



# How Baby Boomers Can Ski Bumps Like a Pro

A retired corporate manager turned ski instructor helps boomers feel comfortable on challenging runs.

By [Emily Brandon](#) Dec. 15, 2008 | 12:14 p.m. EST+ [More](#)

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- Baby boomers who ski only a few times a year often stick to the immaculately groomed green runs. Joe Nevin, a 62-year-old Aspen ski instructor, thinks middle-aged skiers shouldn't shy away from difficult and mogul-strewn trails. The former Silicon Valley manager for Intel and Apple leads an instruction program called [Bumps for Boomers](#) aimed at teaching those age 50 plus to confidently ski black-diamond and bump runs. *U.S. News* asked Nevin to share his best advice for baby-boomer skiers. Excerpts:  
**Are ski areas beginning to cater to older skiers?**

Many ski areas focus on youth because youth is the future. Skiing has always been about going fast. If you look at who the heroes of this sport are, they're all racers. When you pick up a ski magazine and look at the cover, you usually see someone racing or jumping off a cliff. When you become a little older and common sense kicks in, the last thing you want to do is emulate who is on the cover of these racing magazines. If you're just a normal, average white-collar worker—an attorney or physician or someone going into an office building who only gets to ski a couple times a year—you have trouble relating to the industry. **What's the difference between teaching baby boomers and teaching younger skiers?**

I noticed that baby boomers all had a common problem that was prohibiting them from skiing off of groomed runs. It was a balance problem, a speed control problem, and it was not understanding the terrain tactics that you need when you ski off of the groomed runs. When baby boomers are up on the slopes, they're sort of struggling a little bit. We show people how to ski moguls and powder without the need for fast reflexes. The older you get, the slower your reflexes become. The steeper the ski run you're on, the faster your reflexes need to be. If you want to ski well and in control and you're using a technique that doesn't work when you get older, ultimately you are in a no-win situation. We're more concerned about balance and control than speed. We want people to be able to not beat their body up. We have a low-impact way of teaching moguls. We emphasize balance and speed and control, and we teach people using really simple language how to read a mogul run and make it simple and easily skiable. **What's the secret to successfully skiing moguls?**

To help simplify it and take the anxiety away, look at it like steps going down a hill, and just take one step at a time. Instead of thinking of it as something that is ugly that is going to eat

you up and throw you down, moguls are merely like a series of speed bumps going down a hill. Every mogul run has a virtually flat top, and that flat top is almost like a green run in the middle of a jump run. De-emphasize the troughs, and emphasize the safe places. **Are men or women typically better at skiing bumps?**

Women often outshine men. I will periodically get a call from a guy, and the call will go something like this: He will say, "I am an expert skier, and my wife is high anxiety and tentative. Do you think we could ski together?" We teach a very effective way of skiing. We use gravity to initiate turns, and we try to soften our ski edges so we can ski smoother. Women are more willing to go with the flow, and guys always have to control everything. Guys are macho. They've got a lot of muscle strength, and we'll go to a bump run and they will try to use brute strength. Skiing is not a muscle sport. It is kind of a finesse sport. We've had more than one occasion where guys are so pissed that they're throwing their poles on the ground because their wives are outskiing them. People who don't ski well are very abrupt. The more relaxed and patient you are, the better skier you are. And women are more willing to let something happen rather than control it. It applies on the ski slope as well. **Are there any special precautions baby boomers and older skiers should take?**

Balance, speed control, and terrain tactics. When you understand those three legs of the stool, you pretty much have the whole picture. We can teach people in three days to ski black diamonds without the need for fast reflexes. We show them the maneuvers they need to do moguls on green runs. We'll put little marks in the snow that represent moguls so they can learn the techniques on a nice, flat green run. Then we take them, usually about two and a half hours into the course, and introduce the moguls to them. Boomers are scared to death of getting hurt because they're not in their 20s or 30s anymore, and they're not going to bounce back like they could then. They don't want to be in physical therapy. The first thing we do is teach them how to slow down—how to use the brakes.

**What is it like to go from corporate America to being a ski instructor?**

My background is not one of a ski instructor, so I can understand and relate to people who come to ski with us, because I too worked in an office building and pushed paper around. You work 48 weeks a year to get four off. There's a bumper sticker around here that says, "My life is better than your vacation." I did the ski thing kind of backwards. Most ski instructors basically came up to the mountains to ski when they were in their early 20s and got captivated and never went and got a real job. I did 30-something years in corporate America: six years with Intel and 12 years with Apple. Then, I came to my senses, moved to the mountains, and more or less retired. I wanted to retire at age 50 because there is more to life than working in corporate America. I retired at age 52. Early on, when a lot of my contemporaries were out spending on things, I was saving. When I was working in Silicon Valley, I was teaching skiing on weekends at Alpine Meadows and Lake Tahoe. I knew I wanted to retire and ski, and I couldn't think of a better place to do it than in Aspen. **What should a retiree look for in a ski town?**

Look for a real-world town that operates 12 months out of the year and one that has a lot of cultural amenities. If you move to a mountain in the middle of nowhere, you can get cabin fever. Aspen has a very rich musical environment, a jazz festival, winter music programs, world-class hiking in the summer, and four great ski mountains. While I wanted to move to the mountains with my wife, I also didn't want to move to the outback of Alaska. I wanted to be able to eat well and have good cultural activities at my disposal.

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