



Get Off the Couch and On the Slopes!

Snowboarding & skiing are the hottest ways for kids to enjoy the season

By Jeff Lewin, Director of Blizzard Ski & Snowboard School

As any parent knows, the start of winter brings thoughts of how to keep your kids from climbing the walls for the next five months. While Minnesota's long snowy season may inspire your own dreams of curling up in front of the fire, active and fun outdoor pursuits are great for the entire family. And with health issues such as childhood obesity on the rise, winter is a perfect time to get your kids (and yourself) moving!

Skiing and Snowboarding

Skiing and snowboarding are huge. Ski areas have reported record numbers across the country, especially among younger participants. Skiing and snowboarding are individual sports and everyone progresses at their own pace. Both sports enhance coordination and balance and give kids a chance to experience a workout that's as exhilarating as it is fun.

Perhaps best of all, snowsports like these are something everyone in the family can enjoy. When children know how to be safe on the slopes, it opens up exciting new opportunities for outdoor adventures to enjoy as a family.

If you're like many parents, you may have concerns about your child trying skiing or snowboarding. Will she like it? Is it safe for him? Is it expensive? How can you find qualified instructors?

A Blizzard You'll Welcome

The answer is as close as Blizzard Ski & Snowboard School, a Twin Cities' institution since 1958. Blizzard teaches snowboarding and downhill skiing to kids in kindergarten through 12th grade. Blizzard boasts an avid following of families who can't imagine going through a winter without this traveling ski and snowboard club.

Blizzard has a simple recipe for success: 1) Hire the very best instructors. Blizzard is a member of the Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) and the American Association of Snowboard Instructors (AASI). 2) Make it easy for local kids to learn how to safely ski and snowboard, and even easier for their parents to let them learn. 3) Have fun, fun, fun! Every trip, every time.

"Blizzard is a fun place to play and learn in a loving, friendly, and caring organization," says the mother of an 11-year-old who tried skiing and snowboarding for the first time last year. "She comes home happy, and that's really what matters."

The Weekend Caravan

Blizzard is a traveling school, which means that every weekend from November-March, their buses stop in nearly 15 towns from Otsego to Mendota Heights, Shoreview to Chaska. Each bus is supervised as it takes groups of young skiers and snowboarders for day trips to Wild Mountain, Powder Ridge, Welch Village and other local winter hot spots.

Says a Blizzard mom whose 9-year-old son has been attending Blizzard for 2 years, “Blizzard has more bus stops, in more convenient locations, than anyone else. And if we have other commitments, Blizzard makes it easy to not feel guilty if we choose to do a family activity one week, or if Tyler wants to go to a birthday party. We don’t pay for trips we miss.”

Did Someone Mention Payment?

Skiing, snowboarding, daytrips...sounds expensive, right? An eleven-week membership is remarkably affordable, breaking down to under \$15 per supervised hour. (That’s cheaper than a babysitter!) Regarding equipment, many local shops like to engage in the community and build long-term relationships with families. Many ski and snowboard shops offer “buy back” programs. The shop will literally buy your gear back at the end of the season and apply the amount toward your purchase for next season. A select few shops also offer season-long rentals or host equipment swaps, which can be a great place to get used gear at huge savings.

Why Ski or Snowboard?

Your child may have his or her own answer (“It’s cool,” “It’s fun,” “I just want to try it”), but parents are often surprised at the changes they see in kids who learn to snowboard or ski. Many professional educators believe children gain confidence from athletics, and that learning an individual sport helps kids set goals, improve focus, and achieve success.

“My son didn’t have a lot of self-confidence,” says one Blizzard dad. “He’s quiet and not a real popular kid. But because of Blizzard, when his class went on a ski trip with school, he skied down a black diamond run and his whole class was at the bottom cheering him on! He was so happy!”

Sounds like a great reason to get off the couch and on the slopes this winter!

For more information about Blizzard, call 763.559.3343 or visit www.blizzardmn.com

Jeff Lewin is a member of PSIA-AASI Central Region. He is an internationally certified ski and snowboard instructor and owns Blizzard Ski & Snowboard School with his wife, Jennifer. They have three children and live in Minneapolis.