

Managing Your School's Ski Trip

Because professionals run ski areas, people sometimes assume that they take all responsibility for a group. This is not the case. Taking any group skiing or snowboarding involves considerable decision-making and care to ensure a high-quality and safe experience.

This is a short guide for teachers or leaders of school groups on a ski or snowboard trip. Please use it as an information resource and checklist when managing your school's trip.

Competencies of outdoor leaders

One person should take responsibility for the trip, but they are likely to involve qualified instructors or coaches employed by the ski area. Whilst you do not need to be a qualified instructor or coach to lead these trips, it is always a good idea to seek education specific to snow sports.

The following qualifications are relevant:

- ▶ NZSIA / SBINZ Level One – teaching at beginner level.
- ▶ NZSIA / SBINZ Level Two – teaching up to intermediate level.
- ▶ NZSIA / SBINZ Level Three (full cert.) – teaching up to advanced level.
- ▶ NZSIA also offers qualifications specific to teaching children, alpine racing, freestyle, adaptive and telemark skiing.

Planning your trip

Here's a detailed step-by-step list of all the things you should do when planning your trip.

1. Ensure that there are sufficient assistant leaders with suitable skills for the needs, abilities and number of participants.
2. Obtain information on participants' and assistant leaders' health and fitness, and ensure that they carry any personal medication, e.g. asthma inhalers.
3. Obtain all group members' emergency contact details.
4. Obtain a weather forecast and consider this in reviewing the trip plan.
5. Make bookings with the ski area, checking what group packages are available (tickets, equipment, instruction and ski area road if necessary).
6. Organise transport, ensuring that private vehicles have chains.

7. Prepare a list of participants' names, foot sizes and previous experience for, equipment rental.
8. Obtain a weather and snow report on the day of departure to the ski area.
9. Prepare participants for the trip:
 - ▶ Check that participants have suitable clothing and equipment. You should sight this and help participants obtain better clothing and equipment if necessary.
 - ▶ Check that participants have suitable food and drink.
 - ▶ Communicate a cancellation procedure and time.
10. Brief assistant leaders and helpers, emphasising their importance during the equipment rental period and the first hour on the snow.
11. Ensure that participants know what you expect of them:
 - ▶ Which subgroup they are in, where they can ski or board, and who with.
 - ▶ Snow user responsibility code.
 - ▶ Lift courtesy and safety.
 - ▶ Where and when they will have lessons.
 - ▶ Where to go if they are sick or injured.
 - ▶ Where and when they will meet, e.g. lunch and the end of the day.
 - ▶ What to do if they are separated from their group.
12. Meet with the ski area host or group co-ordinator.
13. During the activity ensure that participants:
 - ▶ Apply sunscreen.
 - ▶ Wear sunglasses or goggles.
 - ▶ Do not have loose clothing that could catch in the lifts.
 - ▶ Are warm, including fingers and toes.
 - ▶ Get to their lessons.
 - ▶ Can ride the lift.
 - ▶ Ski in control.
 - ▶ Stay with their subgroup.
14. Ensure that participants have not tampered with their release settings on their skis and that participants can get in and out of their bindings on their both skis and snowboards.
15. After the activity:
 - ▶ Return equipment.
 - ▶ Debrief the trip with the participants and the assistant leaders:
 - ▶ How the trip went.
 - ▶ Incidents (and follow up on them).
 - ▶ Suggestions for future trips.
 - ▶ Report where appropriate, e.g. the National Incident Database.

Skiing for the disabled

Disabled Snowsports New Zealand (DSNZ) is a national charitable organisation that helps remove participation barriers and encourages people with physical or intellectual disabilities to get involved in snowsports.

Outdoor leaders should understand DSNZ's policies and the special needs of people with disabilities. You should be attentive to their sensitivity to cold, their equipment, their ability to ride lifts, and their medical conditions. You may need to support them when there is negative public reaction to them.

Adaptive equipment and instruction are available at Whakapapa, Mt Hutt (through Disabled Skiing Canterbury), Cardrona, and the Remarkables.

DSNZ offers the Adaptive Instructor Qualification. It builds on NZSIA or SBINZ Level Two and aims to ensure that qualified instructors are:

- ▶ Able to teach a safe, fun, adaptive lesson (to a single disability).
- ▶ Able to demonstrate the use of adaptive equipment.
- ▶ Have a good awareness of individual disabilities and their relationship to snowsports.
- ▶ Aware of the adaptive aspects of mountain safety.