

There Are As Many Personalities Among Skiers As There Are Snowflakes

The KNOW IT ALL won't listen. Why should he, since he already has all the answers. He'll finish sentences for you and after you tell him something, he'll mutter, "I Know!". If you have a KNOW IT ALL student you will have to set the guidelines. Insist that he listen to you and have him repeat the instructions. If he attempts to do something you feel he is not ready for, only let him attempt it if there is reason to believe he will not hurt himself by trying it. When you have proved your point, insist he follow your instructions to be allowed to continue skiing.

The TWO RUN skier is another interesting case. He will endure two runs and then insist it's time to retreat to the lodge for hot chocolate. Since his attention span is limited, keep him happy. Take him in for a while, but bring him back out again. You will need lots of patience. Gradually, he will stay out for longer and longer spells. A word of caution - some skiers with disabilities do have sensitivity to cold, read your student contracts carefully.

Let's not forget the CLINGER skier. She will not let go of you leg. Firm but gentle with your words. Reassure her that you have complete control and that she couldn't get away from you.

One of the more frustrating to teach is the I CAN'T DO IT skier but he is one we see frequently. Even though capable for himself, one skier might manipulate you into buckling his boots, putting his skis on for him, and pushing him up the hill so he didn't have to sidestep. He sure loves skiing. Why not? You are doing all the work. If you find that the student has made a good honest effort, then help is needed. The student needs to know that the way we learn is by making mistakes and the most important factor is that we do our best.

The SCARECROW skier sags so much you wonder if she has a muscle in her body. Since she has enrolled in the Adaptive Ski Program, she may not. Again, careful review of all medical information. Yet many of the participants will have muscle strength but it will require skiing exercises to make them stronger. There will be a strong tendency to go limp and sit on the ski tails. Skiing a student between the legs serves as a crutch, ski out front. Work the muscles slowly. Don't overdue it in a single day. If student is cognitively capable, suggest at home exercises.

The TIN MAN skier is the opposite of the SCARECROW. He's stiff, either because he's not very flexible or because he's petrified of skiing. If flexibility is the problem, try some warm up exercises. Reach for the sky by putting both arms overhead and reaching as high as you can. Or with your arms overhead, tilt to the side, doing a side bend. Constantly reassure the TIN MAN that you have total control and take things slow. Once he realizes he won't get hurt, he may start to relax and the fun can begin.

For any student, adaptive or non adaptive, learning to ski is frustrating. There can not be enough emphasis on going slow and picking the appropriate terrain. Very slight terrain to start. Hours and days may be spent on the lower mountain before taking even the BEGINNERS LIFT. Remember, safety first and that fear blocks fun.