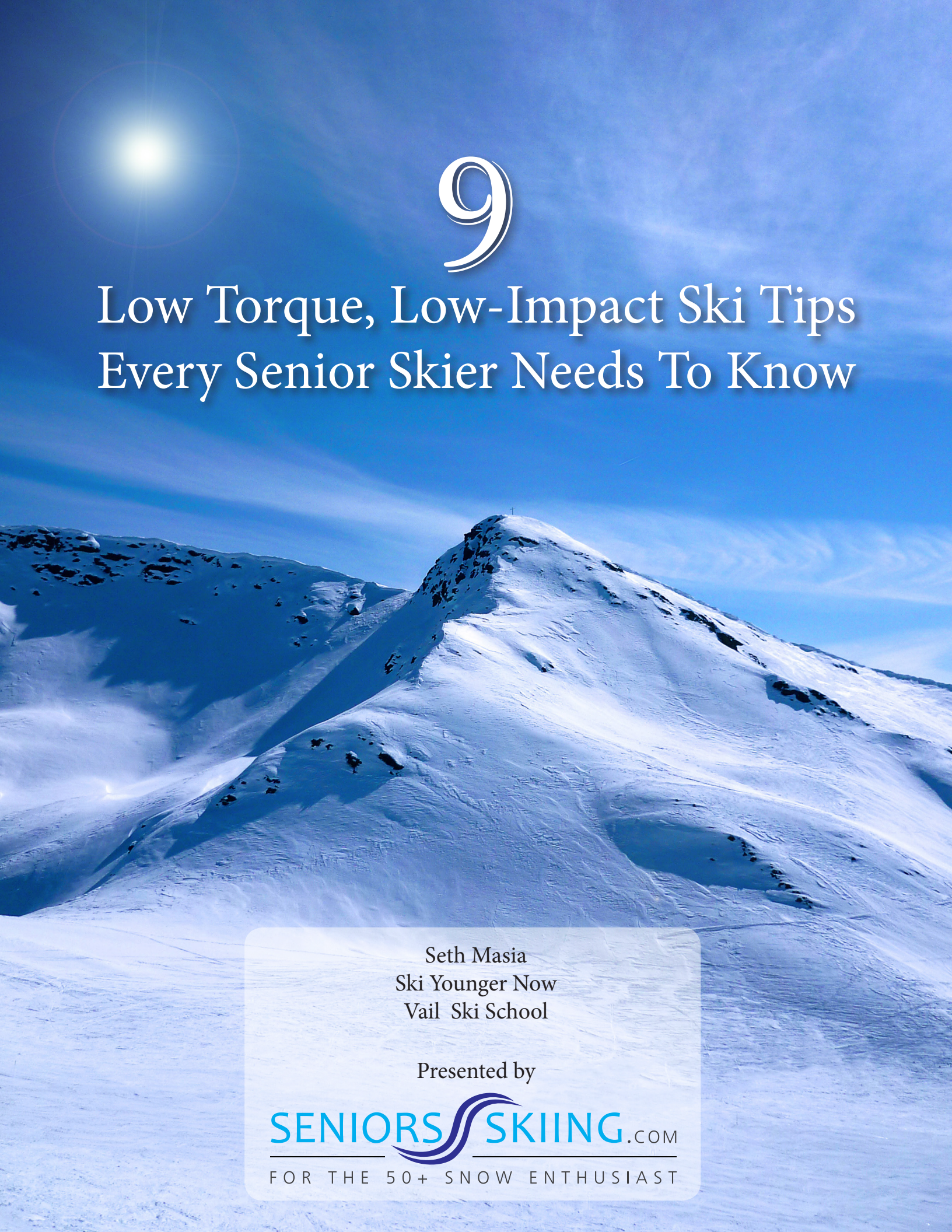

9 Low Torque, Low-Impact Ski Tips Every Senior Skier Needs To Know

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Ski Younger Now
Vail Ski School

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SENIORSSKIING.COM

FOR THE 50+ SNOW ENTHUSIAST

Ski Younger Now—the instructional program I started in the Vail Ski School—is aimed at people in their 50s and 60s (and older!) who have skied for decades. They still want to ski in control in steep terrain and moderate bumps, and they want to look good doing it. They want to ski with their kids and grandkids (and sometimes with younger spouses), and they'd like to ski all day long.

But these folks were taught to ski in an athletic style, which no longer serves them well. They no longer have the reaction times, muscle mass or joint integrity to make quick rotational moves, up-unweights, and recoveries. Critically, they often ski on reconstructed knees and hips, or deal with other old injuries.

They need to be retrained to let gravity, terrain and ski geometry do the work of turn initiation and speed control.

In working with this population I've developed a straightforward retraining progression that largely takes rotational stresses off the knees and lower back. You can't completely eliminate rotational moves but there are ways to reduce the peak torques on major joints and muscle groups.

We focus on simplifying the turn to a continuous predictable arc and reducing the frequency of recoveries, those near falls, which require extra effort and are a major source of muscle sprains in this group.

Most important, Ski Younger Now skiers learn to let the skis and terrain do the work, not the legs and lungs. They don't necessarily quit at lunch. They stay fresh and can go back out for two or three more hours.

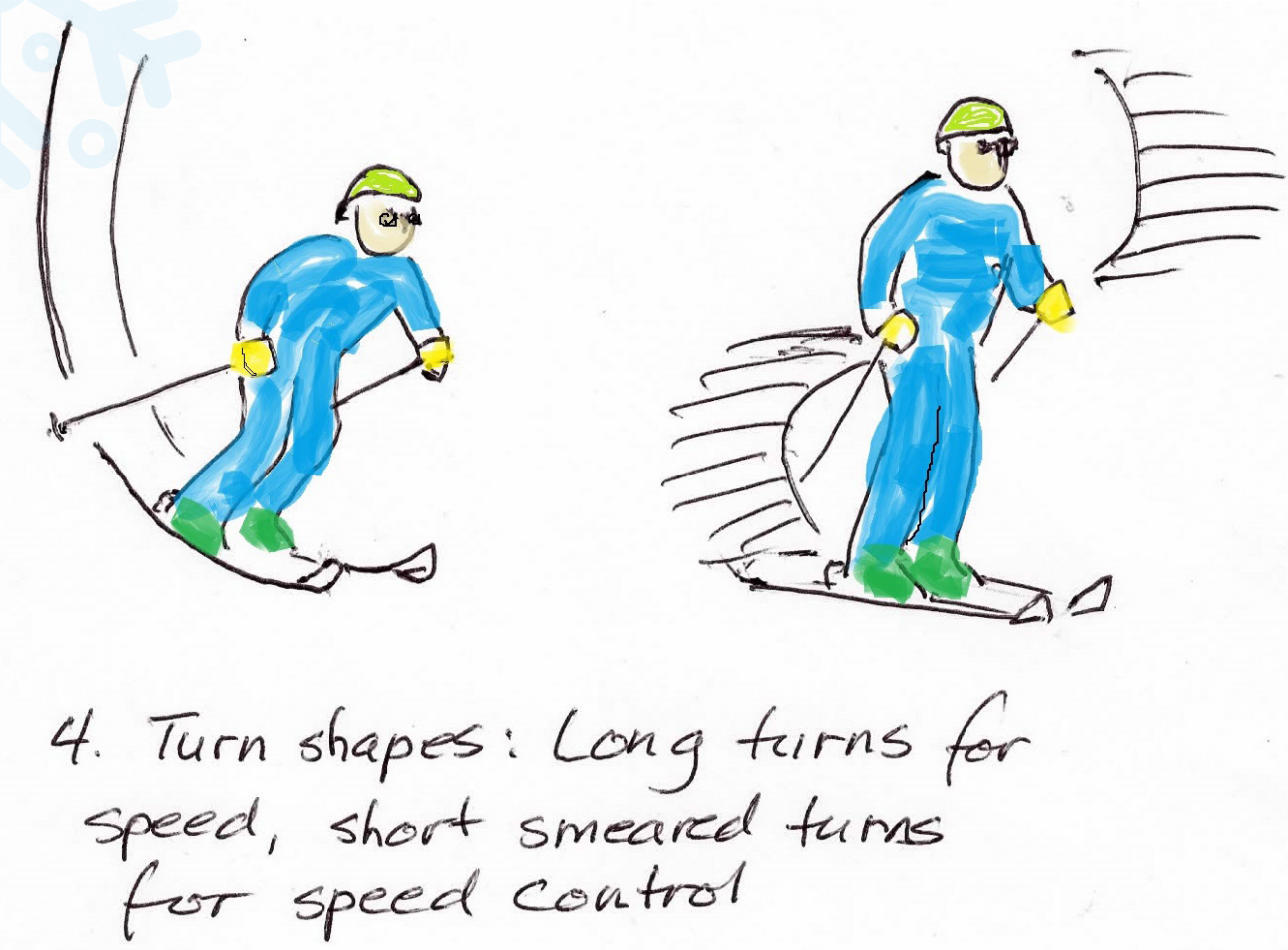
The Ski Younger Now program is conducted as a three-day workshop throughout the season (see Ski Younger Now for more details). The first day works on nine simple steps you might want to try on your own:

1

Start with the "patience turn." From traverse position, start a glide. Use a single subtle gesture to flatten the skis: Simply signal for the turn by gesturing with the downhill hand, as in signaling for a turn on a bicycle. Because modern skis are designed to seek the fall line when flattened, this gesture *by itself* begins the turn with no muscular input. As skis pass through fall line, roll onto the inside edges to shape and finish the turn, to a stop. Repeat in opposite direction.

2 **Link the turns,** returning the turn-signal hand to neutral as soon as each turn has started.

3 **The hand gesture becomes the pole-plant** gesture – it's part of the existing skill set, and timing it to flatten the skis will pay off later with an early pole plant in steep terrain and bumps.

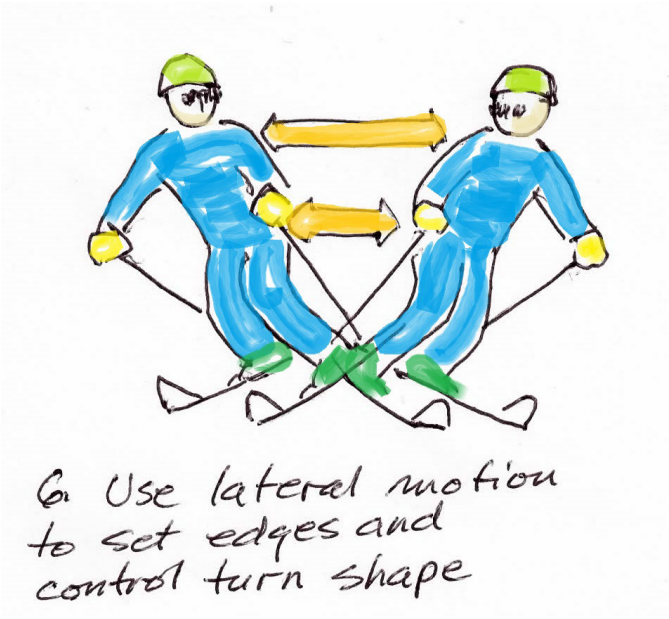


4 **Turn-shape exercises:** There are two ways to use the ski: carving (full edge engagement) and "buttering," using a flatter ski to skid or "smear" a tighter, slower turn. Use subtle edge pressure changes to move between the two styles as terrain and traffic dictate.

5 Change pressure inside the boot:

Experiment with the effects of pressure applied at big toe, metatarsal, arch, heel, and shin – and ankle roll for edging.

- Pressure applied forward (on the ball of the foot) makes the turn happen more quickly and makes for a shorter, speed-control turn.

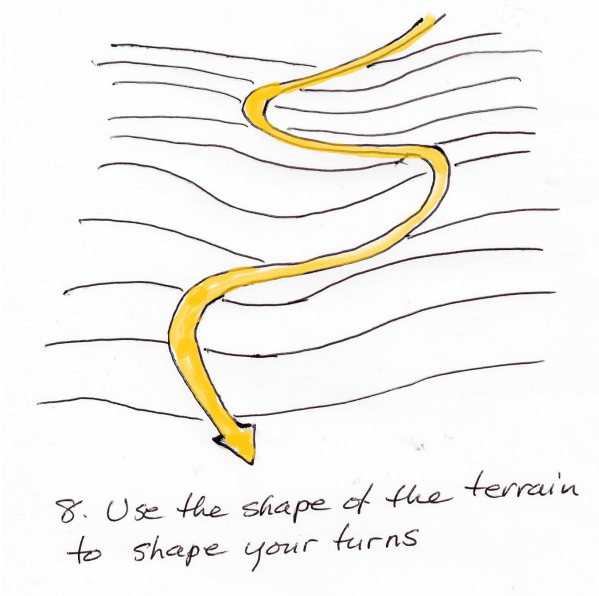


- Pressure applied at the arch applies edge control power through the center of the ski, offering better grip on hard snow especially in a medium-radius or longer turn.
- Pressure applied at the heel is an athletic move best used by expert skiers. It can get an intermediate instantly into trouble.

6 **Reduce vertical motion,** especially up-unweighting effort. Lateral moves control edge angle, and thus turn shape, much more efficiently than vertical or rotational moves.

7 **Use rhythm to build muscle memory:** Blend skills in rhythmic four-count turns. Shift from the four-count turn to waltz-time turn for steeper pitches. Use the six-count turn to carry speed across flats.

8 **Use terrain to influence rhythm and turn shape.** Find and follow routes that use terrain shape to assist turning and do as much of the work as possible. For example, banked snow can help redirect skis; convex rolls aid when unweighting. Always maintain awareness of skier/boarder traffic.



9 **Utilize smooth speed control** to reduce impact on muscles and joints. Reducing speed 10% reduces impact energy by 19%; reducing speed 20% reduces impact energy by 36%; reducing speed 30% reduces impact energy by 51%.

Seth Masia began skiing in 1968, with leather boots and wooden skis, during a climbing trip to Chamonix. In 1974 he joined the staff of SKI Magazine and worked there, as technical editor, until joining K2 Corp as product manager for alpine skis in 1993. Meanwhile, he taught skiing at Squaw Valley for nine winters. In 1994 he returned to SKI to launch the website skinet.com, which led to a three-year gig building websites for Microsoft. After earning a masters degree in environmental journalism, he joined the American Solar Energy Society, and retired as executive director in 2014. He has been teaching skiing at Vail since 1998, and serves as president of the International Skiing History Association. He begins the 2016-17 ski season as a grizzled 68-year-old with all his hair and teeth.