Level 1 Alpine Certification Resources

Here is information that's more specific to people taking their Level 1 exam at Cascade Mountain this year, but this is information others may benefit from as well.

What happened starting last year, was the exam changed a bit. PSIA is trying to get all divisions doing things the same. There is probably some good and bad aspects about that. The good is that having a national standard puts all divisions at the same playing field, making it easier for us to move between divisions if we want to. What's up for debate is how skiing and terrain differs from division to division – and there's a whole, separate topic there.

Either way, I'll suffice it to say that all 3 levels have gotten a little tougher. I still believe that with Level 1, they want you to pass and it's still relatively easy. There's more you have to do and learn.

Getting Ready for the Exam

1. Be a ski instructor and get some teaching done in the beginner zone.

2. Read and understand the "Alpine Technical Manual" – here

3. Register to become a PSIA Member at PSIA-C.org. Once you have become a member, you then have access to some e-learning videos.

4. Register on the event page for "Level 1 Virtual"

5. Take the "Alpine Level I E-Learning Course" and the "Delivering the Beginner Experience E-Learning Course"

6. Check out the certification pathway page – click here. Look for level 1 and all steps are outlined along with resources.

7. Here's info on the Alpine Level I Exam

8. Check out the Alpine Certification Standards (Levels 1-3 in one document), the Performance Guide, and the Assessment Form – here

9. Check out my Level 1 Study Guide

Planes of Motion

Make sure you look this up in the Alpine Manual and know it:

- Saggital plane – fore and aft movements
- Frontal plane – lateral (side to side) movements

- Horizontal plane – rotational movements (upper/lower body)

Level 1 Tasks

1. Basic Garlands
2. Basic Parallel
3. Beginning Railroad Tracks
4. Guided Uphill Arc
5. Hockey Stops
6. Intro to One-Ski Activities
7. Level 1 Ungroomed Terrain
8. Level 1 Free Run/Smooth Terrain
9. Sideslip in the Fall Line
10. Step Turn into the Fall Line
11. Straight Run Leapers
12. Wedge Christie
13. Wedge Turn

Sample Teaching Assignments

- Share your introduction with the group, setting expectations for a beginner lesson
- Discuss boot fit and comfort
- Introduce boot work
- Describe a ski and common terminology (tip, tail, toe piece, etc.)
- Present an example of 1-ski activities (scooters, etc.)
- Present an example of 2-ski activities (wagon wheels, practicing a wedge, etc.)
- Introduce side-stepping or herringbone/duck walk
- Select appropriate terrain and introduce straight runs
- Introduce a braking wedge
- Develop wedge changes
- Introduce wedge turns
- Link wedge turns
- Hockey stops

I would divide the beginner lesson into these parts, generally:

- Greeting / introduction / set expectations
- Explain equipment and teach the athletic stance
- Boot work
- One ski activities
- Two ski activities
- Turning and stopping on shallow terrain
- Introduce the chair lift
- Turning and stopping on green terrain
- Wrap up

Movement Analysis/Assessment

Look at what is happening at each part of the turn:

- Initiation (start)
- Shaping (middle)
- Finish (end)

You'll need to find one fundamental in one part of the turn. So, know the 5 skiing fundamentals.

Start at the snow. and work up:

- What are the skis doing?
- What are the feet doing?
- What are the legs doing?
- What is the upper body doing?

If you do MA in an online video session, you can ask the examiner to stop, rewind, and slow down the video. In fact… you should ask them so you can see it better. Asking won't bring down your grade, and I would argue it could increase it.

The Wedge Christie Progression

This is where you start the turn in a wedge and then transition to parallel skis to finish the turn. To do this, release the downhill ski to get the skis to match. You can first practice doing garlands to get how this feels since a garland releases the tips of the skis. It's a fine movement and you should practice it slowly.

Here's how a teaching progression would look:

- **Static:** Releasing of the downhill ski
- **Simple**: Garland of releasing and engaging
- **Complex:** Simple turn to the right, then left
- **Whole:** Linked turn

More Resources

- General resources (psia-c.org)
- Education materials (thesnowpros.org)
- Know the code
- Know the 5 skiing fundamentals
- How to Become a Certified Instructor
- Check out the Movement Matrix
- Check out the Cascade Mountain training video for new instructors.
- Watch Deb Armstrong's Beginner lessons video.

Walking in boots, athletic stance:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzkw9Hcwnao

Bow ties and boot arcs:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iR-4wFuxZ_Q

Getting them moving:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdVKcb-D9JA

One ski drills:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKfWIBQKIvI

Two ski drills:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P30FzSWw-uM

Maneuvering on a slope:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhQtzBhPIHg

Straight run:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b49VHpUnRMA

Gliding wedge:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTqFaC3bJf0

How to turn:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96Lm6yBQJbk

Linking wedge turns:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHQ9xTVnR6o

Parallel turns:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFTz_PqZTdA

Tips for Teaching in an Exam

Here are some notes I have about teaching in a PSIA exam.

Here's what good skiing is:

1. Control the relationship of the center of mass to the base of support to direct pressure along the length of the skis
2. Control pressure from ski to ski and direct pressure toward the outside ski (stacked over the outside ski)
3. Control edge angles through a combination of inclination and angulation
4. Control the skis rotation (turning, pivoting, steering) with leg rotation, separate from the upper body
5. Regulate the magnitude of pressure created through ski/snow interaction (flexing and extending)

What do good teachers do?

- Help the student in a way that makes sense to them.
- Instill trust with safety and good communication.
- Feedback with encouragement and praise.
- Use good activities, terrain selection, and play.

The lesson is now 30 minutes instead of 20 minutes. With that extra 10 minutes, you can get an extra run in. At the end of the first run, use that terrain to explore. With the second run, put what was learned into our skiing. Exploring would be adding DIRT to what we did.

Use “if/then” statements instead of “I want you to…” – for example, “If we pressure our shins into the our boot cuffs, then more pressure is applied to the front of the skis.”

D.I.R.T. is:

- Duration (how long)
- Intensity (forces, run width, etc.)
- Rate (how often)
- Timing (when)

Ask the student, “How did that feel?” to help them start to feel what’s going on.

During the lesson, adapt to the changing needs of the student. If one thing didn’t work for them, have another way (probably less intense) ready to go. The examiner may do this in the exam, so have it ready.

When watching students (other instructors, usually) ski, and if the examiner is next to you, say out loud what you’re observing with each person.

In your teaching assignment:

- Did learning happen?
- Did someone’s skiing change?
- Did the student’s understanding change?
- Did you manage risk (safety/terrain)?
- Did you adapt tasks to individuals’ limitations/capabilities?
- Was your teaching actionable?
- Did you build trust and guide the learning experience?
- Did you check for understanding?

In your wrap-up, ask your students what they liked the best / what their biggest takeaway was (in addition to what I mention in my book).

The 6 Teaching Fundamentals:

1. How well you collaborate on the long term goals and short term objectives.
2. Manage the activity, information, terrain selection and pacing.
3. Promote play, experimentation and exploration.
4. Facilitate the learner’s ability to reflect upon experiences and sensations.
5. Adapt to the learner’s needs.

6. Manage physical and emotional risk.

The Student-Teacher Relationship

During the exam (and when teaching, of course), make sure you get to know the other people in your group on the chair ride up. The examiner might ask you what you found out. This is a part of teaching – developing rapport and trust.

Learning Outcomes

- **Assess & Plan:** Plan learning outcomes and organize progressive learning experiences relevant to beginner/novice students.
- **Implement:** Facilitate learning experiences that guide students toward the agreed upon outcome and engages them in the process.
- **Reflect/Review:** Communicate performance changes that target the learning outcome to help students identify that a change has been made.
- Articulate an accurate cause-and-effect relationship between body and ski performance within any single skiing fundamental in a specific phase of the turn to offer a relevant prescription for change for skiers in the beginner/novice zone.

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