

How To Become A Ski & Snowboard Instructor

Industry Guide



About The Guide

This guide has been put together by snow sport industry experts, examiners and qualified instructors. It is designed to help those considering becoming a ski or snowboard instructor or participating in an instructor training course.

The industry guide includes:

- › Answers to common questions about ski or snowboard training courses
- › Five mistakes to avoid when choosing a ski or snowboard training course
- › The benefits of ski and snowboard instructing experience
- › Advice for selecting a course that suits your goals
- › An overview of what working as an instructor is like

Common Questions

1. Does Completing Any Training Program Guarantee Me A Job?

It's important to know not all training courses are created equal. Some instructor training program providers state they will be able to get you a job in the industry after completing their course. Unfortunately, this is not always true.

Most snow sports schools will only hire qualified instructors with practical work experience. When selecting an instructor training program provider, it is essential to look for a company, like EA, who can offer you a guaranteed job offer and an internationally recognised qualification. This is the easiest way to enter the industry and fast track your career.

2. Are All Qualifications Made Equal?

No, not all qualifications are made equal. The following table shows equivalency of some of the world's most well-known ski and snowboard instructor qualifications.



If you are looking for a career break or a winter gap year, then a Level 1 training program is going to be a suitable option. A Level 1 training course will introduce you to the world of instructing and improve your ability.

If you are looking to establish a long-term career in the snow sports industry, we recommend completing your Level 2 qualification. This will significantly improve your chance of gaining employment after your first season.

The International Ski Instructors Association (ISIA) is the world body for professional ski instructors. The following table shows the level required to become a member of the ISIA. In general, it takes a minimum of three years training and teaching to reach ISIA level.

Country	Ski Association	Snowboard Association	Highest	ISIA Equivalent	Intermediate	Entry
New Zealand	NZSIA	SBINZ	Trainer	Level III	Level II	Level I
USA	PSIA	AASI	Examiner	Level III	Level II	Level I
Great Britain	BASI	BASI	Diploma	Level III	Level II	Level I
Australia	APSI	APSI	Trainer	Level III	Level II	Level I
Argentina	AADIDE	AADIDE	Trainer	Level III	Level II	Level I
Canada	CSIA	CASI	Level VI	Level III	Level II	Level I

Table 2.1 International Instructor Organisations, ISIA and equivalent levels



Testimonials From New Instructors

"It is an incredibly rewarding job particularly when the people you are teaching make a very clear progression and when a 5 year old informs you that "you're not half bad"... well, my work is done really! Thankfully our boss had the foresight to let us have New Year's Day off and Verbier really did live up to the hype, New Year's Eve was a crazy night"

Ione Walker, Verbier, Europe

"My favourite part of the program was getting to meet other people who are also in love with the snow was a great experience. However, of course getting to improve my riding and getting to spend the season teaching was THE highlight for myself."

Josh, Lake Louise, Canada

Common Questions Continued...

3. Am I Really Guaranteed To Pass?

Through most well-operated training program providers the chances of passing your Level 1 qualification are high. However, there is no guarantee you will pass the exams.

The familiarity your trainers have with the exam material, and making an effort into your training and study will help increase your likelihood of success.

Passing your Level 2 qualification will be more challenging than your Level 1. Organisations, like BASI, require signed proof from a ski school that you have completed a certain number of hours of teaching experience. All organisations recommend that you have some instructor work experience before attempting your Level 2 qualification.

By selecting an internship program, which offers training, certifications, and a job offer to teach for a season, the likelihood of successfully obtaining your Level 2 qualification will increase.

4. How Much Prior Experience Do I Need?

You won't need to be an expert skier or snowboarder to be eligible for a training course. But, you will need to be able to link turns on intermediate terrain comfortably.

Your prior experience will determine how easy or hard it will be for you to pass the skiing or snowboarding portion of your exam. However, this is only one part of becoming a successful instructor and most entry-level instructor qualifications have a greater emphasis on a candidate's ability to 'teach' others. For those with excellent interpersonal skills, this is easy!

5. How Can I Be Sure I'm Getting Quality Training?

Quality training is essential to achieving your goals for the season and passing your exams. To ensure the training you're getting is of high quality, your trainers should be at least Level 3 or 4 qualified instructors (refer to table 2.1). It is also essential your trainers have experience working for the ski or snowboard organisation with who you will be sitting the exam.

6. Are All Training Programs Created Equal?

There is a great deal of variety when it comes to instructor training courses and the price you pay. When comparing training program providers, it is essential that you look at what is included in the courses they offer, so you don't face any unexpected costs.

Things to consider include:

- › Accommodation. Is it quality and in a handy location?
- › Is transport to and from the mountain included or required?
- › How many training days there will be per week?
- › Are you lift and season passes included?
- › Are exam costs and affiliations membership fees included?
- › How much will flights cost and are domestic transfers included?
- › Will I have the opportunity to earn money working as an instructor? In other words, is the job offer a paid job offer?
- › Will I work for a reputable ski school?
- › Is my qualification recognised internationally?
- › Is there a designated company representative on the ground to help me if I get in a pickle while I'm away?

Five Mistakes To Avoid When Choosing A Ski Or Snowboard Training Course



1. Beware Of Hidden Costs

Facing unexpected costs during your training course can be stressful, especially if you are not financially prepared. Becoming an instructor isn't cheap and should be viewed as an investment. We advise being realistic and drawing up a budget. Refer to our budget planner in this guide. Be sure to include all costs such as program fees, flights, insurance, equipment and living expenses. On an internship with EA, you will have the opportunity to earn an income when you pass your exams, which will make funding your training course easier. A course provider should be able to help you budget for your chosen destination.

2. Do Your Research

Compare course options to determine what is going to be the best option for you and your goals for the season. It's a good idea to talk to a training consultant as some providers may offer scholarships or brand ambassador deals to make your course more affordable.

3. Be Aware Of Providers That Don't Guarantee A Job Offer

The main focus of this guide is to give you insider secrets from the industry direct, ensuring you the best possible entry into the world of becoming a ski or snowboard instructor. If you think you may wish to instruct in a future season the first mistake you can make is signing up for a course that does not provide you with a guaranteed job offer.

Most providers out there offer training and certification opportunities. However, most fall short when it comes to 'real' on the job experience or even better – an instructor job offer for a winter season.

Most snow sports schools do not hire new instructors unless they have prior experience, which is why a job offer is an essential part of a training course. With the right training program provider, it is possible to improve your ability, gain an internationally recognised qualification and get paid instructor work experience – all in the same season.

4. Research The Locations On Offer

The course location is one of the most important factors to consider. If you want to ski or ride deep powder, hit up great parks, or get your tree skiing fix, then you should ensure the destination you choose offers the best chance of this. Talk to others who have been there, look at photos, blogs or videos and consider what other resorts are close to where you are training or working.

5. Give Yourself The Best Chance

The only way to continuously improve and develop your skiing or snowboarding skills is with 'on the job' experience. Most reputable organisations do not allow people to sit anything higher than their Level 1 qualification without instructor work experience. Working as an instructor will also give you experience and a variety of skills to add to your CV.

Ski Or Snowboard Instructor Experience

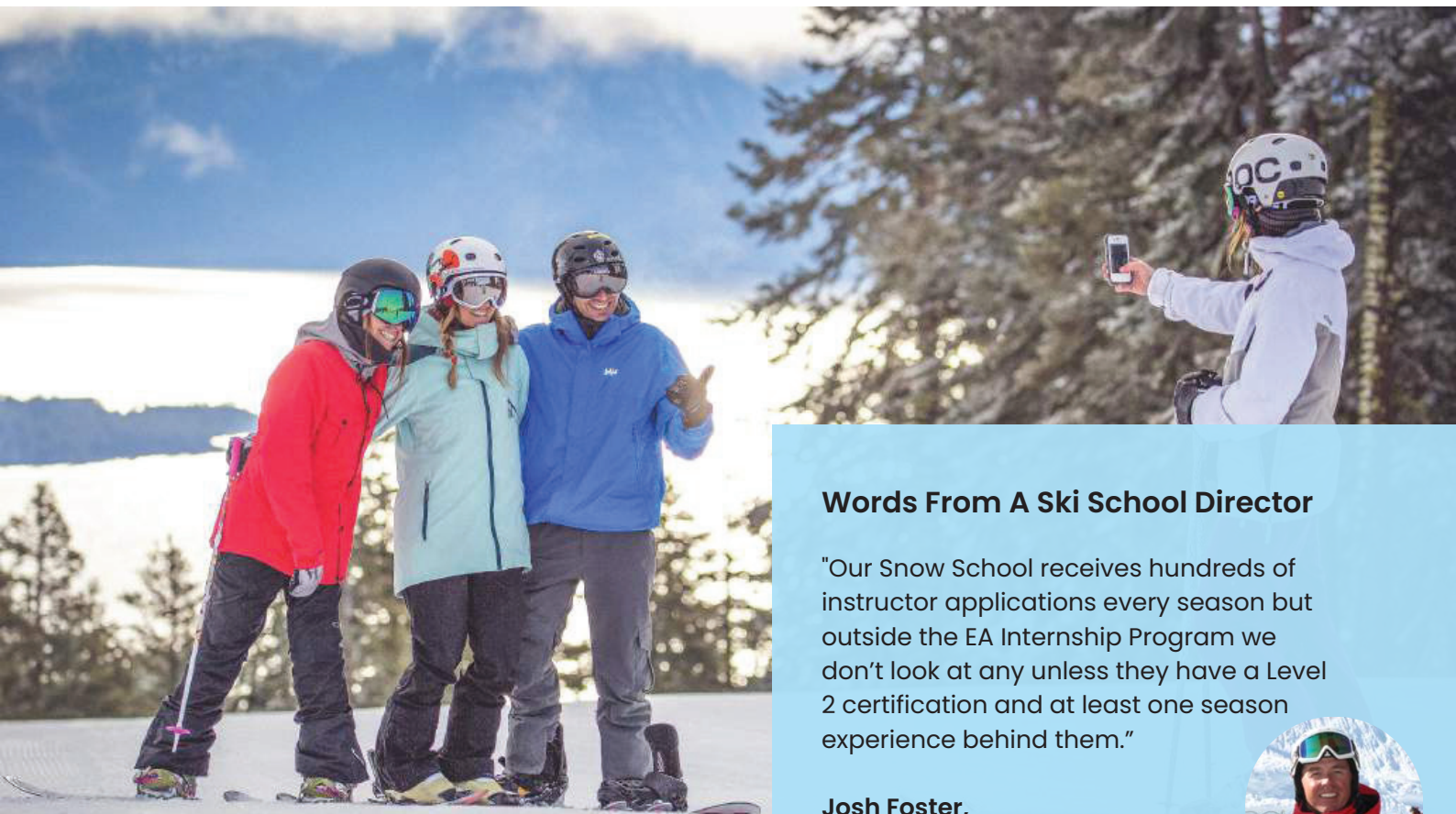
The Benefits

Gaining experience as an instructor offers a considerable range of benefits, regardless of whether you want to pursue a career in snow sports or not.

- > Learning on the job is the ultimate training– no amount of instructor training can provide practical experience, and in this industry, experience is everything
- > You get to enjoy a full winter season and earn money to help you enjoy your time away
- > Add experience to your resume and make yourself more employable
- > You will live in a foreign country, experience a new culture and make friends from all around the world



If you are interested in pursuing a career in snow sports, doing a course with the guarantee of work is a no-brainer. It will ultimately give you the right connections and opportunities to fast-track your career.



Words From A Ski School Director

"Our Snow School receives hundreds of instructor applications every season but outside the EA Internship Program we don't look at any unless they have a Level 2 certification and at least one season experience behind them."

Josh Foster,
Big White Snow School, Canada



Choosing A Course That Suits Your Winter Goals And Career Aspirations

People want to do a ski or snowboard instructor course for a variety of reasons.

Here are some of the most common:

- To enjoy a gap year after finishing school or university
- To take a career break and try something new
- To make a career change and work in a new industry

Most people interested in participating in a ski or snowboard training course fall into one of two categories. What one do you identify most strongly with?

At This Stage, I Don't Plan On Working As An Instructor Long Term...

If your goal is just to make the most of the time and money you invest in a ski or snowboard training program, you should ensure you will obtain 'real' experience as a ski or snowboard instructor. This shows to ANY future employer that you have put your skills to use and can handle the task you have trained to perform.

I Want To Pursue A Career As An Instructor For A Number Of Years...

If you plan to be employed in the ski and snowboard industry many resorts require at least one season's prior experience as an instructor. Instructor internship programs are perfect as they allow a streamlined path directly into training, certification and employment as an instructor. This enables you to get that crucial experience.

Season Ends – Two Directions

A Lifetime On The Snow

Most EA interns turn instructing into a career and continue to chase winter across the globe

Further qualifications means higher earning potential

Chase the snow around the world going to amazing resorts whenever you please



An Unforgettable Season

For some interns, one season is enough. They often continue on to university or try something new

If you do an internship you can add your experience to your CV/resume and get a valuable work reference to improve chances to get ANY future jobs

Opportunity to do future seasons and pick instructing back up anytime you miss the snow.



Note: You don't have to decide your career right now, as many people go into a ski instructor course planning to return home after and stay out for future seasons. However, it is important to consider what you want to achieve in your season so that you can pick the right one.

What Is It Like Working As An Instructor?



A Word From An EA Instructor

"It has been awesome so far, I've loved every second. I passed the level 1 which I was so happy about I'm now thinking of going for my Level 2 at the end of March. Starting work was fun and it went smoothly. I can't pick a favourite teaching moment as there's been so many, I've really enjoyed it when I've seen people progress massively."

- Maddy, Canyons, Japan



Working as a ski or snowboard instructor has its benefits – you will likely hear tales of instructors who were given cars, holidays and wads of cash from clients.

However, it's important to realise this is not the reality for most new instructors. The days are long, and the work will be hard. Ski towns are notoriously expensive to live in, and when your job is dependent on the weather and ski school bookings, it can be tough at times, especially financially. We always recommend new instructors prepare for this.

Earning And Expected Salary As A Qualified Instructor

Like most careers, earning potential rises with experience and qualifications. Don't expect to make a considerable amount of money in your first winter season. Instead, keep in mind the potential long-term benefits your skill, experience and relationships may offer.

Your earnings as a ski instructor can vary depending on location, weather and demand. It's hard to know how much you might earn in a season. However, if you are in a busy resort during school holidays, you are likely to benefit from large amounts of work.

As you gain your qualifications, increasing the types of customers you can teach, you will naturally earn a higher wage and be in more demand.

Your Winter Season Budget Planner

The following is a budget planner to help you prepare for your ski or snowboard training course. You will need to do some calculations and research to make sure you can afford to take part. Talk to your training program provider if you have any questions.

Income

Average number of hours per week

Hours

Number of work weeks per season

Weeks

Hourly rate of pay

Per hour

Base Income (hours x work weeks x rate of pay)

Tips & Request Hours

Total Income

Savings & Assistance

Personal Savings

Assistance from family

Total Savings & Assistance

Program Costs

Course fee

Flights

Insurance

Ski or snowboard gear

Visa fees

Total Program Costs

Living Costs

Number of weeks during season	Weeks
<hr/>	
Rent per week	Per week
<hr/>	
Rental costs (number of weeks x rent per week)	
<hr/>	
Food and entertainment	
<hr/>	
Other	
<hr/>	
Total Living Costs	

Summary

Total Income (from above)	
<hr/>	
Plus: Total Savings & Assistance (from above)	
<hr/>	
Less: Total Program Costs (from above)	
<hr/>	
Less: Total Living Costs (from above)	
<hr/>	
Net Position (surplus or funds required)	



Become A Qualified Instructor

Next Steps

Dear winter lover,

Good job! Taking the time to read through this guide shows excellent preparation and planning – an essential skill for an instructor. This is the first step in ensuring you attain those dreams of becoming a real-life ski or snowboard instructor and a winter of epicness!

We hope this guide is useful and can provide assistance while you work through the decisions required to get the most out of your time in the ski and snowboard industry. Be sure to use all methods available to you; the internet, school careers advisors, friends and family and reputable organisations.

For further information on ski and snowboard training and employment opportunities provided by EA Ski & Snowboard, please feel free to contact the team.

Good luck!

EA Ski & Snowboard

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See If You Qualify For A Ski Or Snowboard Instructor Training Course Or Internship

- ▶ Check your ability level
- ▶ What country are you interested in?
- ▶ What do you want from your season?

See If You Qualify >>