

# First-Timers

## LEARNING TO SKI & SNOWBOARD IN COLORADO

BY ASHLEY HUGHES

Want to get in on all of the downhill fun, but don't know where to begin? We'll walk you through everything you need to know to graduate from the bunny hill in no time.

Breckenridge Ski Resort

# START 'EM YOUNG

For those looking to get little ones into the sport, there are a plethora of programs suited for the tiniest skiers and riders. Here are some highlights to consider.



## Monarch Mountain

NEAR SALIDA

**Mini + Me** lessons let parent/child pairs grow together, though mom or dad must already know how to ski or snowboard. During the two-hour session, kids ages 3 to 6 will be shown the ropes, while the adults receive coaching tips.

## Keystone Resort

KEYSTONE

More than a ski school, **Camp Keystone** relies on a special kids-only zone with fun, interactive displays, game-aided learning and a designated teaching area — all meant to boost confidence and foster a love of skiing or riding from the very start.

## Beaver Creek Resort

NEAR AVON

Making good on a promise that kids will learn to ski through its instruction, **Beaver Creek Ski School** provides a fourth lesson day for free if someone hasn't met the target goal according to their age group after the third day of lessons.

## Purgatory Resort

DURANGO

**Strider Snowbike Lessons** give 3- to 4-year-olds a chance to develop balance and motor skills before trying out real-deal skis or boards. Once comfortable, youngsters ages 3 to 6 can hone snowboarding skills at **Burton Riglet Park**, a playground-like setting with its own happy hour: one hour of instruction for \$15.

## Steamboat Ski Resort

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

An alternative to the regular kids' clinic, the full-day **Steamboat Signature Five Program** (first grade through age 17) limits groups to five students per instructor based on skill level, so there's more emphasis on personal attention.

## Ski Cooper

LEADVILLE

Adorably named, the two-hour **Panda Cubs** (4-year-old skiers) and **Panda Sliders** (5- to 7-year-old snowboarders) programs are for the wee crowd, while full-day **Panda Patrol** (skiers ages 5–13 and snowboarders ages 8–13) works with the older kids, and gives you a chance to take advantage of a 10 percent discount on your own lesson.

## Winter Park Resort

WINTER PARK

Time off from school is a perfect opportunity to pick up new skills outside of the classroom. With two-day programs over long weekends for **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day** and **Presidents Day**, plus two different three-day sessions during **spring break**, you've got your holiday plans already made.

Find other great ski resorts for families at [COLORADO.com/Top-Ski-Resorts-Families](http://COLORADO.com/Top-Ski-Resorts-Families).

Less familiar but known for fewer crowds, free parking and shorter lift lines, the GEMS are hidden treasures with great value. Get a deal card, which grants two 2-for-1 lift tickets or two 30-percent-off lift tickets at each resort. In addition to those noted by the GEMS icon, other locations include:

**Powderhorn Mountain Resort, Mesa:** Saturday and Sunday free Learn-to-Ski & Ride Program

**Sunlight Mountain Resort, Glenwood Springs:** 75 percent of the terrain is suited for newcomers

**Hesperus Ski Area, Durango:** Extend the day with night skiing or hit the tubing hill

**Kendall Mountain, Silverton:** A manageable 240 feet of vertical drop puts families at ease



Loveland Ski Area

LOVELAND SKI AREA/DUSTIN SCHAEFER

# BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

Learning something new isn't just for youngsters. Later-in-life beginners also have an array of options at their disposal.



## Arapahoe Basin Ski Area

NEAR DILLON

With a **FLEX 4** lesson pack, you can decide to use all four lesson vouchers yourself or share them with anyone age 3 and up. Half and full days are both available, and a lift ticket is included. If you have more time to devote, the **Molly to Mountain** program allows as many half-day lessons as you need at the Pika Place and Molly Hogan learning areas, in addition to equipment rental and a lift ticket.



## Crested Butte Mountain Resort

CRESTED BUTTE

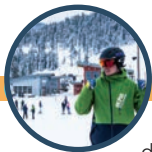
Geared to set first-timers up for success, the **Full Day Beginner Adventure** is offered to skiers and riders and includes your lift ticket. Burgeoning boarders should also look into the **Burton Learn to Ride** program, a terrain-based approach that helps reduce anxiety about losing control of your board.



## Breckenridge Ski Resort

BRECKENRIDGE

Check the schedule for **Women & Wine**, a half-day, ladies-only ski lesson where participants are grouped by ability level (so don't worry about not being able to keep up). A reward for your efforts comes in the form of a glass of wine après.



## Echo Mountain

IDAHO SPRINGS

Free instruction, you say? With the purchase of a day pass you'll have complimentary access to **Echo Mountain Ambassadors**, a team of ski and snowboard coaches that are

stationed around the beginner area and near the lodge. Hit them up for pointers, tips and suggestions at the closest ski area to Denver.



## Loveland Ski Area

NEAR GEORGETOWN

With the **Newcomer 3-Class Pass**, you start with a full day and then two additional half-day **Master the Mountain** lessons. After completion, you'll receive a free season pass to further work on your technique. Separate from the main Loveland Basin, **Loveland Valley** is an area with gentle slopes, and a **Lift 7-only** ticket lets you utilize just that lift's terrain, as well as the magic-carpet surface lift, at a great price.



## Aspen Snowmass

ASPEN & SNOWMASS VILLAGE

Two of the four mountains of this massive ski area — **Buttermilk** and **Snowmass** — feature **Adult First Time** one- or three-day ski or snowboard classes with an accelerated learning method and specialized equipment to jump-start your snowy love affair with the sport.



## Vail Ski Resort

VAIL

Work with a pro for three consecutive days through the **Adult First Time Series** (ski or snowboard). The third day is granted at a reduced rate, and the goal is that by the end of the course you'll be confidently tackling the green trails.

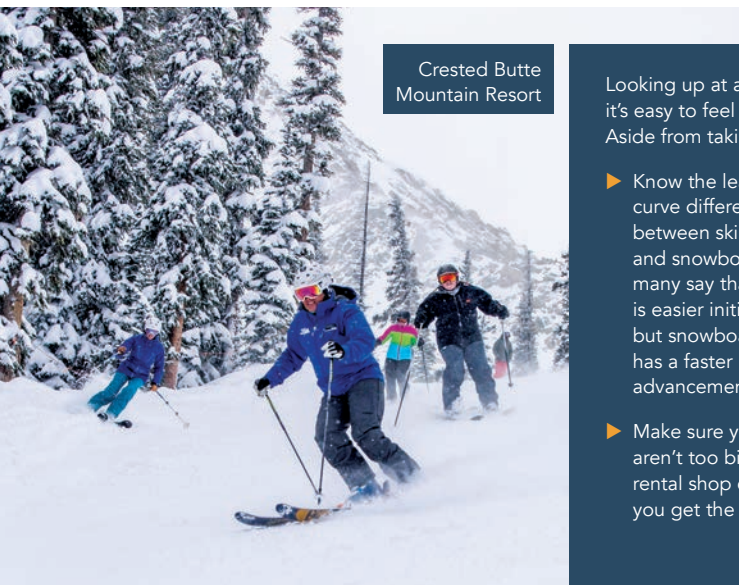
There are learn-to-ski/ride programs at all of Colorado's ski resorts. Find additional resources at [COLORADO.com/SkiSchool](http://COLORADO.com/SkiSchool).

## Tips for Beginners

Looking up at a steep peak as you watch someone carve down a black-diamond run, it's easy to feel intimidated. But even expert powder hounds had to start somewhere. Aside from taking a lesson, here is some of the most important advice to heed.

- ▶ Know the learning-curve difference between skiing and snowboarding; many say that skiing is easier initially, but snowboarding has a faster rate of advancement
- ▶ Make sure your boots aren't too big — the rental shop can help you get the perfect fit
- ▶ Stick to learning areas and beginner terrain until you're comfortable — there's no shame in a magic-carpet ride!
- ▶ Learn to layer appropriately (a thermal base layer is super important) but don't double up on socks; just wear a good, moisture-wicking material like Merino wool (avoid cotton)
- ▶ Wear sunscreen — yes, even on snowy days — and a helmet
- ▶ Learn to maintain control and master stopping first
- ▶ Yield to people in front of you
- ▶ Don't stop where people can't see you from behind (example: below the crest of a hill)

Crested Butte Mountain Resort



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: RICHARD CUMMINGS; LOVELAND SKI AREA/CASEY DAY; ASPEN SNOWMASS/DANIEL BAYER; VAIL RESORTS/DAN DAVIS; CRESTED BUTTE MOUNTAIN RESORT; ECHO MOUNTAIN; BRECKENRIDGE RESORT/ANDREW MACGUIRE; MILES/MATT INDEN.

# ADAPTIVE SKIING & SNOWBOARDING




Telluride Adaptive Sports

Many Colorado ski towns and resorts are proud to offer programs and equipment designed for those with disabilities, including:

- ▶ **Challenge Aspen, Snowmass Village**
- ▶  **Ignite Adaptive Sports at Eldora Mountain, Nederland**
- ▶ **Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center Adaptive Ski & Ride School**
- ▶ **Telluride Adaptive Sports Program**
- ▶ **Steamboat STARS**
- ▶ **National Sports Center for the Disabled, Winter Park**
- ▶ **Adaptive Sports Center, Crested Butte**

## More Deals & Tips

January is **Learn to Ski & Snowboard Month**, so look for other special lesson bargains at that time. Throughout the season, **Howelsen Hill Ski Area** in **Steamboat Springs** hosts **Ski Free Sundays** — just pick up your free ticket at the lodge. There's also something to be said for beginner-friendly layouts. Two to seek out are **Copper Mountain's Green Acres** learning area near **Frisco**, and  **Granby Ranch**, whose family-oriented mountain in **Granby** is laid out so all trails start at the same point and end at the base. In the off-season, book a lesson at the **SNÖBAHN Indoor Ski and Snowboard Center** in **Centennial** for more practice.



Meier Skis

## GET YOUR GEAR

Now that you know where to go, blend in on the mountain with your made-in-Colorado equipment:

### Skis & Boards

- ▶ **Meier Skis, Denver:** Skis are handcrafted from Colorado trees right before your eyes
- ▶ **Wagner Custom Skis, Telluride:** Determine your Skier DNA to formulate the perfect pair
- ▶ **Unity Snowboards, Silverthorne:** The focus is on durability and performance with these cutting-edge boards

### Apparel

- ▶ **Voormi, Pagosa Springs:** Pick up everything from high-performance wool socks to heavy-duty jackets
- ▶ **J2 Software, Salida:** Select your length, color, pockets and other details for a one-of-a-kind fleece coat
- ▶ **Freeride Systems, Leadville:** Outerwear like insulated softshell jackets and hiking parkas is tested at an elevation of 10,000 feet

Bundle up with more winter gear at [COLORADO.com/WinterGear](http://COLORADO.com/WinterGear).



Wagner Custom Skis

After 10 years in Colorado, Ashley Hughes is finally warming up to activities like hiking and skiing, but cooking, dancing and traveling will always be her primary hobbies. She lives in Denver with her husband and three cats.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TELLURIDE ADAPTIVE SPORTS;