

Only Go With as Wide a Ski as You Need

Why Choosing the Right Ski Width Matters for Your Knees

I found this video and it's pretty interesting. Skis now are getting wider, and they're great for powder skiing, but I've heard about knee problems with wider skis. For myself, if a ski is too heavy, it hurts my knees on the chairlift with my legs hanging down, so that limits the amount of weight I can have on my feet. A good amount of that weight is the binding, actually.

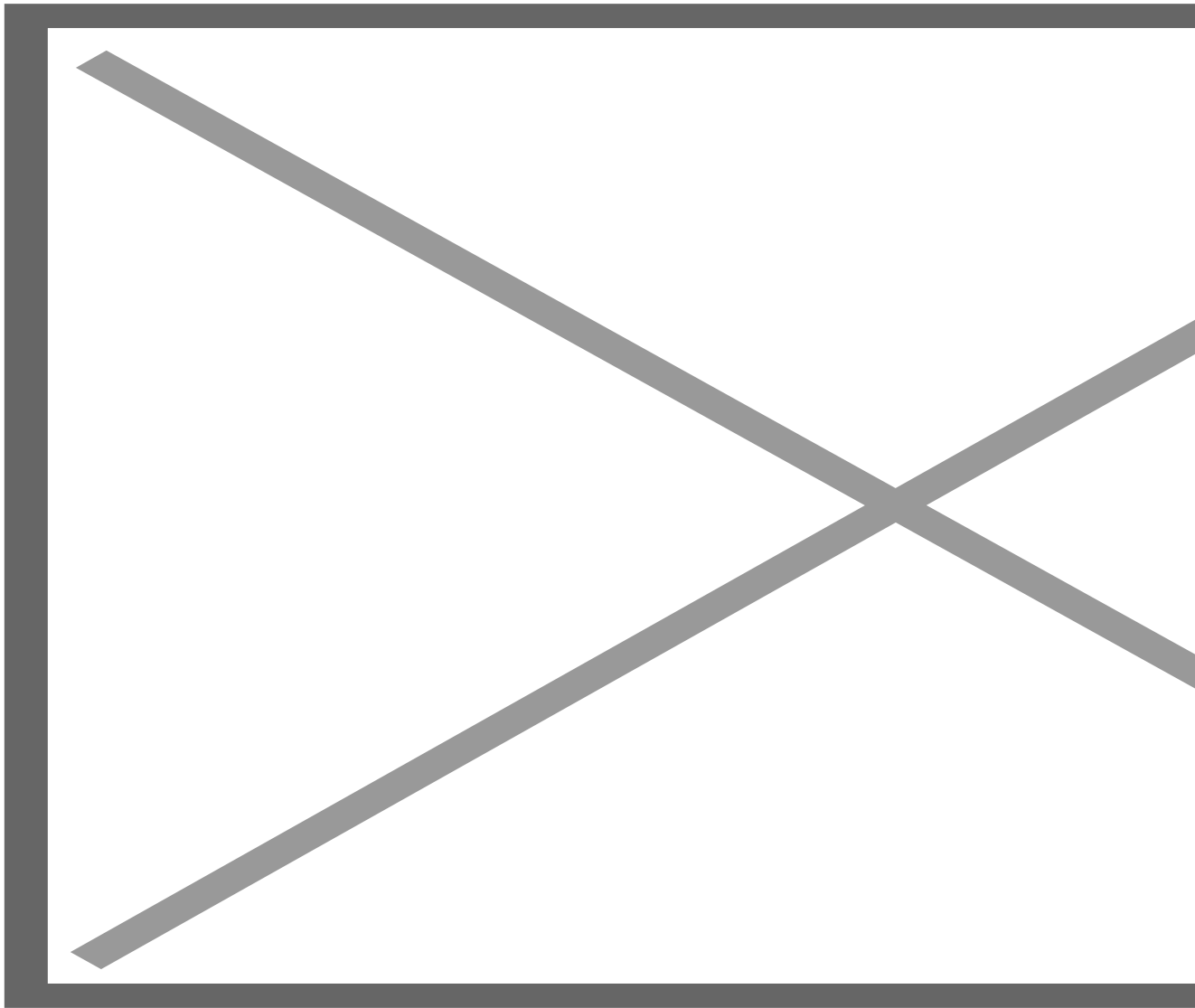
So, when it comes to skiing, picking the right ski width underfoot is more than just a matter of personal preference—it can significantly impact your performance, comfort, and even long-term knee health. Here's why sticking to an appropriate ski width is crucial and why you should think twice before hopping on those ultra-wide skis for a day on groomed runs.

The Origins of Wide Skis

Wide skis, originally called "Fat Boys," were designed in the early 90s by Atomic for powder skiing. These skis, over 100mm underfoot, excel in deep snow, providing stability and floatation. Fast forward to today, and skis with similar widths are being marketed as all-mountain options. A quick visit to your local ski shop will show you that wide skis dominate the market, dwarfing the selection of narrower skis under 90mm.

The Problem with Wide Skis on Groomers

If you're spending most of your time skiing on groomed or firm slopes, wide skis may be doing more harm than good—especially for your knees. According to Professor John Seifert of Montana State University, who has conducted research on this topic, wide skis can cause subtle but significant bio-mechanical changes that increase stress on your knees:



- **Knee Extension:** During the middle of a turn, a wider ski forces your knee to extend by up to 14% more than a narrower ski.
- **Knee Flexion:** At the end of the turn, your knees bend more, which can increase strain on the joint.
- **Postural Adjustments:** To compensate for the ski width, skiers often adjust their posture by extending their knees and hips more and even rotating their body, which compromises the strong, athletic position needed for controlled turns.
- **Lever Arm Effect:** Wider skis move your boots farther from the snow, creating a longer lever arm that amplifies stress on your knee joint.

What Does This Mean for You?

If you've ever experienced knee soreness, nighttime discomfort, or even a limp after a day of skiing on wide skis, you might be dealing with "Fat Ski Syndrome." This issue can gradually wear down your knee health over time.

Seifert's research suggests that the width of your knees should influence your choice of ski width for groomers. For men, skis should ideally be no wider than 100mm underfoot, while women should aim for a maximum of 90mm.

Optimal Ski Widths for Groomed Runs

To maintain knee health and improve your skiing performance on firm snow, consider these guidelines:

- Daily Driver:
 - Men: 80-90mm underfoot
 - Women: 75-85mm underfoot
- Powder Ski:
 - Over 100mm underfoot for deep snow conditions

Wide skis over 100mm are fantastic for powder days but aren't necessary for firm slopes or groomers. On groomers, they can lead to flatter, hooked turns rather than the smooth, C-shaped turns you'd make with a narrower ski.

Why a Ski Quiver is the Answer

Think of skis like golf clubs—you wouldn't use a driver for every shot. Having a ski quiver tailored to different conditions can optimize your skiing experience. A narrower ski for everyday use and a wider ski for powder days will keep your knees happy and your turns sharper.

If you're committed to a single pair of skis, stick to the 90mm (for women) or 100mm (for men) rule to strike the right balance. Now, go tear it up in some fresh pow!

Original article: <https://www.skiwithtony.com/only-go-with-as-wide-a-ski-as-you-need/>