



## **Lift Riding**

There are several types of ski lift to help transport skiers and snowboarders up the hill. Before using any type of lift, it is important to be comfortable with how the lift works and how to use it safely.

### **Types of Lifts**

There are two major types of lifts that are used at most ski areas: **Surface Lifts** and **Chairlifts**.

Surface lifts are generally used for smaller hills and more gentle slopes, and chair lifts are used for bigger hills and higher slopes.

### **Surface Lifts**

A surface lift is any lift that takes a skier or snowboarder up the hill while the person is standing on the snow under their own power. There are several types of surface lifts. The most common lifts are the rope tow, magic carpet, T-bar, poma lift and paddle or cable tow.

One advantage to surface lifts is that they often (although not always) give the rider the opportunity to unload before arriving at the top. This gives an athlete the opportunity to start their run on more gentle terrain.

As the athlete prepares to unload, remind him or her to maintain a relaxed position and begin to steer the board away from the lift. Once the athlete is moving away, they can let go of the rope or paddle and ride the board and begin to skate to the desired starting point.

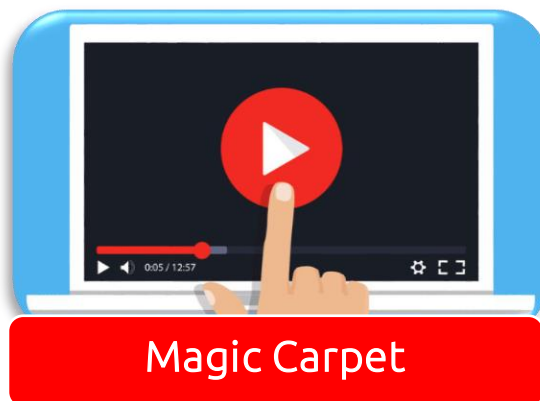
### **Magic Carpet**

The magic carpet is similar to a conveyor belt. People stand on the belt and are moved uphill. Magic carpets generally move slowly; however, there are a few tips to make riding easier. As the athlete moves into position at the bottom of the belt, have them step onto the belt with the free foot and place the board alongside the free foot using small steps. As the belt approaches the top, have the athlete begin by placing the free



foot on the snow and follow with the board. Once the athlete has regained their balance, have them skate with the board to an area that is out of the flow of traffic to strap in.

The magic carpet is very useful for the first beginners' lessons. Most of the time, these are conducted near gentle slopes, where the first drills can be done with less chance of falling. The magic carpet can be used by the athlete with very little experience. The design of the magic carpet also allows the athlete to save a lot of energy, because they do not have to walk up the hill.



## Towing lifts

Other types of surface lifts move people up the hill by towing them. Lifts that tow can be difficult for snowboarders because they must ride with one foot strapped in while the other rests on the stomp pad. Rope tows and paddle tows are looped systems that run continually uphill. Athletes are towed to the top by grabbing onto the rope or paddle.

## Rope tows and paddle tows

Rope tows and paddle tows have a loop of rope or cable that the athlete must hold onto to move uphill.



- When your turn arrives, move forward and place the board in the track pointing uphill with the free foot placed on the stomp pad.
- The body should be in a relaxed position with the knees bent. As you prepare to load, look downhill over the shoulder next to the lift.
- Rope tows do not require a specific hand placement.
- While the rope is running, gently lift it to waist height, allowing it to run through your hand.
- Then squeeze the rope using both hands until it is held firmly in your grip (the rope is not slipping through your hands).
  - As your grip tightens, you will begin to move forward.
- Look straight ahead and maintain a relaxed position.

The preparation for riding a paddle tow is similar to that used for the rope tow.

- Once in position, have the athlete reach backward down hill as the paddle approaches.
- The athlete should then guide the paddle into position as it passes and grasp the handle with both hands.
- Remind the athlete to keep their weight shifted slightly toward the back and the knees bent, because once the athlete had grasped the handle, the lift will pull them forward abruptly.
- If relaxed and ready, the athlete will be more prepared for the sudden pull.

**Tip:** If the athlete is unloading at any point other than the top of the hill, have them immediately move the board so that it is not pointing down the hill (the board should be across the fall line). This will help prevent sliding backward downhill or into the lift.



**Practice Tip:** To give the athletes practice with the balance and body position required for riding a rope tow, you can tow them using a magic stick or a ski pole (see below) before having them attempt to ride the lift.



## T-bars and Poma Lifts

T-bars and poma lifts are similar in that they pull one or two persons while they stand on the board. However, these lifts are slightly different because rather than the person holding on, they are towed by a piece of the lift that is positioned behind the legs.

It is important to note that with these types of lifts, the person being towed does not sit on the seat, but rather is pulled by it.

- As you approach the loading area, you will be signaled by the attendant when it is time to move forward.
- When signalled, skate forward and position the board so that it is pointed uphill.
- The attendant will guide the T-bar or poma seat so that it is behind the legs of the person being towed.
- As the lift begins to tow, remind the athlete to maintain a relaxed stance with the knees bent, maintain the same pressure on both feet, and allow the lift to do the work.
  - Because of the unevenness of the terrain, it may be necessary to constantly adjust your balance to keep from moving off track.
- As the lift approaches the top, a sign will indicate when it is time to unload.
  - Unloading usually takes place in a flat area.
- Firmly hold seat pole and, as you are moving forward, slowly release it.
  - The spring on the seat will move it ahead and away from you.
- When it is clear, move off to an area out of the flow of traffic to strap in.

For the first time using a t-bar lift, it is easier for the athletes if they are accompanied by a good skier or snowboarder who can ride in a straight line and offer support if necessary. For practice in using the t-bar lift, most lift stations have a t-bar without a towline to give beginners practice before attempting to ride.





## Chairlifts

All chairlifts function in a similar way, although they may vary in size, speed and the number of people carried by each chair. Chairlifts vary in size from lifts carrying two people to lifts carrying up to six. High-speed detachable chairlifts perform similarly to regular chairlifts, but the chairs detach at the loading and unloading points, making it easier to get on and off. Each chairlift has an attendant at the top and bottom to assist with loading and unloading. The attendant is also available to either slow or stop the lift if there is a problem. If you are unsure about how to proceed, ask the attendant for help!



## Lift Loading

Most lifts will have a system of ropes to keep the waiting line moving in an orderly fashion. At the end of the waiting line and prior to the loading area, each lift has a line to mark the position of the riders who will load next. As the people ahead of you are loading, it is important to pay attention and be at the line and ready to move to the loading area as soon as the previous chair is loaded. Once the previous chair has been loaded, the attendant will give a signal for the next group of riders to move forward and prepare to load.



**Tip:** Lifts normally run at a faster speed, but you can ask the attendant to slow the lift down to make loading easier and safer for beginning snowboarders.

- Have the athlete skate forward to the line indicating where the chair will load. Make sure that their snowboard is pointing straight forward uphill.
- Have the athlete assume a relaxed stance with the knees slightly bent.
- Have the athlete look over their shoulder as the chair approaches, and sit as it reaches the loading line.
- Once aboard the chair, remind the athlete to keep their snowboard pointed forward until the chair is completely off the ground.
- Make sure that the athlete is seated completely on the chair with their back firmly against the backrest.
- Once the chair has left the loading area, lower the safety bar and enjoy the ride.

### **Lift Unloading**

As the chair approaches the unloading area, raise the safety bar and prepare to unload. Remind the athlete to keep the tip of the board up and to point it straight forward. The unloading point will be marked so that you will know when to stand.

**Tip:** You can signal the attendant to slow the lift to make unloading safer and easier.

- As you approach the unloading point, have the athlete place the board onto the snow, with their free foot on the stomp pad, and slowly begin to stand.
- The momentum of the chair will push you forward and down a ramp into the unloading area.
  - You can remind the athlete that the movement used to ride down the unloading ramp is the same movement used in skating with one foot in.
- Have the athlete remain in a relaxed stance and ride the board until it stops.
- Point out that the board can be steered, if necessary, just as it was during the skating drills.
- Once at the bottom of the ramp, skate to an area that is near the run that you will be using and out of the flow of traffic, and strap in.