

Ski school

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their child. If you start kids skiing or snowboarding before the age of 10, they're likely to do it for the rest of their lives.

Zach: I'm curious about that because at that young age, can they make a lot of progress? Like what can they really do at those really young ages?

Tyler: As a parent, you wanna see them develop skills and be able to turn and get up from a fall on their own. And those things happen over time as a child develops muscular motor skills. So yes, 5-year-olds are going to require a little bit more help. A 7-year-old, you know, she's in first grade, she's used to being away from her parents. She has to navigate the world more independently than the 5-year-old does. So you will see skill development more rapidly in the 7-year-old.

Zach: One of the bigger hurdles a lot of people face is navigating the gear. It's not super cheap and there's just so many ways to do it. You've got new or used gear that you could buy. You can rent gear at most ski areas. And there's kind of a fun option where you can do a full-season rental. So what's your advice on how to navigate that kind of minefield of gear?

Tyler: A gear swap is a great option if there is one in your community, but be aware that you don't wanna get a piece of equipment that is very outdated. You should have the equipment adjusted specifically for your child's boot size and their height and weight and their skill level because you don't want to have equipment that could potentially injure them if a ski doesn't release, for example, when you fall. So if you get used equipment, have it checked out by a shop.

Rentals are a great option because it's gonna be the best fit. It's gonna be the most current equipment. And you don't have to carry the equipment to and from your car. We do also offer a season rental as well, so if you're gonna ski in between lesson dates, then having your own equipment with you is helpful. The good thing is, you know, it's all brand new equipment. It fits perfectly. And, if for some reason mid-season, if your child's shoe size changes and then you go to the next size up and it's no problem. You can just swap it out. And with kids, they often see their friends doing the other discipline, like snowboarding, and so they might want to try it out and you can just trade it in and try it out.

Zach: Okay, so say you've got your gear, you've got your equipment. The kids are bundled up in just the right amount of warm clothing. What's next? Would you start trying to get them comfortable sliding down the bunny hill? Or would you get them some kind of lesson right off the bat, just so that they're learning the best technique right away?

Tyler: We kind of have a joke, 'Don't let friends teach friends,' and that applies to parents teaching children. There's a different dynamic between your teacher and the child and a parent and the child. So when a child is with their parent, they tend to be a little bit more fussy. They tend to expect their parents to help them a bit more. Whereas when they're in a classroom setting like at school, they're gonna behave more independently.

We use teaching aids that help control the speed at which they're coming down the hill without touching their body. Kids, when you touch them, they're expecting you to control them in some way and the less touching you do of the child's arms or body, the more likely they are to maintain their own autonomy and stay upright and balanced and figure out how to balance on their own. So the little teaching aids are really helpful in establishing some of those first skills that kids need.

Zach: I did notice that having a pro instructor, they seem to learn a lot quicker. Certainly much quicker than if I had been doing it.

Tyler: Honestly, yeah, we can get people making turns and right in the chairlift in two hours usually, because of the experience and techniques and methods that we use to teach people how to ski and snowboard well.

Zach: What are the key skills that you're trying to get across in there those first few lessons? Is it just making a "pizza" while coming down the bunny hill?

Tyler: We tend to try to teach our students speed control through turn shape. We wanna get people turning and being able to slow down by turning across the hill rather than using a great big volcano or a great big letter A to slow themselves down. When we tend to have students that come us who have been taught to make a giant pizza shape, that puts their skis on their edges and an edge ski is much more difficult to turn at slower speeds. And so we try to focus on a tiny slice of pizza — like a pizza that you're gonna share at a birthday party. The focus is on turning the skis to get kids to slow down and turn across the hill — that is an essential skill kids need to have before riding the chairlift.

Zach: Is there usually a hump to get over or a switch



A snowboarder gets help from an instructor.



Mount Hood Meadows' ski school offers various options to accommodate your family's schedule. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MOUNT HOOD MEADOWS

that flips when they kind of get it? Does it usually take a few lessons? Does it depend on the kid? I guess I'm just curious for just the average parent coming up, you know, what expectations to have.

Tyler: Statistically, three times is really the magic number. Once you've gone three times, it's no longer new, you know where you're going, you know where the beginner slope is, you know what socks to wear — nothing is brand new. So that third experience is really kind of the hump to get over.

Zach: Do you have a list of things to really avoid?

Tyler: Just coming up with expectations that we want kids to have a good time and sometimes, playing in the snow is the thing that your child is gonna want to do. If they're quite young, playing in the snow, touching the snow, tasting the snow, those are all things that are part of the experience. So don't discount those. Those are important aspects of learning to ski and snowboard. A big one is don't "over-terrain" your child. And what I mean is taking them up the next lift before they can physically do it themselves. That's a great way to put some fear into your child. There's plenty of terrain on Buttercup to satisfy most kids.

Zach: We've spent a lot of time on kids but there are plenty of adults looking to return or pick up skiing. What would be some of the differences for a parent or adult that was coming back to it? Would you follow a similar path with the equipment and getting the instruction?

Tyler: I would say if you've taken a break and you're coming back, the equipment is constantly changing and evolving. So if you've taken a break and maybe you've got your old equipment that's been in the garage and it's kind of dusty, it's better to come up fresh, just do a package where you're gonna do a lesson and rental and a progression lift ticket, and just get reintroduced to the sport that way, where you've got all brand

new equipment. And the cool thing is it's probably gonna come back to you a lot quicker than you'd think it would. Take that first-time or novice lesson just to get your wheels back underneath you and make sure you're feeling good.

Zach: One of the things probably holding me back a little bit, and maybe holding others back was price. The cost of gear, the cost of lift tickets — skiing has been criticized over the years for being only accessible to a certain socioeconomic class. So can you suggest some tips for keeping it within reason economically for families just getting started?

Tyler: If you have availability midweek, we have slightly better pricing for lessons and lift tickets. Coming up on slower days is much more affordable. Another option is if your kids are stoked and you wanna get really good, really quick, sign them up for our four week 'snow blaster' program. It's for elementary school age kids and it's four consecutive Saturdays or four consecutive Sundays. And the price is between \$90 and \$125 a day with four hours of instruction. It's a great way to get kids really accelerating quickly at a good price.

We also offer a spring pass (\$159 for adults, \$99 for kids). Meadows is open until the end of April. So if you wanna get a lot of great spring days, the spring pass is a great option. It's 45 or 50 days of skiing for a really good price at a time when the weather and conditions are often really nice and it's just beautiful on the mountain.

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"double dip," because you don't need that either, according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Bonus!

If you've got out-of-state visitors during the three-day weekend, they don't need licenses or tags either, but that only applies Saturday and Sunday.

The inevitable legal disclaimer is that all other fishing rules apply, including fishing hours, closures, bag limits and size and gear restrictions.

So I'll see you out there, sugar.

Moving on ...

WOULD YOU LIKE FLEAS WITH THAT?: Maybe it was the spring-like temps or the crocuses, but I started thinking about camping story ideas for spring/summer.

Salem used to have a chapter of the International Dutch Oven Society, but it has been more than a decade since we ran a story about Dutch oven camp cooking, and my sources on the topic are, needless to say, a tad outdated.

Something about Daniel Boone's secret recipe for "Bar & Dumplings," as I recollect.

Just kidding.

Anyway, searching online led to zip for Salem. But there is a Northwest Dutch Oven Society based in Tacoma, Wash., that does seminars and holds demos and cook-offs.

I'm waiting for their response to an email.

If I may be allowed to go off-trail just a bit, one of the



Henry Miller chills on day six without power after the Feb. 13, 2021.

HENRY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

more intriguing aspects of the online hunt for "Salem Oregon Chapter of the Dutch Oven Society" were the algorithm's guesses about my culinary pursuits.

Among them: "Willamette Valley Humane Society" and the "SPCA" (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals).

Hmmm.

Anyway, if you know about local maestros of the

cast-iron campfire culinary arts, email me their contact information at the address below.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: To paraphrase the late Gen. Douglas MacArthur, "Old anglers never die. They just smell that way."

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