

SKI
TIPSBy
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STEEP SKIING TECHNIQUES

You're showing your out-of-town friend the magnificence of the Schlasman's lift, proudly pointing out sporty lines left and right (notwithstanding that you may or may not have actually skied them successfully). You depart the lift, make the quick right, and face a sea of daunting moguls as the fall line drops steeply out of sight.

"How's this snow?" your friend inquires, trying a little too hard to sound casual.

"Oh, you know, rocky," you reply as you tighten your boot buckles a notch. "Well then you'd better show me a clean way down, or you'll owe me a beer for every rock I hit."

While PBRs are cheap, this route was your idea and it's up to you to show your friend a smooth line. Now is the perfect time for a handy move I call the "schmear." It's a way to take the edge off steep terrain, allowing you to ski it directly, yet conservatively.

The schmear, also called the "slarve" — sliding carve — was made popular by Shane McConkey when rockered skis first emerged. While a normal turn makes an arc in a continuous C-shape, a slarve adds a downhill drift at the end of the turn. While you're drifting, you are also checking your speed, getting over your feet, and buying yourself some time to scout rocks and other nasties in your path. It's a highly adaptable move, with many uses in steep, off-groomed skiing. Thus it's become one of my most frequently taught tactics.

Here's how you set it up.

■ Enter the turn as you typically do: plant your pole, imagine how awesome you look, and let your ski tips seek the fall line.

■ By the bottom of the turn get your skis a little more across the fall line than they would be in a normal turn.

■ Flatten your skis to get them to slide. This is a key point. If your skis are digging into the snow with a high edge angle, they'll grip rather than slide. When they grip, they'll go across the hill, which isn't particularly helpful. You want to go down the fall line, not across it. This is es-

pecially true when you're on the spine of a long bump. You can flatten the ski and schmear right down the whole thing, while in perfect control.

■ To get the skis to flatten, you need to balance over your downhill foot. Avoid leaning your body toward the hill, as we sometimes tend to do when skiing cautiously, because that will give the skis a high edge angle. So stand over that downhill ski and relax your grip on the snow. The feeling you're after is reminiscent of a slow-motion hockey stop, except you don't actually stop.

■ Stand up tall, look down the hill, and plan your next move. Don't drift for too long because it bleeds all the energy out of the turn and can make your skiing bland. Use the schmear only as much as you need it.

One of the things I love about this drifter-turn is that it allows for careful, tactical skiing without traversing or "shopping" for turns. It allows you to keep moving down the hill while still keeping your options open. It's also handy for flat light, iffy snow, or very narrow spots.

Better yet, the slarve can be seen in just about every high-end ski video that crosses your Facebook feed. You did see the one with Angel Collinson slaying Alaskan spines, didn't you? She tosses her skis sideways at key moments to adjust her line, avoid sluff, or position herself right where she needs to be. This move can be used in a calm, rational manner, or as a full-tilt, hard charging tactic. Watch from the Schlasman's lift and you'll likely see schmears of various shapes and sizes. Take the cue from your fellow skiers and add this skill to your repertoire. That way you can toast a day of clean, fun runs instead of feeling bad about all your new core shots and a friend who will no longer follow you anywhere. ♦

Karin Kirk is a ski instructor and Ridge Guide at Bridger Bowl. She definitely does not buy beer for companions who hit rocks; that's their problem. Karin can be reached at karin@kirkframeworks.com.

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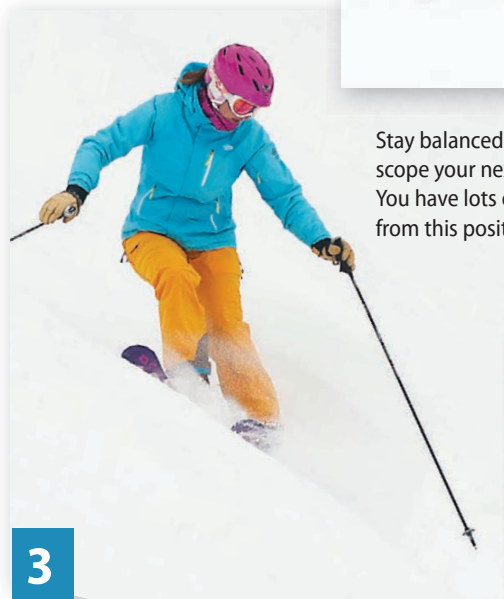
Initiate your turn off the back of the bump.

Flatten the skis and let them drift downhill.



2

Stay balanced as you scope your next turn. You have lots of options from this position.



3

Drift only as long as you need to, then move into your next turn.

4



ON A SIDE NOTE ...

Got a question or a burning pet peeve related to skiing? Send it along to Miss Mountain Manners at: karin@kirkframeworks.com and it may be featured in the next issue of Carve.