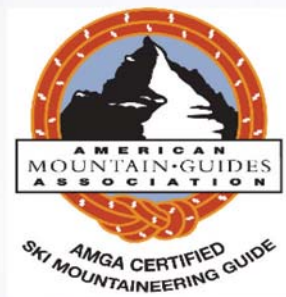




Ski Guides Course Manual



American Mountain Guides Association

**A M E R I C A N
M O U N T A I N • G U I D E S
A S S O C I A T I O N**

Ski Guides Course Manual

Published by:
American Mountain Guides Association
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Boulder, Colorado 80306
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This manual is the product of the volunteer work, assistance and advice of many AMGA guides and program instructors. Special thanks go to Freddy Grossniklaus, Rob Hess, Jean Pavillard, Mike Powers, Howie Schartz, Bela G. Vadasz, Art Mooney and Martin Volken, the members of the AMGA's Technical Committee and special thanks to Alain Comeau for the production of this manual. Most importantly, the AMGA thanks those course participants, past and present, who have supported professional guides training.

Cover photo courtesy: Gabe Rogel Doug Coombs, La Grave, France

In Memory of Doug Coombs and Chad Vanderham

Revision: 2008
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Introduction

A.M.G.A. Ski Guides Course

The Ski Guide Course is designed for skilled skiers who wish to learn the skills and techniques used while guiding from a lift-served and backcountry environment.

The course addresses the skills in an off-piste and backcountry, non-glacial environment, often addressing the challenges of high-season winter snow conditions. Emphasis is on maximizing client rewards through a ski-centered experience, while effectively managing risk.

There will be many lessons and skills sessions in the course. Techniques will be presented and you will be given opportunities to apply the skills.

In addition to time at or near the ski resort, we will experience 1-day and multi-day routes with long ascents and descents with total elevation gain near 6,000 ft. Some days may involve rope training skills at local crags and steep snow slopes.

Before You Come to the Course:

Review the equipment list. Make sure to bring the required items. If you have questions call the Course Director.

Review the sample itinerary, but be prepared for adjustments due to weather and snow conditions. Read the articles about guiding in the back of the booklet. Practice the techniques presented. Do the best you can. If something doesn't make sense make a note in your booklet and get the answer during the course. If it is an urgent question or you need clarification call the Course Director.

There is a large amount of material to cover in 12 days. It is imperative that you familiarize yourself with the prerequisite material before coming. It will be difficult to cover the material in the time allotted if you are not prepared. This is not to say that if you do not understand something that we won't take the time to make sure you do, only that everyone has a responsibility to everyone else to come prepared.

Using This Booklet:

The booklet's small size was chosen so you would be able to carry it in the field during the course. There are note pages to give you space for diagrams or notes. Plan on carrying it with you all the time, even on ski tours.

Required Skills for AMGA Ski Guide Course

Knowledge and mastery of the following:

Avalanche Training and Experience:

Have completed a Four-day Level 2 avalanche course that includes stability evaluation and documentation of avalanche activity, weather and snowpack (AIARE or comparable). Candidates must be familiar and well practiced in SWAGS recording standards as they will be used throughout the course. Candidates must also be well practiced in multi-victim rescue.

Skiing Skill and Experience:

Skiers will have to demonstrate Advanced and Expert skiing skills in a variety of terrain, possibly up to 50°, and in a variety of snow conditions demonstrating a variety of turn types, speeds and skiing intensities.

Uphill techniques including track setting and a variety of appropriate kick turns. Ability to vary uphill pace from less than and greater than 1000 ft. of elevation gain per hour for as much as 6,000 ft.

Mixed Climbing Skills:

Candidates must be experienced and proficient in climbing with ice axe and crampons, utilizing a variety of techniques including self belay and self arrest, as well as safely and efficiently climb on Class 3 and 4 snow covered rock with ski mountaineering boots.

Knots: Follow through eight, figure eight on a bight, bowline, clove hitch, prussik, Munter hitch, double fisherman's, and water knot, flat overhand

Placement of traditional protection: stoppers, camming units, hexcentrics and tricams.

Belaying in a variety of terrain with belay plates, auto locking devices, (body belays).

Rappelling on multi-pitch terrain using a variety of devices (including carabiner brakes).

A working knowledge of the following:

Improvised ascending methods

Mechanical advantage systems (2:1 assisted and 3:1 mechanical advantage systems)

Belay escapes

Required Reading for all Participants:

Technical Handbook for Professional Mountain Guides: AMGA & ACMG

SWAGS: *Snow, Weather, and Avalanches: Observational Guidelines for Avalanche Programs in the United States*

Recommended reading:

Alpine Climbing by Mark Houston and Kathy Cosley

PSIA Alpine Technical Manual: Skiing and Teaching Skills

<http://www.psia.org>

Avalanche Handbook, 3rd Edition

<http://www.thebackcountry.net>

Ski the Whole Mountain by Eric and Rob Deslauriers

Ski Mountaineering Guide Cards, Brooks Range Mountaineering Equipment CO.

Course Overview:

In the Ski Guide Training Program it is difficult to adhere to a prescribed specific agenda due to variable weather and other ever changing snow conditions. Many of the lessons are adjusted and often interlaced within the ski tours and terrain travel.

The Course Director will work to include all lessons and best utilize all the learning opportunities throughout the course.

Guides Fieldbook

A Guides Fieldbook is a very important tool for developing skills. It helps create a process for daily stability evaluation, hazard assessment, tour plans, time plans, navigation plans, weather observations, avalanche activities and more. It maintains records that may be helpful to represent a guide's prudent standard of care sometime in the future.

See sample: page 28 and 30

An avalanche fieldbook and its entries were introduced to each candidate at an AIARE or similar Level 2 Avalanche Course.

Required fieldbooks can be:

- 1) 311 Level, Rite in the Rain with reference cards. Samples of commercially available reference cards are provided – <http://www.brooks-range.com>

And / or

- 2) AIARE Fieldbook Rite in the Rain – <http://www.avtraining.org>

Operational Stability Analysis

Morning and evening OSA should be incorporated into daily Guides Meetings.

See sample: page 32 and 33

Guides Meetings

Morning and Evening Guides Meeting will be conducted daily.

See an example of a template that may be helpful: page 34 and page 35

Tour Plans

Tour or route plans are helpful to create time estimates and time management plans during travel. They also help in pre-establishing recognition of slope aspect, incline and elevation to be traveled during different times of the day.

See sample: page 36 and 37


Questions:

For questions regarding your course application, payment, travel/lodging, call or email the AMGA office at 303-271-0984 or program.director@amga.com. For questions regarding the course content, equipment, or logistics contact the Course Director. Consult your course confirmation letter or call the AMGA office for the correct contact person(s).

On behalf of all the instructors we look forward to meeting and working with you. See you at the pre-course meeting.

Conduct on Courses:

Safety of all participants is paramount on these programs. Skiing and uphill climbing ability is expected.

If you feel uncomfortable with a skiing or climbing situation please let the instructors know so they can adjust the situation. If you feel uncertain about snow conditions or any other objective hazards, it's your responsibility to voice your concerns.

Be conservative at all times. This will involve the following;

- Avoid unnecessary risk to yourself as well as the group.
- In learning to become a guide, guide security, as well as client security are paramount.
- "There is no client security without guide security".