

# Bumps For Boomers: Ski Program Designed To Keep Post 50s On The Slopes

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Many boomers look at a mogul field, break into a nervous sweat and immediately reach for the ski trail map, praying there's an easier way down. Two runs later, they are waiting in the ski lodge with their boots off, swearing to never again spend another \$100 on a lift ticket. Sound familiar?

[Joe Nevin](#) saw the problem of boomers aging out of downhill skiing, and knowing that it is easier to keep a customer than to create a new one, decided to solve it. The answer, he said, was that boomers needed to be retaught how to ski, with accommodations made for their slower reflexes, diminished strength and stamina, and increased lack of courage. He uses a method that emphasizes balance and control over speed skiing and teaches techniques to maneuver moguls and powder snow that don't require fast reflexes or using knee movements that look like an oil-pumping piston. The courage? Well, just like the cowardly lion, it's still there; it just needs to be tapped by confidence.

Nevin came of age at various communication and marketing jobs in the Silicon Valley -- yes, Apple -- and about a dozen years ago, decided to head for the mountains at Aspen. What he immediately noticed was that around age 45, people move

differently and begin to think of skiing in a different way. They realize that their daredevil days are behind them and that if they fall and injure themselves, they won't bounce back so quickly. They see the slopes populated by younger, more athletic skiers in better shape and start to consider golfing and cruise vacations instead.

Nevin didn't want to lose boomers to a set of golf clubs or a cruise ship.

Strictly from a marketing perspective, boomers have the most money and the most leisure time in which to spend it. Keeping them on the slopes became the challenge, and thus Nevin created the [Bumps for Boomers](#) program in Aspen.

For \$1,294 for four days of instruction, those 50 and older can learn to ski more efficiently, to tackle moguls and powder with grace and ease and to end the day without back pain or knees that refuse to bend even once more.

Missing from the program are the carving techniques taught for the past 20 years by ski instructors. Gone also is the idea that skis are acceleration pedals and should be used as such. Boomer skiers start out on short skis for two days as they relearn how to balance their weight and control their skis. And with these newfound techniques, they are able to ski a full day -- getting their money's worth -- and not feel so sore and tired that they don't want to come back the next day for more.

The program is in its ninth season and is the only one designed specifically for the unique needs of boomers, says Nevin.

What about the "help me, I've fallen and can't get up" ski fear? "Actually, we rarely have anyone fall," he said. Once people have a centered stance, they feel more comfortable. Then speed control techniques are introduced.

So far, the oldest student has been 84. Most are in their 50s and 60s. The one requirement is that students should be able to ski a blue intermediate groomed run. This is a program to keep boomers on the slopes, not necessarily welcome new ones for the first time.

Last season, 87 percent of the people who took the program said it was the primary reason they came to Aspen, and 45 percent of them had never been there.

Boomers, who made skiing popular in the 1960s and 1970s, continue to be a significant demographic for the skiing industry. In fact, a study by the [National Ski Areas Association](#) found that "the percentage of people ages 55 to 64 on the slopes has more than doubled to 9.2 percent since the 1997-1998 ski season. The number of skiers 65 and older has been inching up every year as well, from 2.4 percent to 3.8 percent."

See our slideshow below for pictures and videos of Bumps for Boomers in action.

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