

Team Tip

Think back to your snow days before sidecut. Can you remember the high degree of precision needed to get an “old straight” (conventional) ski to carve? The amount of patience required was almost exhausting, and it seemed that your movements needed to be laser guided. And to get both skis carving, well, that was almost otherworldly. Even round, consistently skidded arcs could be accomplished by only a select few in the upper echelons of skiing. The rest of us were forced to pivot and skid our way through life.

Thank goodness sidecut evolved during this lifetime! We’re no longer forced to skid along random tangents as we make our way down the mountain. We mortals are now able to enter the world of the elite and start to scribe thin lines in the snow. Heck, carving on today’s sidecuts has become so easy that just about anyone can stand nearly anywhere on a ski, happen upon an edge, and enjoy the ride as the ski turns. (Not long ago, making those movements on long, straight skis would have had markedly less favorable results.)

Have You Lost Your Direction?

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Have we forgotten what quality movements are? Sidecut is meant to accentuate and reward good movements, not bail us out when we move badly. You could argue that shaped skis reward fuzzy fundamentals. Instead of building a solid set of skills and later reaping the benefit (the formerly elusive carve), we hit the hill and lay down some impressive tracks with hardly a thought about what really makes a good turn.

Has modern ski design allowed a generation of skiers to forget that the art of the sport lies in the quality of what we call “directional movements”? For me, directional movements are how I stay balanced, keeping me out in front of each turn with my center over my feet. The actual direction can vary slightly—depending on what you want to do based on your understanding of the situation at hand and your abilities. For the most part, though, moving forward and slightly to the inside at the start of each turn is a good place to aim.

To better understand directional movement, review the prerequisites

that follow, and then try the exercise described below.

THE PREREQUISITES

Balance, strength, and athleticism are huge components of quality skiing, including directional movements. The following are a few basic movements that you need to be able to handle before tackling the actual drill. These prerequisites may take practice; don’t be discouraged if you need to work on them first. Practice the next three exercises both statically and in a traverse.

1. Can you balance on the edge of one ski...on the flats, on a pitch, statically, on your uphill edge? If not, set this as an intermediate goal and practice.
2. Can you stand on one leg from a low position and then extend that leg to stand up? If not, you need to work on your leg strength.
3. Can you stand on one leg and roll your foot from your little toe to your big toe? If not, practice this fundamental athletic movement.



Photo 1



Photo 2

THE DRILL

Find a groomed intermediate run and ski at moderate speed when performing this drill.

1. Start in a basic traverse position with your weight on your downhill ski (photo 1).
2. Without moving your hips forward, shift your weight to the uphill edge of your uphill ski, and lift the downhill ski off the snow (photo 2).
3. Glide for about a ski length on your little-toe edge.
4. Now extend that uphill leg so that your hips are over your feet (your base of support), and balance there for an instant (photo 3).
5. Keep moving forward and slowly move to the inside of the turn. Your ski should want to seek the fall line (photo 4).

The goal here is to get that ski to carve.

Your feedback should be internal and immediate. When you get it right, you should feel strength in your stance, the positive pull of a ski tip carving into the fall line, the ability to hold your inside ski

off the snow for as long as you want, and a feeling of being connected through your body to your ski. Trust me: You'll have an "Oh yeah!" feeling when you get it right.

MOVEMENT ANALYSIS CUES

If you don't find success with the drill, here are a few factors that may be to blame.

1. If you fall to the inside, you have shortcut into the turn too abruptly.
2. If you lean on your pole so hard that it feels like it's about to snap, you've moved to the inside too far, too fast.
3. If your arms beat the air like the wings of hummingbird, it's a good bet that you don't really know where your hips are in relation to your feet.
4. If you feel your calf plastered against the back of the boot, you're sitting way too far back.
5. If you have to pivot your ski and it really never gets out from underneath you, you're out of balance.
6. If you can't continue to shape the rest of the turn, you're not moving with your ski.

FOUND THE DRILL TOO EASY?

Here are some elements you can play with to increase your level of difficulty and further heighten the accuracy of your directional movements.

1. Leave your poles behind.
2. Take one ski off.

3. Continue the carve until your skis point uphill.
4. Experiment with skis with different amounts of sidecut.
5. Go slower.
6. Try it off the groomed runs.
7. Practice on side hills and slopes with double fall lines.

As you practice this drill, you should be able to zero in on the optimal directional movement and sensations that make you feel successful in the prevailing conditions. Keep in mind that because snow conditions, steepness, and terrain are constantly changing, your directional movements will also need to shift to help you stay in balance.

Good directional movement is what allows you to stay balanced over and against your skis—and what can keep you from having to make abrupt adjustments. When you know what shape of turn you want to make, understand what the equipment on your feet is capable of, and let your body respond in the right direction, round, clean arcs (carved or skidded) become a given. The next time you hit the snow, make your sidecuts do what they were designed to do—enhance solid directional movements—rather than compensate for fuzzy fundamentals. **32°**

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