

Snow Sports – Dryland Training Tips (adaptable for all snow sports)

For the times when Mother Nature doesn't provide enough snow, or for times when finances prevent teams from going to the snow as much as one desires, dryland training is a *great* and valuable option! Dryland training does not just refer to fitness training, although that's an important component. You really can work on specific skill instruction – particularly if you have athletes that are new to snow sports.

A comprehensive dryland training program will include the following components:

-Cardiovascular Conditioning -Muscle Strengthening -Balance -Flexibility -Skill Instruction

Most coaches have an arsenal of cardio and muscle strengthening activities to present to their group. Below are some ideas for activities that help improve balance, along with some ideas for teaching skills. All can be done indoors where it is dry and warm, with no expense for transportation to the snow. These activities can also be performed by the athletes in their own home in between practice sessions.

Activities to Improve Balance

Stand on one leg: count how long you can stay that way. Repeat with the other leg. *Practice Tip:* Athletes try to improve their count. Practice at home during all TV commercial breaks.

Hop on one leg: two or three times and then . . . **FREEZE** try to maintain balance on the supporting leg. Switch legs and try it on the other side.

One leg knee bends: don't let hips go below knee height (90 degree angle)

Walk along a straight line: sort of like a balance beam that's on the floor. (Choose any painted line on a gym floor or tile line, etc.) *Practice Tip:* Do this as a relay race. When someone steps off the line, they begin again.

Bounding: Leap across the floor as high and far as you can with each step. (Hint: leap over a creek, not like stepping off of a curb). *Practice Tip:* This is a great one to use inside or out. If done for a length of time, it is also a good cardiovascular activity. This is also an exceptional skill builder for cross country skiers.

Zig Zag Jumps: Act like a zig zag sewing machine and jump across the floor in zig zag fashion. First on both legs, then on one.

Practice Tip: All of the above can be incorporated into relay races at a dryland practice – indoors or out

Assessing Readiness for Snow

Before you bring athletes to the snow, you'll want to be sure they are ready for the "slippery factor" it presents. Each athlete should be able to perform the following skills **before** going to the snow. If they cannot, they are not ready and need more dryland training time practicing these skills:

1. Athlete must carry his/her own skis in a safe, controlled manner. *Practice Tip:* Do this as a relay race in dryland training. We've all seen athletes that have not been taught to carry skis properly, which causes a danger to the athlete and to others around him.

2. Athlete should be able to put his own skis on without assistance. (Or with minimal assistance if bindings are especially tough to clamp down.)
3. Athlete should be able to move forward independently on flat terrain with skis on.
4. Athlete should be able to recover independently after a fall. *Practice Tip:* It is essential to practice this with new athletes. It is much nicer to practice this indoors where it is dry and warm! In the beginning, it can take a long time to learn this skill. Why not do it without the added discomfort of being cold and wet and not being able to get up?
5. Athlete should be able to sidestep on flat terrain.

Dryland Skill Instruction Ideas

Challenge for Time: Challenge the group as a whole (to build team support) to perform the designated skill correctly and completely within a predetermined time limit. Time allowed changes as season/team progresses. Some suggestions follow:

- Carry skis safely from Point A to Point B
- Put on skis, fall down and get back up
- Put on skis at point A, move forward independently to point B and take skis off
- Put on skis, turn 360 degrees (star turn or step turn), fall down and get up
- Sidestep from point A to point B, fall down, get up, turn 180 degrees and sidestep back
- Any combo of the above – can also be done as relay races

Follow the Leader: Athletes take turns leading the group. Followers must follow the same path and perform all the skills the leader performs.

Pole Sidestep: Take athletes' poles and lay them down on the ground in a row – parallel to each other – about 3 to 6 feet apart (closer is harder). Athletes sidestep over the poles, first without skis on, then with skis on. Move to the right, then left. This is harder than it may sound, because athletes must have control of the tips and tails of their skis at all times. Progression can be to do this without skis or poles, then adding in skis and poles. This activity works well indoors or out, snow or no snow. Make fun by timing athletes or setting up two courses and racing.

To Teach Racing Techniques (edging, competition, etc.) play Sharks and Minnows: Wear skis, do NOT use poles!!! Athletes line up side by side between cones. This is the designated "safe beach". Choose the skier that is most skilled to begin as the first "Shark". The shark yells "SHARK ATTACK". At this instruction, skiers (minnows) that are lined up ski past the shark to try and get to the safe beach which is on the other side. The shark tries to tag as many minnows as possible. All tagged minnows must stay in the center and become sharks for the next attack. Continue until there is only one minnow left. This person wins and becomes the new shark. *Practice Tip:* This can be done on snow, grass or carpet. It can also be done with only one ski on (particularly for beginners to help teach edging) or on a snowboard with one foot out. It's a fun way to break up a practice!