

SKI
TIPSBy
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INSIDE VS. OUTSIDE TURNS

At the end of most ski days, I wind down the high-lights over a beer with my husband. He enjoys teasing me about my ski instructor jargon. “Did you have a strong inside half today?” he’ll ask jokingly. That’s a phrase that instructors love to use, yet it makes no sense to normal people. While I admit that we instructors can hardly resist delving into the abstractions of ski technique, the concept of the inside and outside parts of the body is one that is one worth exploring. So bear with me as we get down with some ski nerd conversation.

What do we mean by inside and outside?

Think of a ski turn as part of a circle. While turning left (counterclockwise), your right ski is on the outside of the curve and your left ski is on the inside. Stop reading this for a moment, imagine turning left, and think about what your skis are doing. During your imaginary left turn (which really rocks, by the way!), your right ski is on the outside of the curve, and it’s also the ski that is carrying most of your weight and dictating much of what’s happening throughout the turn.

OK, are we solid on the basic concept? Let’s dig a little deeper into this.

If you draw a line up the zipper of your jacket, you can imagine separating your body into two halves: the inside half and the outside half. In a left turn, the outside part of your body would be your right ski, foot, leg, hip, arm, and shoulder.

The outside part of your body is what puts energy and drive into your turn. The inside part of your body stays balanced and disciplined, and basically just has to stay out of the way. What the inside part of your body should *not* do is lean in toward the hill or get twisted up in an effort to create rotation in your turn.

- ◆ Whole body leaning into the hill. Hips and shoulders tilted toward the inside of the turn.

- ◆ Weight is being pulled onto inside foot (the skier’s left foot).

- ◆ Because of the weight on the inside ski, it is turning more sharply than the outside ski.

- ◆ More snow spraying off inside ski than outside ski.

- ◆ Inside hand much lower than outside hand, inside pole dragging.

- ◆ Facial expression uncertain. Lacks determination.



UNBALANCED SKIER

What should I do with the outside part of my body?

Start at the ski. As you begin a turn, focus your weight onto your outside ski. Specifically, press on the big toe of your outside foot. That is a good place to direct your weight, because it keeps you forward and puts you over the edge of your ski.

Everything else stacks up on top of that. Think of balancing over that outside ski all the way through the turn. It’s moving of course, so you need to move with it. The moment you stop moving with your ski, you end up in the back seat.

The amount of power you’ll deliver to your outside ski depends on the snow and what kind of turn you want. In soft snow, you can ease gently onto the outside ski. In firm snow, steeps, or for shorter turns, crank on your outside ski with more effort and energy.

Your outside arm and shoulder can reach down toward the snow too. This sounds weird, but it helps you commit your balance to the outside ski. It also helps you keep your shoulders level and prevents you from getting pulled to the inside of the turn.

What about the inside part of my body?

The inside part of your body is not just along for the ride. Ideally, it’s actively counterbalancing what’s going on with the outside part. Your job is to keep the inside half of your body engaged and stable.

Again, starting at the ski: your inside ski carries much less weight than the outside one, but it’s still engaged all the way through the turn. Think of touching the snow with the pinky toe of your inside foot. Don’t press too hard, but do seek a connection underneath your little toe.

To keep your inside foot light on the snow, your in-

side hip almost feels like it’s lifting up. The result is that your hips stay level as the outside half pushes down and the inside half elevates.

Lots of people crank out their turns by dipping their shoulders into the turn and reaching for the snow with their inside hand. Thanks to shaped skis and soft snow, it works. And it’s fun. Who am I to tell you to stop doing that? But if you want to ski with more precision, energy, and efficiency, you might not want to make a habit of that move. Instead, resist leaning into the hill and keep your inside arm and shoulder lifted up so that your shoulders can be horizontal instead of tilted into the hill.

Here’s a quick barometer for you: as you ski through a series of turns, try not to drag your inside pole in the snow. This drill builds awareness more than anything. If you feel yourself needing that inside pole for support, you are likely sucking the power out of your skiing. Instead, engage your core and try to balance without leaning on your inside pole. Trust that outside ski, and go ahead and stand on it. When you do this you’ll find yourself stacked up more athletically.

When everything aligns and you feel the outside half of your body applying power while the inside half stays agile and engaged, then you’ll know you’ve entered a whole new world of ski nerd nirvana. “Dude, check out my inside half,” you can say to your chair-lift mates. They probably won’t know what the heck you’re talking about, but hopefully they’ll nod and smile anyway. ◆

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BALANCED SKIER

- ◆ Stacked over outside foot (the skier’s right foot) and pressuring outside ski.

- ◆ The skis are parallel.

- ◆ Both skis have a similar edge angle.

- ◆ Hips, hands, and shoulders are level.

- ◆ Inside pole not dragging in the snow.

- ◆ Six-pack abs (not shown) are helping to maintain balance and posture.