

MOGULS MADE EASY

Cowboy up and learn the skills to avoid getting bucked in the bumps

Ah, moguls. Why do you trouble us so? Moguls seem to represent one of the more persistent love/hate situations in all of skiing. On one hand, big bump runs seem to call to us — we really ought to be able to venture over there, no? But on the other hand, as soon as you find yourself surrounded by a sea of bumps and troughs, it suddenly seems like a bad idea altogether.

There are many tactics and techniques for skiing bumps and I could probably fill a book (or a comic book, at the very least) with all the variations. But for most of us, negotiating moguls demands two key skills: speed control, lest we go pinballing through the bump field, and balance, so that despite the 3-dimensional surface, we remain in charge of our skis instead of vice-versa.

The Basic Recipe

As you stand gazing down a mogul field, you might wonder how to best approach the run. This is especially true as the friend or family member who suggested this run disappears from view, leaving you to ponder this mystery all by yourself. For starters, aim to begin and end each turn on top of a mogul. The tops of the bumps offer a respite from the ruts and give you room to maneuver. Traverse into the run, looking for a bump with a nice broad top. Plant your pole somewhere on the top of the bump (you do use a pole plant with every turn, right?), and start your new turn with conviction. Your skis will then travel off the top of the bump, down into the adjacent rut and then back up onto the next bump. Depending on where you aim yourself, the next bump could be directly downhill of the bump you started on, or it could be somewhat across the hill. That depends on how aggressively you want to ski the run, and it really doesn't matter too much which particular bump you aim for. Use the top of the next bump to wrap up your turn, plant your pole, and head into the next turn. Huh, that sounds easy on paper, doesn't it?

Whoa Cowboy, Control your Speed!

You can always tell when someone is having a bad time in the moguls when you see them bouncing unhappily across the run, looking more like a rodeo competitor than a skier. Bumps have a sneaky way of depriving you of the opportunity to slow down. It becomes a matter of knowing exactly where you can slow yourself and doing so assertively. For basic bump skiing, the place to check your



BY KARIN KIRK

speed is at the crest of the bump, where there is room to turn your skis freely and apply the brakes. If your skis are down in the ruts between bumps, there's just not enough space to get the skis sideways. Using the tops of the bumps works out well since that's where each turn ends and it's a natural place to scrub speed. So at the end of the turn, stand on your edges a bit and let the skis skid to bring the speed down. In fact, aim to slow down a little more than you'd like. If you can ski a bump run at 80 percent of your

ideal speed you'll find yourself being proactive about speed control, which is key. By the time you are going too fast it's too late to make effective adjustments. (Yahoo, cowboy!)

Stay over your feet!

The classic mistake is to let the skis get out in front of you as they accelerate down a bump and into a trough. Sitting back is heavily penalized in the bumps, it leaves you vulnerable to the whims of the bumpy surface and it's probably the single most common cause of trouble while skiing off the groomed. The answer here is to press the tips of your skis down the face of the bump just as you are starting your turn. Stand up tall, keep your hips over your feet, go with your skis, and trust that moving forward is the right idea even if you don't like the looks of the trough you are heading into. Stay as balanced as you can through the trough, then flex your ankles, knees and hips evenly to absorb the next bump. This will feel as if you are moving toward the bump (rather than shrinking back from it). If you ski slowly, there is no need to make huge moves to absorb the bumps. So aim for controlled, balanced turns and spare yourself the pounding.

Should you come apart a little bit as you ride through the rut, remember to aim for the top of the next bump. Use that spot to slow down, get back over your feet, plant your pole and start again. With each run, you'll have dozens of opportunities to practice the recipe. Don't give up! Start slow, plan ahead and strive to stay over your feet. And don't forget to yell "yahoo!" during those moments when things get a little out of hand. It's all part of our Montana cowboy heritage. ♦

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1. Look for the top of a mogul as a place to begin your turn. Have your pole ready.



1

2. Plant your pole on top of the bump to begin the turn.



2

3. Stay tall and forward as you ski down the face of the bump.



3

4. Look for the next bump — stay forward and swing your pole to target the top of the next bump.



4

5. Use the top of the bump to scrub speed, plant your pole and continue with the next turn.



5

6. As you dial it up, add absorption to soak up the moguls so you don't get bucked.



6

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