it is relatively warm, wear ski gloves, but if it is cold (below -10C), wear mitts. Leather mitts with liners are the best since leather mitts stay dry inside when wet outside.