

**Chapter 4**  
**Teaching**  
**Nordic**

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# Teaching Skiing - Nordic

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Outdoor for All uses the American Teaching System (ATS) as the foundation for our approach to teaching people how to ski. ATS is a system based on years of experience and research by numerous skiing professionals and incorporates contemporary skiing techniques and mechanics, as well as teaching and learning theory. The system is intended to provide guidelines and models to help ski instructors evaluate a student's skiing and guide them to improvement.

ATS represents both the art and science of ski teaching. This system consists of three components: the Teaching Model (teaching and learning theories), Skiing Model (technical skiing mechanics), and Service Model (customer relations). The purpose of ATS is to provide flexible guidelines for you to use to become a more successful instructor.

Exceptional teaching is a blend of science and artistry. The science is the *what* of a lesson, the technical content. The art is the *how* of the lesson, your ability to present the lesson material in an interesting way. Good instructors combine both the art and the science to teach sound fundamentals in a fun, enjoyable way. It is through ATS that you can find the tools and models needed to be a good instructor and find that blend of art and science.

For more detailed information about ATS, consult the PSIA *Alpine Manual*.

## The Philosophies and Principles of ATS

- ◆ **Student-centered teaching** — The student is the focal point of the lesson.
- ◆ **Outcome-based education** — Establish achievable goals and teach based on them.
- ◆ **Experiential learning** — People learn by doing.
- ◆ **Learning partnership-based** — Both student and instructor have an active role in a successful lesson plan. Involves listening, feedback, and checking for understanding.
- ◆ **Guest service-driven** — Our students are guests. Treat them as if you want them to come back.
- ◆ **Teach from the heart** — Can't fake this one! They won't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

### The goal of every lesson: "Safety in a Fun Learning Environment"

- ◆ **Safety** — Use common sense and be aware of your surroundings.
- ◆ **Fun** — Comes from loving what you do and sharing it with others.
- ◆ **Learning environment** — Keep your plan simple and while teaching, be prepared to learn from your students, your peers, and your mistakes.

## The Service Model

The basic principle behind the service model is to treat the skiing public like guests that you want to come back. Remember that our students are our guests and should be treated accordingly.

Our students are paying for their lessons, and they deserve the best.

Make the effort to try to understand your customer and to provide exceptional customer service. Why is he or she taking a lesson? How can you plan to meet the customer's expectations? What can you do to make sure the customer is satisfied?

### **Components of the Service Model**

- Assess the customer's needs and motivations.
- Propose a plan for meeting those needs.
- Provide the service.
- Close the transaction by summarizing what was learned.
- Follow up with the customer.

### **Five Secrets to Success**

- See yourself from the customer's perspective.
- Be an active listener.
- Positively exceed expectations.
- Recover from service inconsistencies.
- Have fun doing what you are doing.

One key to exceptional service is understanding your customers. As adaptive instructors, we need to address more than just the student's disability and ability levels. We must take the time to communicate with our students and to form an appropriate lesson plan. Consistent two-way communication is the best way to reach and maintain a good understanding of your students.

- To ensure that you'll be understood, use simple, clear wording rather than technical terms or jargon when talking with your students. Speaking simply also lessens the chance that guests might be intimidated by what may come across to them as arrogance or an uncaring effort to be impressive.
- Form open questions that start with words like how, why, which, or tell me, so that people aren't limited to one-word responses. When your students reply, practice active listening by nodding, smiling, and using other positive body language. Make sure you don't interrupt.
- Focus on your student's words and messages and then ask questions or repeat important points so you clearly understand what they're saying. Remember when you're talking and listening that 80 percent of communication occurs through tone of voice and nonverbal cues. If you stay focused while listening, you will pick up these cues, and you also will be more aware of the messages you are sending.

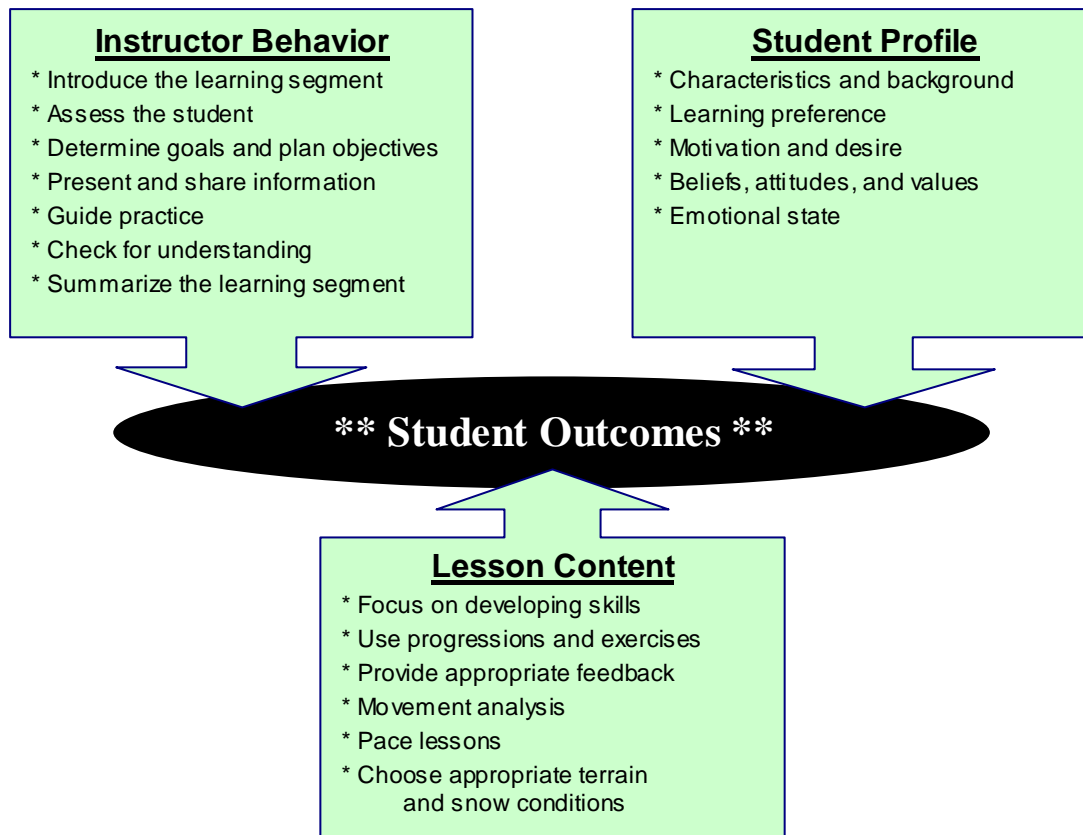
By creating an ongoing exchange of thoughts and feelings during the lesson, you will be certain to accurately assess and understand what your students expect from you, and then you'll be better able to exceed their expectations.

For the full text and more information about the service model, see the *PSIA Alpine Manual*.

## **The Teaching Model**

The ATS teaching model provides a framework for planning ski lessons and making professional decisions about how and what to teach so your student can meet his or her goals. The model is based on learning and teaching theories and provides guidelines to help you organize your class and present material most effectively.

The teaching model addresses the people involved in a lesson, including your behavior as an instructor and how you deal with the student's behavior. The teaching model helps you identify and meet the needs of your student. There are three areas that impact student outcomes: Instructor behavior, Student profile, and Lesson content.



The ATS teaching model can be used in sequence or as needed. For the new instructor, sticking to the model in sequence allows you to become familiar with the parts and their relative importance. As you become more comfortable with the teaching model, you may find that you can be a little more flexible with the order. No matter how you use the teaching model, be sure to use all the parts.

The purpose of the teaching model is to help you create a learning partnership with your student. This partnership is based on the student's behavior, your behavior, and your ability to tailor the lesson to meet the student's needs.

Each lesson should be focused on the individual and geared toward allowing that student to reach his or her full potential. Creating the learning partnership is the corner stone of teaching skiing. The components of the teaching model help you provide a quality lesson.

### ***Components of the Teaching Model***

- **Introduce the learning segment** — Clearly outline the agenda and establish lines of communication. Build rapport with the student and create a fun, supportive learning environment.
- **Assess the student** — Evaluate the student to determine how to structure individualized, effective lessons. Identify what the student brings to the lesson, including physical, cognitive, and social skills. What other sports or activities can you draw on to help communicate your lesson? Determine the student's expectations, goals, motivations, concerns, limitations. In adaptive skiing, conduct a thorough evaluation of the student's disability and how the equipment or lesson should be adapted to meet the student's needs.
- **Determine goals and plan objectives** — Based on your assessment, work with the student to set goals for the next learning segment. Create a logical lesson plan to achieve goals and share it with the student. When appropriate, use a warm up run to determine where to jump into the progression. Always review an old skill on an old hill before introducing new materials.

- **Present and share information** — Keep it simple and to the point. Choose appropriate terrain. Perform clear, consistent demonstrations. Pace information, practice, and feedback to keep the lesson fun and students motivated. Many new instructors with beginner students use command or task style teaching to help keep the lesson on track and avoid distractions. Teach safety and courtesy in every lesson.
- **Guided practice** — Provide quality mileage. Provide positive, specific feedback as you communicate the important aspects of the learning segment. Allow the student time to own the skill. Guide practice using appropriate guiding, hands-on assistance, and tethering. Types of feedback: Positive feedback (“Do this”), Descriptive feedback (“You did this and it resulted in this”), Prescriptive feedback (“Next time, do this by trying to do this”).
- **Check for understanding** — Determine the students’ level of understanding by observing their performance or having them tell you what they understand. Ask directed, open-ended questions and review material throughout the lesson.
- **Summarize the learning segment** — Review the lesson goals and the level of accomplishment. Finish on a positive note, preview the next lesson and encourage further development.

## Learning Styles

People have different ways of absorbing and processing information. As ski instructors, we need to be aware of the different styles of learning. It is our responsibility to create a learning partnership with each student. Being able to identify the student’s learning style helps us create a lesson that will be more effective.

We use four classifications of learning styles:

- **Doer** — Doers tend to be practical and want to experience a new task more than hear about it. Doers learn best by experiencing the task themselves through trial and error. They don’t want to stand around listening to lectures; they want a concrete experience.
- **Watcher** — Watchers are visual learners who want to see good demos, ski accurately and at task level. Watchers learn by seeing others do it before trying to imitate it. They want to hang back and watch and think about the task before trying it. Use verbal images when explaining. Direct the watcher to what they should look at and allow the opportunity for reflective observation.
- **Thinker** — Thinkers are often auditory learners who want clear, concise descriptions. They want to understand “why” they are performing a task; they need the abstract concepts to understand most effectively. Be precise and to the point. Use metaphors and words that paint a picture. Thinkers need to analyze the situation before trying it. Consider giving thinkers additional technical information on the ski lift. Ask questions to allow the thinker to verbalize and understand the lesson.
- **Feeler** — Feelers are kinesthetic learners who can tell the difference in how different tasks feel. They learn best by actively experiencing sensations. Hands on positioning (with permission) can be very effective because feelers need sensory feedback. Show and describe what they should “feel.” Feelers want to break things down and feel the pieces. Let feelers try to describe what they feel when they perform a task.

Although we all have a dominant learning style, we learn best from a variety of learning experiences. Create well-rounded lessons for your students by taking advantage of the different learning and teaching styles. For best results, use a combination of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic approaches. If a student is struggling to learn something, try presenting the material in a way that appeals to different learning styles.

Be aware of your learning style and make sure you don't over use it. Concentrate on incorporating your student's learning styles in the lesson.

**Tip for New Instructors** — It is possible you won’t be able to identify your student's prominent learning style. If you give clear consistent demonstrations and keep your lesson plan simple, you will be successful in most cases.

## Teaching Styles

Students have learning styles. Instructors have a collection of teaching styles available for presenting information. Many instructors use a combination of styles. At Outdoors for All, many instructors find that the Command style is

most effective. Choose an appropriate combination of the following teaching styles based on the lesson content, the student's abilities, and your comfort level.

- **Command** — Instructor controls all aspects of the lesson, telling the student what to do and giving feedback. This style can help the instructor stay on task. This does not mean you should be rude, it only means that you control the flow of the lesson. You present material and tasks and the student responds. Command style consists of demonstrations, explanations, execution, and evaluation.
- **Task** — Instructor establishes the parameters of a task, explains and demonstrates the task and safety issues, sets the boundaries, and then lets the student experiment with the task. Students are free to practice within the boundaries. This allows the instructor to move around and observe from different vantage points.
- **Reciprocal** — Students work with each other as partners performing and observing tasks established by the instructor. The students give each other feedback, encouraging interaction. Wrap up this segment with relevant conclusions. Be sure the students are providing appropriate feedback and practicing skills correctly.
- **Guided discovery** — Use a series of questions or experiences to guide the students to the desired results. Instructor leads the group but lets them make the discovery. To avoid ambiguity there should be only one correct answer.
- **Problem solving** — Instructor poses a problem for students to solve and then designates a time limit and work area. Students work independently or in a group. A problem may have more than one solution. This teaching style develops the ability to find alternatives, explore them and select the appropriate ones. Do a wrap up to the session to provide insights and alternatives to the students.

**Tip to New Instructors** — Stick to command and task until you have a thorough understanding of learning styles and lesson content. KEEP IT SIMPLE!!!

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# Teaching Skiing Check for Understanding

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1. What does ATS stand for and what is it?
  
2. Explain the following principles in relation to teaching skiing:
  - a. Student-centered teaching
  - b. Outcome-based education
  - c. Experiential learning
  - d. Learning partnership-based
  - e. Guest service-driven
  - f. Teach from the heart
  
3. The teaching model is: (pick one or more)
  - g. Designed to be used in sequence by the beginning instructor.
  - h. Designed to be flexible for the advanced instructor.
  - i. Best if all the components are used.
  
4. Place the following elements of a lesson in order with a brief description of each.  
Provide guided practice, Present and share information, Introduce the learning segment, Summarize, Check for understanding, Determine goals and plan objectives, Asses the student
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  - e.
  - f.
  - g.

5. Name the four learning styles and provide a brief description of each.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  
6. Which of the following is most important to a successful lesson?
  - j. Your level of technical knowledge.
  - k. Your ability to convey a clear, correct, consistent message.
  
7. ATS consists of three models. What are those models?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  
8. List the three areas that affect student outcomes.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.

## Notes