

PSIA-Rocky Mountain-AASI

Managing Splits & the Family Private - Handout

Every lesson has a split, even the clinic group that you're in right now has a split in it. It may be an ability split, athleticism split or a motivational split. The questions to be asking are:

Managing Splits either in a group or private lesson

- How big of a split is too big?
- How do I manage the split in Motivation, Skill, Attitude, Athleticism or Energy?
- How do I meet everybody's goal for the day?

Private Lessons

- Who is the key player?
- Does everybody play an equal role (receive equal attention)?
- Do their goals for the day align? If not, can they all be achieved?
- How do you re-align someone's goal to something that can be achieved?
OR, How do you set up the day so that everyone feels as though they were given an opportunity to work towards their goal?

As you participate in the two day clinic, notice how your clinic leader manages the differences in ability, motivation, athleticism, energy and attitude of the varying group members. While in your group, tap into the experiences not just of your leader, but also of members of the other group. Role playing is useful, however, tapping into another pro's experience may provide you some helpful insights when you are next faced with a split group or private.

Success Strategies

In a group lesson, skiers will be generally be somewhere around the same level, for example strong or weak level 5's. If you end up with a Level 3 skier and notice it early enough in the lesson there is still an opportunity to have the Level 3 skier move to a Level 3 group. Familiarize yourself with your Snowsports School's policy regarding moving guests into the correct group.

From time to time you may end up with a larger split than any of us would really want to work with – a resourceful pro can tap into experience and creativity to construct a day that is successful for everyone.

Conversation starters

The intention is begin to build a relationship with each individual in the group and relationships between individuals in the group. The important thing is to ensure that you hear from all members of the group or family, this doesn't have to happen all at once. You can utilize time in lift lines, chair rides, and breaks on and off the mountain. Some questions may provide an insight into how best an

individual learns other experiences that may be transferred to the snow sports environment such as:

- What is/was your favorite subject in school? What sport do/did you play? Where was your most memorable vacation? In order to learn something deeper about the individual the next question would be a “why” or “what about” question – why was it your favorite? What about “Mexico” made the trip so memorable? If the group is large, individuals can share in pairs.
- Have participants share a piece of information about themselves that doesn’t relate to skiing/riding.

Goal Setting

In order to establish goals for the day we all know to ask questions such as, why are you here?, and what do you want to get out of today? However, a thoughtful second question can lead you to the real motivation. It could be any one of a number of questions such as: “Why is this important to you?”, “How will you behave differently as a result of doing this?”, “What will you be able to do with this skill that you cannot do now?”

Generally, the why and how questions can tap into the motivation behind the stated goal. The motivation behind the goal will give you more opportunity to set up a day that is truly successful. For example, Skier A states “I want to learn to use my edges better”. The instructor then asks “Why do you want to be able to edge more effectively?” Skier A answers “I lose control in the bumps and think that if I can edge better I won’t lose control. The underlying motivation for Skier A is to ski bumps more in control. If this instructor hadn’t asked the next question they may have spent the day working to improve the skiers ability to tip the ski onto it’s edge which may or may not have increased the skiers ability to maintain control in the bumps.

Assess the ability levels

Provide a soft focus for the warm-up based on the ability of the weakest skier in the group. Challenge the stronger skiers with a variation of the same drill. Try to identify a skill to work on that would facilitate change in all members of the group.

Present the Game Plan

Once you’ve decided on the different options for the day, present them to your students. Presenting options provides an opportunity for participant involvement. One possibility is: “These are the options open to us, option A will meet need X and Option B will address need Y. I believe Option A would be most appropriate at this time, does that work for you?”

If there is clearly one decision maker in a family, try presenting the information to that key player for buy in first, then present information to all family members for buy in.

Check in often

Throughout the day, check in with your students. Questions such as “Are we on track?” and “How are we doing?” will give you a sense of their energy and enthusiasm. If you notice a drop in energy shift the focus from intense to fun or from focusing on technical to feeling the wind.

Utilize Chairlift rides

Chairlift rides provide a great opportunity to provide extra attention to those that require more detailed explanations, seek further understanding of a topic or have a question that requires a more lengthy answer. Rather than stand around on the hill to explain and lose the attention of your ‘don’t want to stop for anything’ skiers, a simple statement such as “let’s ride together on the next chairlift and I’ll be happy to answer any questions” will let them know that you are interested in meeting their needs – then follow through.

A chair lift ride can also be a great opportunity to check in with a participant that is quiet, nervous or lacking confidence. The chair can create a space for a little more privacy for that individual that doesn’t open up in a larger group.

Terrain Options

One method for managing a group of differing levels is to create terrain challenges. This really depends on the ages of the group. Of course, in a kids group lesson you’ll be restricted for safety reasons to being on the same run. However, in an adult group lesson or a family private with a couple of adults that could accompany the children on different runs, then some flexibility in terrain options open up.

Minimize terrain – maximize challenge. Explore exercises that can be tuned down or up depending on the ability level. Some examples are:

- Uphill arcs – skidded through to carve;
- Hockey slides, hockey stops, pivot slips
- Skiing on one ski (or two skis, keeping one lifted);
- 360’s on easy terrain, two skis, one ski, one ski no poles;
- Skiing blue terrain – with both skis and poles, with no poles, with poles and one ski, with no poles and only one ski.
- Skiing bumps – same deal as above – this gets a lot more challenging.

Personalize for the Individual

Rather than teach one lesson to a group (or family) teach to the individuals in the lessons. There may be more than one individual with a similar focus. When appropriate address these needs of the two similar skiers/riders at the same time. However, be sure to follow up with the coaching/practice individually.

Balance the learning, fun, technical, tactical and psychological aspects of the skiing for each individual in the lesson. Create different focuses for each skier as appropriate:

- Skier/Rider A may have a challenge to make a 50 turns to a specific point;
- Skier/Rider B focuses on a sensation – ie. feel increasing pressure as a turn progresses;
- Skier/Rider C focuses on a technical sensation ie. tipping the skis early in the turn;
- Skier/Rider D focuses on commitment – ie. moving the center of mass forward & downhill.

If fatigue is an issue for a client, create the option for a “break” while stronger members of the group take an extra lap.

Nastar

The Nastar course can be a great venue for challenging individuals at their own level. The instructor can set the challenge for each participant to make three runs in the course with each run being successively faster than the previous.

Alternatively, participants can be paired up into teams with joint team times being as close to each other as possible.

Terrain Parks

Depending on the instructor’s level of confidence and experience in the terrain park, this venue can provide an equalizing ground for skiers of different levels.

This handout has not discussed the concept of participants in a private lesson who show up on different equipment. It does pay to prepare yourself with the knowledge of Alpine, Snowboard, Telemark and Adaptive so that you can add value to all participants. If you have the opportunity sign up for an entry level event in a cross discipline.