

## Ready for Adaptive Tricks? by Pat Messner

Summer is almost here and once again we are dusting off the water skis and heading for the lake. Everyone is anxious to get out on the water. So, what's stopping you?

For those of you who have been skiing for a while and are getting bored with slalom, how about trying trick skiing?

There is a full range of equipment available to all people, regardless of their disability. People who are paraplegic use something called a sit ski, while others, including the blind and those with amputations can use regular ski equipment, with a possible modification or two. Contact your provincial or national water ski office to find out where you can take part in SkiAbility. This is a program designed to introduce water skiing to those with a disability.

All categories except MP skiers can use a regular trick ski. You just need to make sure that the width is no more than 30% of the length. MP skiers should get a wakeboard, preferably one without grooves, attach a mounting plate using extra screws into the ski or the wakeboard binding holes, and place your cage from the slalom ski into place over the plate.

If you are planning to trick ski as much as slalom, you might want to invest in an extra cage since the sling may sit differently for each type of skiing. Use a wooden dowel under the ski while the skier is sitting in place in order to position the cage.

The ski should not be tip or tail heavy and you may find that the cage has to be slightly back.

The sling should be slightly lower than slalom but can be moved up as the skier improves. The hips should be well below the top rail. You can lower one side 1 to 2 inches to adjust for scoliosis or hemiplegia. It should be lower on the weaker side.

The water start is a little more difficult, since you don't have as much ski surface in the water. You can start with your hands in position by your ankles as you would for slalom or you might find it necessary to place the handle between your knees, leaning your head back into the water, looking up and holding the sides of the cage with your hands.



It is very important to keep the tip of the ski up or you will drag down into the water applying tremendous pressure on the rope. Use a quick release anytime someone is trick skiing in order to avoid damage to both skier and equipment.

Begin using a rope that is 23m (75 ft.) or longer, so that there is clear water between the two wakes, and simply get used to the ski by cutting back and forth. Your speed should be between 25 and 27km/hr.

As you get more comfortable, shorten the rope and increase your speed to 28km/hr so that you are cutting through both wakes. If you want, try the slalom course! Lastly, shorten the rope so that you sit just before the rooster tail where you still have two distinct wakes (about 12m or 35' off), and attempt to cut and jump over both wakes. Wait till you feel the lift of the wake before you add your own version of a jump. Congratulations! You have just earned your first 40 points. Before you know it, you'll be doing somersaults and the wakeboarders will be jealous!

The same applies to stand up skiers. Practise, practise, practise by spending lots of time cutting back and forth and riding the trick ski. Once you are comfortable, proceed to actual tricks starting with the side slide (ss) and moving on to 180°, 360°, and so on. Keep your hands close to your body, lead with the head and eyes and maintain a slight lean away from the boat when in a backwards position.

So get out there, and double your fun, by adding another event to your adaptive skiing!

*Pat Messner is Canada's National Adaptive Team Coach and operates Mesle Water Ski School. She welcomes queries for further coaching tips at 613-253-0500 or via their web site [www.waterskirideau.com](http://www.waterskirideau.com).*