

THE SKI.COM DICTIONARY

A

- **Alpine skiing:** Downhill skiing where the toe and heel of the boot are fixed to the ski.
- **Après-ski:** The nightlife following a day of skiing, e.g. shopping, drinking, listening to live music or relaxing in a hot tub. Learn more about the [best resorts for après-ski](#).

B

- **Backcountry skiing:** Also called off-piste or out-of-bounds, this type of skiing happens in unmarked, unpatrolled areas beyond the boundaries of the resort. Experience, avalanche knowledge and proper equipment is imperative when backcountry skiing.
- **Base:** Average depth of snow on the mountain; also the bottom of the mountain where the lodge is located.
- **Basket:** A round, generally flat, disc located near a ski-pole tip to prevent the pole from sinking too far in the snow.
- **Big-mountain skiing or snowboarding:** The style of skiing or snowboarding seen in ski movies, featuring fast, big turns on long, steep vertical descents and, usually, cliff drops.
- **Blower:** A term for extremely light snow that exists in ample amounts.
- **Black Runs:** In Europe, ski runs are classified by different colors with black indicating expert terrain.
- **Bowl skiing:** Skiing on wide bowl-shaped slopes with or without trees. See *Cirque* below.
- **Brain bucket:** A helmet.
- **Bunny slope:** The area of the mountain with a gradual decline, perfect for beginner skiers to be taught basic ski techniques. Learn more about the [best ski resorts to learn to ski](#).

C

- **Carve:** The act of digging the ski/snowboard's edge into packed snow in order to turn.
- **Catching an edge:** When the edge of a ski or snowboard accidentally digs into the snow, usually resulting in a fall or a near fall.
- **Cat-skiing:** *Backcountry* or off-piste terrain which is accessed via a snowcat.
- **Chairlift:** A type of aerial lift, which consists of a continuously circulating steel cable loop strung between two end terminals and usually over intermediate towers, carrying a series of chairs, typically with skier or snowboarder passengers.
- **Chondola:** A ski resort lift that features a mix of chairlifts and gondola cars.
- **Chutes:** Narrow sections of snow between two rock walls typically skied by expert or advanced skiers or snowboarders.
- **Cirque:** A bowl shape or amphitheater usually sculpted out of the mountain terrain by a glacier.
- **Cliff-hucking:** A move done by only experienced skiers and overly ambitious beginners in which the skier jumps off a cliff.
- **Corduoy:** Named for the ridges in the snow caused by grooming machines, corduroy is another word for groomer or groomed slope.
- **Corn:** Snow characterized by its large corn-kernel-sized granules found during the spring.
- **Cornice:** An overhanging mass of snow at the edge of a ridge or peak.
- **Couloir:** The French word for 'corridor,' a couloir is a narrow, long chute that is often the result of previous, glacial calving.
- **Cross-country skiing:** Skiing on flat terrain using self-produced power with no extra help from slopes. There are two recognized cross-country skiing techniques: "skating" and "classic" (or

“striding”). Cross-country skiing is more aerobic than alpine skiing and uses lighter weight boots and lighter, narrower skis.

- **Crud:** A type of snow characterized by an uneven surface, usually encompassing some lumps of soft powder-like snow as well as icy or slippery patches.

D

- **DIN settings:** Deutsche Industrie Normen (DIN) is a scale to ensure ski bindings release under the same force at all skiing destinations worldwide.
- **Downhill:** A speed discipline in alpine ski racing, downhill features poles (gates) which are set the maximum amount apart to increase speeds.
- **Dry slope:** Common in England, dry slopes are small ski hills made out of synthetic material that is meant to imitate a snowy surface.
- **Dump:** An unusually large or heavy snowfall.

E

- **Early season:** The beginning of ski season. Typically before the New Year. Learn more about the [best resorts for early-season skiing](#).
- **Edge:** A metal strip found on the bottom sides of skis and snowboards used for carving.
- **Ego bumps:** Small, well-spaced moguls on an intermediate slope that are generally easier to ski than those found on more difficult slopes.
- **Epic:** A day characterized by the large amount of powder or other conditions that make it unforgettable and out of the norm.

F

- **Fall line:** The line a ball would follow if rolled down the slope; the quickest route down the mountain.
- **Figure eight:** Tandem skiers whose tracks when viewed from above give the illusion of the numerical “eight.”
- **Figure eleven:** The tracks left by a skier who makes no turns.
- **First tracks:** When a skier is the first to ski an area of fresh snow before anyone else; also known as “freshies.”
- **Freeride skiing or snowboarding:** see *Big-mountain skiing*.
- **Freestyle skiing:** A skiing discipline that incorporates aerial acrobatic techniques into downhill skiing.
- **Funicular:** A cable railway in which a pair of tram-like cabs on rails moves along cables and transports skiers up and down a steep slope. Funiculars are more widely found in Europe. Learn more about the [world's top funiculars](#).
- **Funitel:** An aerial cable lift used to transport skiers. Funitels are more widely found in Europe. Learn more about the [world's top funitels](#).

G

- **Gaper:** A skier who does not understand proper on-slope etiquette, ski wear or ski technique.
- **Giant slalom:** An alpine ski racing discipline in which the poles (gates) spaced at a greater distance to each other than *Slalom* but less than in *Super-G*.
- **Gondola:** A gondola is an enclosed lift suspended from a cable to transport passengers up and down a mountain. Learn more about the [world's top gondolas](#).
- **Grass skiing:** An all-seasons skiing discipline done on grass with specialized equipment.
- **Groomed slope:** Refers to the slope terrain that has been groomed and is now smooth.

H

- **Halfpipe:** A pipe-shaped snow construction which amateur and competitive skiers and snowboarders perform tricks out of as they descend down the hill.
- **Hard-packed:** A euphemism to describe icy conditions; generally occurs with the lack of new snowfall.
- **Headwall:** A steep cliff, usually the uppermost part of a cirque.
- **Heli-skiing:** A skiing discipline requiring helicopter transportation to the highest slopes and known for providing skiers/boarders with fresh tracks.
- **Herringbone:** A skiing technique named after the marks left by skis when a skier nudges upward through the snow.

I

- **Indie grab:** An industry term for grabbing the skis or snowboard under the boot on the outside edge while executing a jump.

J

- **Jib[bing]:** Any single or combination of tricks on skis or a snowboard, generally done in terrain parks, but not limited to that.
- **Jump turn:** A method of turning direction by jumping with your skis in the air; generally used in steep terrain.

K

- **Kick turn:** An about-face turn while stationary, by lifting one ski and reversing its direction, followed by the other ski.
- **Kicker:** The sharply angled end of a jump, allowing a skier or boarder to gain significant height.

L

- **Liftie:** A lift operator.

M

- **Magic carpet:** A type of conveyor or surface lift often found in beginner learning areas for its ease of use.
- **Mashed potatoes:** Wet, heavy snow.
- **Milk run:** The first run of the day.
- **Moguls:** Mounds of snow, also known as bumps.

N

- **NASTAR:** Citizen racing program with courses at many mountains allowing anyone to participate and to handicap themselves against world-class racing times.
- **Never-ever:** Someone who has never skied and signs up for a first-time ski lesson.
- **Nordic skiing:** See *Cross-country skiing*.

O

- **Out-of-bounds:** Terrain outside the boundary of the ski area with no avalanche control or ski patrol; many times these areas are illegal to ski.
- **On-piste:** "Piste" is the French word for trail or run. Therefore, "on-piste" would mean on a trail or run, typically a groomed one.
- **Off-piste:** "Off-piste" means in uncontrolled terrain, i.e. in sidecountry or backcountry areas.

P

- **Pillows:** The soft tops of moguls after a fresh powder dump.
- **Pizza:** Performed by slowly snowplowing down a slope; generally used by ski instructors when teaching young children.
- **Pond skimming:** A silly spring-skiing past-time at ski resorts in which skiers don costumes and try their best to skim across an icy pond. Check out our [guide to pond skimming](#).
- **Powder:** The "ideal" ski condition that occurs after a fresh dump of snow.
- **Pre-release:** Denotes the situation when skis unhinge earlier than anticipated.

Q

- **Quad:** A chairlift carrying four people.
- **Quiver:** A collection of ski types. For example, a full quiver of skis would include an all-mountain pair, a powder pair and a frontside pair. A one-quiver ski means it's a very versatile ski.

R

- **Red Runs:** In Europe, ski runs are classified by different colors with red indicating intermediate slopes.
- **Rockered skis:** Introduced in 2002 when the late Shane McConkey brought the Volant Spatula to market. The "rockered" shape of the ski mimics the attributes of a water ski, enabling a skier to float over a surface with minimized risk of snagging an edge. Learn more about [rockered ski technology](#).
- **Roller skiing:** An all-seasons skiing discipline generally performed by cross-country skiers as training in the off-season.
- **Rope tow:** The lift more commonly found on bunny hills and some green-rated slopes, but also found reaching difficult terrain. Also known as a surface lift because the skier/snowboarder keeps their skis/snowboard on the snow and holds onto a rope which pulls them up the hill.
- **Rail slide:** A technique performed by sliding skis or a board across a metal or wooden rail, generally done in terrain parks.

S

- **Shaped skis:** Relatively new and improved skis characterized by some form of an hourglass shape, and designed for easier turning.
- **Schuss:** To ski down the slope without turning.
- **Six-pack:** Six seated chairlift.
- **Ski in ski out:** Lodging on or near the slopes allowing skiers to ski in and out of their accommodations. *_Definitions vary by resort and should be carefully checked by a Ski.com Mountain Vacation Specialist.
- **Skijoring:** The winter recreation activity of being pulled over snow by a dog, horse or a motor vehicle.
- **Ski lift:** See *Chairlift*.

- **Ski touring:** A form of skiing where both uphill and downhill travel is possible without needing to remove skis. Typically, ski touring is done in the *Backcountry* or off-piste, and skis, bindings and boots allow for free movement of the heel to enable a walking pace.
- **Skins:** Used in *Ski touring* and *Uphilling*, adhesive backed strips of fabric stick to your skis or splitboard and have tiny rearward facing directional hairs to let you slide forward without slipping back.
- **Slalom:** An alpine ski racing discipline in which the poles (gates) spaced more closely than those in *Giant Slalom*, *Super G* and *Downhill*, necessitating quicker and shorter turns.
- **Slush:** Melted, wet snow prevalent during spring skiing.
- **Slopeside:** See *Ski in ski out*.
- **Slopestyle:** A freestyle discipline in which athletes' ski or snowboard down a course with a variety of obstacles including rails, jumps and other terrain park features.
- **Snowboarding:** Skiing on one "ski" which is wider and shorter, with both feet fixed in a position similar to surfing or skateboarding.
- **Snow plough:** A braking maneuver whereby skiers move their ski tips to form a triangular shape also referred to as a wedge or pizza.
- **Snorkeling:** When powder runs up the body and blurs a skier's vision. This is what powder skiers live for.
- **Stem christie:** A basic turn begun with a wedge and completed by skidding on both uphill ski edges until your skis are parallel.
- **Super G:** Like *Downhill* alpine racing, Super G is a "speed" event, in contrast to the technical events *Giant Slalom* and *Slalom*. The poles (gates) are closer together than Downhill, however.

T

- **T-Bar:** See ropetow
- **Telemark skiing:** A skiing discipline where the heel of the ski is not fixed and requiring a different technique from alpine skiing.
- **Terrain park:** A maintained area with a variety of jumps, half-pipes, rails and other obstacles.
- **Tram:** Also known as aerial tramway or cable car, a tram is an aerial lift that transports skiers up the mountain in a contained cab on a cable. Learn about the [world's top trams](#).
- **Traversing:** Moving horizontally across a slope so as to lose or gain a minimal amount of elevation.

U

- **Unweighting:** Taking weight off the ski, usually prior to a turn.
- **Uphilling:** Similar to *Ski touring*, but not specific to a *Backcountry* excursion. Many "uphillers" will "Skin" up the ski resort for exercise.

V

- **Vertical drop:** The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of the mountain or slope. Learn more about the [longest, lift-served vertical drops at North American ski resorts](#).

W

- **Whiteout:** Limited visibility due to snow, fog or flat light.
- **White room:** See Snorkeling.
- **Wind Buff:** A snow condition that is created by an abundance of wind blowing loose snow onto a leeward aspect.

- **World Cup:** International races for all disciplines including alpine, cross-country, ski jumping, freestyle skiing and snowboarding and more.

X

- **X-C:** An abbreviation of *Cross-country skiing*.

Y

- **[Skiing] Yard sale:** A major fall resulting in the skier/snowboarder's clothes or equipment being strewn all over the hill – mimicking a yard sale.

Z

- **Zig zag:** Traversing across a slope in a “z” formation.