

# Safety

## Shots

**Safety is no Accident!**

### **Lift Safety**

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Lift safety is an often-overlooked aspect of skiing and riding that helps ensure a safe and enjoyable experience on the mountain. Ski lifts, whether they're chairlifts, gondolas, or surface lifts, are essential for getting skiers up the slopes, but they also present unique hazards if not used properly. To prevent accidents, it's important to follow safety guidelines both when boarding and disembarking from lifts, as well as while riding them.

When approaching a ski lift, always follow the instructions from lift operators and be aware of your surroundings. It's important to approach the lift line with caution and avoid sudden movements that could disrupt the flow of skiers and riders boarding the lift. Ski poles should be held in one hand. Safety straps or leashes should be used with snowboard rental gear or if you are a beginner boarder. When it's your turn to get on, ski or skate directly to the designated area and make sure you're ready before the lift arrives. Once the lift is approaching, sit down smoothly and avoid swinging your legs, as this can cause you to lose your balance or be thrown off.

Once on the lift, it's important to keep your safety bar down for the duration of the ride. The safety bar helps prevent falls and protects riders from unexpected jolts or movements. Keep your arms and legs inside the lift at all times, as leaning forward without the bar down can be dangerous. Avoid excessive movement on the lift, as this can cause instability and increase the risk of accidents. If you need to adjust your clothing or equipment while riding, be sure to do so carefully to avoid disturbing other skiers and maintaining balance. Save adjusting your boots until you are off the lift and well away from the unloading area.

Disembarking from the ski lift requires careful attention to timing and technique. As you approach the lift's unloading area, be prepared to stand up and glide away smoothly as

soon as you're lifted from the seat. Make sure the tips of your skis are pointed up and straight ahead as you approach the top. Keep your ski poles in one hand, or just hold them loosely so they don't get in the way. As your skis hit the snow, stand up smoothly. Let the lift gently push you forward as you start to glide. Keep your skis parallel and maintain a balanced stance to prevent falling as you exit.

For boarders, point the nose of your board straight ahead. As the lift reaches the unloading point, place your free foot on the stomp pad or between the bindings. Let the lift gently push you forward. Stand up and balance over your front foot. Use your back foot to balance and steer—it's not strapped in, so just keep it on the board. Don't try to turn immediately—just ride it out until it flattens.

Move away from the unloading area as quickly as possible. Many of the newer lifts have safety and operational features you may not be aware of. Ask the lift operator for information and assistance. If you do fall or become tangled in the lift, signal the lift operator. Most ski lifts have emergency stop buttons, but it's important to stay calm and avoid panicking in such situations.

Lift safety is all about staying aware of your surroundings and following the proper procedures. Ski lifts may seem like a simple part of the skiing experience, but paying attention to the details can prevent accidents and ensure everyone gets to and from the slopes safely. By respecting the lift rules and being cautious, skiers can focus on enjoying the ride and the skiing ahead.

*Linda Johnston is a long-time skier and ski club activist and has led many group trips to ski destinations in North and South America. She raised her two sons on Arizona and Colorado ski hills. Linda is a doctor of physical therapy, practicing in orthopedics for over 40 years in Phoenix, Arizona.*