

HOW TO GO DOWNHILL...FAST!

By Richard Bell

Are you ready for ski season? Do you dare to look in the mirror and ask yourself “am I in ski shape?” If you’re one of the many individuals—and you know who you are—who spent their summer hitting the local pub every day for happy hour, you’re in for a surprise when you and the snow come face to face on the first run of the year.

But don’t despair. In the next nine weeks, you can convert your body into a downhill machine. Interestingly, I don’t always recommend a particular strength program just for skiing and snowboarding. My clients, for instance, train year round in such a way that I’d consider them ready for the slopes at any time. But that’s my clients. The rest of you will have to make some changes if you want to have a challenging winter on the black diamonds. So let’s do it.

1. **Step One:** People who keep a log of their daily diets and workouts make better gains and don’t become bored. It may seem like a pain, but the very act of writing what you’re doing keeps you honest.
2. **Step Two:** Vary your training. Concentrate on your weak points. One of the most common mistakes I see at the gym is people performing the same workout, year in, year out, utilizing their favorite muscles and ignoring the ones they should be working on.
3. **Step Three:** Follow my nine-week program, which I’ve broken down into three-week phases.
 - **Phase One:** To build lean muscle, do four gym workouts a week — two each for upper and lower body — and seven exercises on each of those days. You can pick your own lifts, but try to concentrate on what I call the “prime movers”: moves like squats, bench presses and dead lifts that target several major muscles in one lift. Do three to four sets, 10 to 12 repetitions. Try out the Swiss balls and unstable toys that are all over gyms these days.
 - **Phase Two:** Training intensifies. Again, four workouts per week — two upper body, two lower. Lower the number of exercises you do to four or five. Increase sets to six, lose the Swiss ball and start to go heavier—only four to six reps per lift.
 - **Phase Three:** Build explosive speed for quick turns and catching air. Only two workouts per week, and back to four or five sets. Weights are heavy—you should only be able to perform four or five reps in each set. Use medicine balls, dumbbells, and barbells, rather than machines. This is no time to let your core strength lapse.

That’s it. Head for the hills.