

## Ski Lessons

*“Tip the Tea Pot”* to move the hips forward. Today’s lesson looks at how to utilize our core muscles and gluts to improve our stance and develop an efficient and powerful kick.

**Hip position and Spine angle** – It is important to develop a skiing stance which allows the skeleton and not the quads to bear most of the weight. Start by trying this static drill. Stand about 3 feet from a wall with ankles and knees flexed. Lean forward and mimic a classic skier in full stride using the wall for support. As you balance on one leg, extend the other leg back and check these three alignments; knee flexed over the ankle, forward body lean, hips aligned over the foot. It’s essential to lean from the ankles and not the waist. Bending forward from the waist pushes the hips back and presses the quads into double duty, supporting your weight and doing the pushing. As you settle into the posture notice your spine/torso angle and forward hip position. This alignment stacks your hip over the foot which allows the skeleton to support most of your body weight.

**Hinge the Hips not the Waist** - Weak or improperly firing gluts lead to a skier hinging at the waist as opposed to the hip. To feel the hip hinge, mimic the same classic skier in the first drill. With all your weight on the glide leg push the side of your hand into the crease located in the front of your hip, (about 3 inches below the waist). Keep the knee flexed and fire your glut by crunching your butt cheek. You should feel the hip push your hand forward. This allows the hips to move laterally with the glide ski or forward prior to the kick. Now move both hands around to your butt cheeks and practice firing your gluts. You should feel the hinge in the front of both hips! The hips are the “tea pot” and the gluts tip the pot forward. It’s a small movement but essential to proper alignment. The incorrect way to move the hips is to hinge at the waist. (This motion actually moves your hand backward in the drill.) When skiing, bending at the waist moves the hips back prior to the kick. For many skiers this collapse occurs when pushing on the poles so it helps to go without them in the beginning. *Firing the gluts* is more of a core stabilizing event than a range of motion. “Tucking the tail” or “forward press” are other common phases skiers use to activate their core, but I prefer to train the glut muscles to *“Tip the Tea Pot”* to move the hips forward with the glide ski.

**Flexion and Extension** - The *“Kick”* in classic and skate skiing utilizes flexion and extension movements that play a large role in propelling the skier. Flexion involves pre-loading muscle groups (compressing the joints), and extension refers to the release of that muscle tension. A successful kick depresses the ski’s camber into the snow rebounding the skier forward.

**Initiate Kick with the Core Muscles** – Your core muscles are the origin of a well timed and powerful kick. As you move from ski to ski think about carrying your body weight in the core area, specifically the front of the hips. Use that weight to compress the knee and ankle joints down onto the ski.

**Cross training and Golf?** I realize not all skiers golf or golfers ski, but they should! If you’re someone who does both maybe this analogy will help you ski better. A skier/golfer can easily compare hip and spine alignment in their skiing stance to the set up and swing in golf. Both are much easier if you maintain your spine angle throughout the entire range of motion. Fore and aft spine movements in the backswing require an adjustment in the downswing to keep the club head on line. In skiing the spine naturally reacts to head and hip movements. A quiet upper body and stable core keeps the alignment consistent throughout the stride. I noticed the work I’ve put in to develop power and speed in my golf swing has really carried over to my skiing. Both sports rely heavily on developing stability and strength in the core muscles to support the spine and stabilize hips.

**The Best Drill** – The best drill to teach the gluts to fire is the double pole. Simply double pole and after each pole compression fire the gluts to initiate hip recovery. Use this drill to transition to other techniques you know!

**Tip of the Day** - "*Set the Tack*" for a quick powerful classic kick. There is only one kick per stride but a variety of ways to trigger it. For kids, have them pretend to "squash a bug" under their ski, helps them to set the wax pocket. With adults my favorite way to depress the ski camber more quickly is to imagine a tack in the middle of the ski directly under the kicking foot. Time the kick just right. The moment the knees pass each other POW! "*Set the tack*" into the snow with a quick down ward flexing of the knee and ankle.

See you on the trail! Phil Harder