

Bringing Skiing to Cai

Milestones in the Journey

No two children are the same. What worked for us may not work for you. The key point is that they need to enjoy it. Keeping children warm, rested and fed will do more than any technique we discuss below.

I needed Cai to enjoy skiing! I wanted him to want to value time in the backcountry as much as I do. If I am honest, these were non-negotiable. The pressure was on to get this right first time. Here is how I went about it.



Cardboard Skis
This was inspired. I watched as he was learning to walk and as his feet pointed forward and his arms came down to his sides I made him some skis from cardboard and duck tape to shuffle around the house. These were so important in our family story that we still have them.



Plastic Skis
Another inspired move. This time using negative psychology so that he asked for a pair of plastic skis. The ones with plastic edges, patterned bases and that can be used with snow boots. These were used for a number of years both backcountry and in resort.



Back Yard
To make sure we used the skis regularly, we made a circuit and kicker in the back yard by piling snow. I also took Cai in the chariot when I went skate skiing and put him on skis between my legs on any descents.



Hula Hoop
The hula-hoop is a great tool. It provides distance from you and your little skier. Unlike a harness it tends to keep them out of the back seat and consequently sets them up for better posture and balance. It also allows you the opportunity to teach them rotation. By turning the hoop you initiate their turn. We constantly repeated the mantra "across the hill sloooow, down the hill fast.



Magic Wand
This was a length of dowel wrapped in hockey tape. Once he had rotational turns down and could safely navigate the hill we went to the next level. By skiing side by side with both of us holding onto the dowel we shaped edged turns and shared the timing of the forces in the turn. We also started jumping.



Telemark Skis
OK. So telemark is so last year. The thing is it is cheap to equip kids for backcountry. Cai also loved the sense of freedom moving around the ski resort without his heel incarcerated. These guys opened up a whole new world for us. One where the dog was invited.



Hut Trips
We had been taking friends and their fathers out backpacking for a while. This was better. Filling a hut with families was an incredible amount of fun. Sharing what children are capable of while indulging in a simple lifestyle, untouched snow and all sorts of games was brilliant. Yes it requires some knowledge and organization to do it safely but all the families we encouraged will remember these trips for a long time.



Backcountry Progressions
Our dog Baggins needs a lot of exercise. He also loves to be out in the snow. We got him when Cai was 9 and this has been the biggest single inducement for Cai to ski in the backcountry. Who doesn't love to see their dog both happy and running wild. What it means is that Cai has skied longer and longer distances, with bigger objectives and in harder conditions. I consider myself pretty lucky to do this with my son.



Manipulation and the art of raising kids who love what you do.	Adventure & holding a space for our children: Pt 1	Adventure & holding a space for our children: Pt 2		Stories: Serious sages for any occasion		Teaching balance and rhythm	Family hut trips: A love story	Some thoughts on backcountry skiing
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This has been quite the fantastic journey. It is though an investment. Seven + years realistically. I have seen many children driven from the things their parents most hope they will be drawn to. The secret has always been meeting Cai in his world and then luring him into mine. For skiing this was done by channeling my inner pirate and committing to finessing my manipulation skills. The links above will describe what we did in more detail.