



Give parents a great summary, and let them know how much fun you had!

LINDA GUERRETTE

# Meet – and Inform – the Parents

## HOW TO DELIVER GREAT LESSON WRAP-UPS FOR CHILDREN'S LESSONS

By Kelly Coffey

**A** crucial element of children's lessons is the wrap-up at the end of the lesson, when parents are eager to hear how their kids did and the children are either happily exhausted or excited to share the day's adventures. The best

lesson wrap-up I ever saw was when an experienced children's instructor arrived in the parent pick-up corral, gathered up all the kids and their parents, and proceeded to get the children to join a summary of the lesson. He may as well have held a conductor's baton as his little orchestra ticked off the highlights of the day.

For his finale, the instructor followed up with each parent to give individual feedback. This instructor gave that wrap-up energy, kept it engaging, and left everyone with the impression that the kids had an amazing lesson. A strong lesson wrap-up accomplishes two main objectives: it conveys the value of the lesson and helps lock in the learnings for the student.

Children's ski and snowboard lessons have a unique dynamic; the guest who

participates in the experience (the child) is not the same guest who pays for the experience (the parent). This dynamic makes the lesson wrap-up mission critical. Oftentimes, only a very short window of time exists to communicate to the parent the value of everything you did the past few hours. Your lesson could be amazing every step of the way, but finishing off with a sub-par wrap-up will leave the parent thinking it wasn't worth the money or the child's time.

You cannot rely on a child of any age to accurately describe their experience to their parents that night at the dinner table. The question of "What did you do in your lesson?" may, at best, be answered with "Ate gummy bears."

Since the parent doesn't experience the lesson, getting inadequate information about

### IN THE ARTICLE

- ▶ A strong lesson wrap-up conveys the value of the lesson and helps lock in the learning for the student.
- ▶ Being able to deliver your wrap-up with energy will be more powerful than any words you say.
- ▶ In every wrap-up for parents, be sure to say you'd love to have the child back for another lesson.

it may cause them to fill in the gaps with their own story. That story might not be favorable to you. Therefore, it is on you, the instructor, to accurately communicate the value of the lesson to the parent.



## THE BASIC STRUCTURE: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

All instructors develop their own style when it comes to delivering lesson wrap-ups. This style is reflected by content they highlight, their delivery, and how they involve the child and the parent.

Keep a basic structure of a wrap-up in your back pocket. This gives you scaffolding and make sure you're covering the most important elements when communicating how the lesson went. The "past, present, future" structure helps keep the information organized during an often chaotic time of the day.

► **Past = the skills the child brought to the lesson.** *"Your daughter began the day linking wedge turns."*

► **Present = the activities, drills, and games you set up and how the child improved through the lesson.** *"We focused on activities that helped her match her skis to parallel at the end of the turn. She's now matching her skis in almost all her left turns. The right turns are a little more challenging for her."*



A good wrap-up proclaims success and sets the stage for the next lesson.

► **Future = a preview of what you'll work on in the next lesson to help the child develop.** *"Tomorrow, I have some great games to help her make stronger right turns and even get her matching her skis higher up in the turn so that eventually she'll be skiing parallel."*

### Add-Ons to the Basic Structure

Bring energy. Regardless of your personality, being able to deliver your wrap-up with energy will be more powerful than any words you say. There are, however, some key words that *should* be part of your summary to parents.

► *"I had fun."* This is an often-overlooked part of the lesson wrap-up. But to tell a parent you had fun with their child goes such a long way. Skiing and snowboarding are supposed to be fun; by stating that fact, you imply that the child enjoyed the lesson, too.

► *"I'd love to have your child back tomorrow."* Inviting the child back shows that you valued the time you spent with him or her. Think about a dinner party. If, at the end of the night, the host says, "We should do this again sometime," you'll feel good about the time you spent at their house. Alternatively, if, on your

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way out the door, the host just says “Goodbye,” you might fill the blank space with your own insecurities, wondering what you did to possibly offend the host. A ski school guest feels the same way. The invitation back solidifies that you and the child had a great lesson and that taking another lesson is a good idea.

## DON'T TALK ABOVE OR BELOW THE PARENT'S UNDERSTANDING

While many of the parents you speak to will be lifelong skiers or snowboarders themselves, you'll also interact with parents who have little or no snowsports experience. Simple concepts for instructors, like “*matching the skis*,” “*toeside and heelside turns*,” and “*using turn shape to control speed*” may go over the head of someone who's never heard those terms before. Stay self-aware with the wording you use and make sure you define your terms. This will simultaneously show your expertise and the parent into your circle. For example:

“One of our goals today was to get the group to understand how to use turn shape

## WHAT YOU SAY VERSUS WHAT PARENTS HEAR

Communication is not just about what comes out of your mouth, but also what your audience hears. Well-meaning phrases can trigger a negative image in the parent's head about what the lesson looked like. Watch out for these common explanations from instructors and look for alternatives that will give a more accurate and acceptable picture of the value of the lesson you provided.

WHAT YOU SAY	WHAT THEY HEAR
“Your child was the best in the group.”	“Your child was in too low of a level and did not get the value you paid for.”
“We would have accomplished more if we didn't have a slower kid in our group.”	“Your child didn't get the value you paid for.”
“I had a large group today.”	“Your child didn't get personal attention, get much skiing/snowboarding through the lesson, and didn't get the value you paid for.”
“Your child refused to listen.”	“You're a bad parent.”

to control our speed. It's common for kids at this level to think that using a big pizza wedge [use hands to illustrate] is the only way to slow down. We did drills that had them turning across the hill and even uphill

a little bit so they could feel the sensation of the turn slowing them down. Your son Josh really latched onto J-turns, which is when we make one single turn back up the hill to a stop. We called them “Josh turns,” which



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he really got a kick out of. I could see he really started to feel that control, which he will take into his normal skiing.”

#### DOING THE UP-SELL CORRECTLY

It's important – for the child's development, overall family experience, and, frankly, your success and that of the resort – to hook guests on the snowsports experience from the get-go. But put aside the stereotype of the plaid jacket-wearing, smarmy salesperson. Ski and snowboard instruction is a guest-service profession, which includes connecting guests to the products that enhance their vacation: restaurant recommendations, the best bootfitter in town, or the next lesson with you.

Your goal should be to turn your student into a lifelong snowsports lover. And the best chance you have to accomplish that goal is to continue to teach that student for multiple days. Keep that outcome in mind when upselling the parent on another lesson for their child.

Stating that you had fun and you'd love to have the child back for another lesson

should be the *minimum* you do for every parent wrap-up. Build upon that step by understanding both the child's goals and the parent's goals for the child. Then illustrate to the parent what a future lesson will look like and how that lesson will get the child closer to those goals. Clearly lay out the value of that next lesson, and let the parent make the decision that they feel is best. That's the soft-sell approach. For example:

*“Kimmy made some great improvement today with her confidence on green runs. I know your goal is to get her good enough to snowboard in control with you all over the mountain. The next steps are to build off of today's successes by keeping that focus on using turn shape to control speed and those leg movements that make turning easier. We want to challenge her with different turn shapes and sizes and help her keep that control and confidence even when the terrain gets steeper. I had so much fun with Kimmy today. I'd love to have her back tomorrow so we can really get some mileage with those tactics.”*



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A happy kid at the end of the day; what could be a better testament to a successful lesson?



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When you share the successes of the day with parents, be sure to bring their child into the conversation so they can share what they learned.



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### BE SURE TO INVOLVE THE CHILD

The lesson wrap-up shouldn't be a monologue of you describing the day. Involving the child in the wrap-up goes a long way. However, this can fall flat if you don't prepare the child. Younger children, in particular, may not be able to answer questions like "What did we learn today?" when put on the spot.

The instructor I described at the start of this article clearly did a lot of prep work before arriving in the parent pick-up corral. He spent time reminding the kids what they worked on throughout the lesson and the individual feedback he gave each of them. That way, when he asked those questions in front of the parents, each child had the answer at the top of their mind.

Make sure you carve out some time to give a wrap-up directly to the child before you meet up with the parents. The goal is to lock in the learning from the lesson as well as prep the child for their part of the conversation.

Once the child is in on the chat with the parents, you can ask him or her to name a drill or game they did. "Red light, green light!" might be their favorite game of the day; and you can then translate what the game was and how it improved their skiing or riding.

### HOW TO DEAL WITH CHALLENGING WRAP-UP SITUATIONS

Lessons don't always go according to plan. Sometimes you need to deliver tough news in your wrap-up. Here are a couple common situations that may make the wrap-up challenging.

- ▶ *The parent had higher expectations than the child could deliver.* Maybe the parent expected the child to be skiing blue runs, but anything steeper than a

green run resulted in the child power wedging. Parents typically measure progress by green-blue-black, picturing their child climbing up those milestones like a ladder. The reality is that we're building a pyramid, where we build strong foundational layers before moving up to the next level.

"Lateral learning," or developing skills – like sideslipping, skating, garlands, changing turn shape and size before you increase terrain difficulty – is crucial for skiers' and snowboarders' development. Therefore, in your wrap-up, highlight the skills you helped the child improve upon, not terrain. For parents looking forward to skiing or riding with their child, describe what they might look for in the body movements of their child when they are on too steep of a run versus the appropriate learning terrain. Be confident in your assessment and the parent will see that you're the expert.

- ▶ *The child took a hard fall that shook them up.* Think about what the child

will talk about at the dinner table that evening. He or she might say, "I fell off the chairlift," when, in reality, the child misloaded the chair and the lift operator had to push the stop button. One paints the picture of the child plummeting 40 feet to the ground; the other a minor fall that didn't even scare the child. Assume the child will describe the event as more extreme than it really was. Counteract that by making sure you bring up to the parents anything out of the ordinary that happened in the lesson. This allows you to control the story and prevents the parent from picturing their own story in a darker way.

### FINAL TIP: PREP YOURSELF

The tips in this article are a lot to cover in a short and often chaotic time. Just as you need to spend time prepping the child on the lesson wrap-up, you first need to carve out time for yourself to get your head wrapped around what you want to cover.

Toward the end of the lesson, give yourself time to reflect on the lesson and decide what you want to highlight in the wrap-up. This could be a quiet chairlift ride, during a break, or when you take a free run with your students. By giving yourself this time to organize your thoughts, you'll set yourself up for success in delivering a clear summary that covers the most important points of the day.

A successful wrap-up for a child's lesson will lock in the learning for the student and convey the value of the lesson to the parents. This is the impression you will leave in the parent's head as they remember their vacation to your resort... and book their child's next lesson. **32**

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### KEEP THE LEARNING GOING IN THE CONDO AND AT HOME

Want to give the children in your classes a great way to keep the learning going *after* they leave the lesson? Why not stock up on PSIA-AASI's *Kids' Activity and Coloring Book*? Kids will get the inside scoop on snowsports culture and safety tips while having fun coloring the pages and building great memories of learning to ski or snowboard. This great resource is available for instructors – and ski and ride schools – at [thesnowpros.org/shop](http://thesnowpros.org/shop).

