

Children's Ski and Snowboard Lessons Why Kids Love Them!

While visiting the Midwest ski and snowboard area called Wild Mountain, in Taylors Falls, Minnesota, we asked kids in lessons why they liked them.

What do you like *best* about ski & snowboard lessons?

- ➤ “Being outside in the snow!”
- ➤ “Doing what my parents and brothers and sisters do! I love snowboarding!”
- ➤ “Being with my friends and making new ones!”
- ➤ “Going over jumps!”
- ➤ “Riding the chairlifts!”
- ➤ “Eating snow!”
- ➤ “Learning to be a good skier!”
- ➤ “Being cool!”
- ➤ “Going fast!”
- ➤ “Bammin down all the different runs!”
- ➤ “Learning new tricks on my board!”

They were in the chalet for their mid-morning break of hot chocolate and cookies. It was cool, about 20 degrees, but they couldn't seem to get back outside fast enough! Those that weren't nervous about the interviewer were all smiling! They were into an exciting day of *all-day* FUN, which included 3 hours with their instructors.

Next we talked to some of their instructors.

What do the kid's instructors like best about the lesson programs?

- ➤ “Being surrounded with smiles for an entire day!”
- ➤ “Soaking up some of their enthusiasm like a sponge!”
- ➤ “I learn from them how to laugh like a kid again!”
- ➤ “Taking a timid kid, who's unsure of himself, and in just a few visits turning him into a *skiing machine!*”
- ➤ “Watching them *learn*, when they think they are just having fun!”
- ➤ “Seeing the excitement on the faces of their parents at the end of the lessons when the kids say, “Watch me Mom!”
- ➤ “Seeing the same kids, year after year, and watching them become *experts!*”

Then, we asked the ski area's management what type of instructors performed best with kids?

What makes a good children's ski and snowboard instructor?

- ➤ “School teachers, parents, and professional people who love the sports and have invested the time, money and energy required to become a certified instructor with PSIA, Professional Ski Instructors of America.”
- ➤ Many of our instructors have been teaching kids with us for more than 30 years!”
- ➤ “The really good ones never seem to tire of it and would rather be teaching children than adults.”
- ➤ “Often when signing up for the winter's classes, kids will ask for a specific instructor they had the year before. That's when you know you have the right instructors in your ski school staff.”
- ➤ “Teaching kids classes is hard work, both physically and mentally, and the instructors need to be not only accomplished instructors, but also know how to motivate, cause fun, and responsibly look after their class in a variety of sometimes cold, inclement, weather. They need to know when to break for hot chocolate. Warmed up the kids can't wait to get back out into the cold with a fun instructor.”

Wild Mountain's ski school is one of more than 100+ similar ski schools in the Midwest. Ski areas work hard to find, train, and keep the best instructors available for their children's lesson programs. As the kids grow through the annual lesson offerings they continue to hone their skills and gain new friends. Some move into racing programs and school competitions. This process has a positive impact on the kid's social atmosphere as well. They always have *friends to hang* with at the ski area. At Wild Mountain, after a few years of children's lessons in the Wild-Cat program, in which they grow through the learning stages of, *Kitty-Cats, Cool-Cats, Tiger-Cats, Alley-Cats, Cheshire-Cats* and *Top-Cats* kids practice, evolve techniques and expertise, learn discipline, competitive behavior, and slope etiquette as they progress. After Wild Cats, many kids choose to move into the DTeam program racing or competing in DTeam sponsored events and races. Many race throughout high school and college, which is one of the reasons the Midwest has provided many Olympians to U.S. teams.

Most parents, whose children have learned these lifetime sports, say the *slope environment* was one of the best learning environments to immerse their kids in. Best of all, they still ski and together with both children and grandchildren!

Some ways parents can help ready their kids for learning sessions?

- ➤ 75% of younger kids start on skis. They learn faster and have less trouble than with boards. Almost half of them eventually learn to snowboard as well, but it seems easier to successfully get them started, at least at Wild Mountain, on skis.
- ➤ Be on time. It is tough for children to enter a new class . . . tougher when late. Be a half-hour early for a comfy start.

- ➤ Make sure all the kids use the restrooms *before* going out. This saves lots of problems for the instructor and the rest of the class.
- ➤ Be excited both, *for*, and *with*, the kids. Enthusiasm is contagious!
- ➤ Once your children are in the class don't hover about. Out of sight is out of mind for the kids, which leaves the instructor with their full attention. This helps the instructors do their jobs.
- ➤ Dress them properly, warmly layered up, neck-gators, warm hats and gloves and goggles.
- ➤ Most ski schools today, *recommend helmets*, but do not require them. It's best to research this question *before* bringing them for their first lesson.

Most of these tips apply to kids 8 and under. Ski area's *general information* people and their websites can answer any questions you might have and it's always best to seek answers before arriving. Nothing makes a parent feel better than a smooth start to something new to their kids. Your pre-lesson actions can make that happen.

Enjoy all this FUN! You'll likely be skiing or riding with your kids for the rest of your life!

For additional information on Wild Mountain's Wild Cat children's programs;

Wildmountain.com