



How to become a Ski Instructor



Far from your typical office job, working as a ski instructor introduces you to a world of fresh air, sunshine, snow, skiing all day, lots of fun and endless opportunities to meet new people.

So how do you go about becoming a ski instructor?



"I would without a doubt recommend this course to anyone who loves skiing and wants to have an amazing experience meeting new people and just having a good time! The coaches were not only amazing skiers but made the course so much fun!"

Juliette, Amsterdam

How often will I work?

This depends on your goals, but once you are qualified, you can start to look for work straight away.

Depending on where you are based, you may find work in resort for the remainder of the season, you may choose to go elsewhere, or you may decide to wait until the next season before embarking on teaching.

In Verbier where we run our gap courses, we often recruit our trainees to work in the peak February half term period straight after the course has finished.

This is a great way to consolidate everything you have learned and achieved during the 10-week course.



Many of our students work for these two weeks and then stay in resort until the end of the season taking advantage of the season lift pass and the lovely spring weather.

After an intense 10 weeks training and then two weeks working, it is quite nice to have a few relaxing weeks before heading home.



What qualifications do I need to teach skiing?

The qualification required to teach in different countries varies considerably between nations. For instance, countries such as France are much stricter than Switzerland, however with the vast array of qualifications out there, it is possible to find something that suits your needs.

There are various governing bodies around the world which examine ski instructors and issue qualifications to teach skiing.



For example BASI in the UK, NZSIA in New Zealand and CSIA in Canada. In Switzerland, we recognise various qualifications but many of our team hold the BASI qualification. This is also the system we have chosen to examine our Gap year students, this is mainly due to it being recognised very well around the world as well as the fact many of our team qualified through the same system.





Learn more about BASI

Formally constituted in 1963, The British Association of Snowsport Instructors (BASI) is a UK based membership association responsible for the training and licensing of snowsport instructors and coaches.

If you have had a ski lesson in the UK, chances are you were taught by a BASI qualified instructor.

BASI exists for the benefit of its members and works on their behalf to deliver:



Training courses and professional qualifications for 5 disciplines (Alpine, Snowboard, Telemark, Adaptive and Nordic) in instructing and coaching

Internationally recognised professional snowsports qualifications

Working opportunities in snowsports instruction in countries throughout the world

Continuous professional development programmes for members

Membership value through a range of member benefits

What do the governing bodies qualify me to do?

Most systems have their own structure & level system, each with a unique pedagogy.

BASI is a well-recognised qualification as are CSIA and NZSIA allowing you to teach in most places around the world.

The official qualifications received from a governing body reflect your skiing and teaching ability when applying for jobs within a ski school. Without them, you are unlikely to be able to teach anywhere.



"This was also a very rewarding time for me. Not only personally, because I got to see my own skiing improve more than I could have imagined but also to actually work as an instructor for a week. I have always enjoyed trying to explain a skill or a piece of information to another person and I loved doing the same with one of my favourite sports. As a side note, I still think it's great that you can get a croissant after a night out in Verbier. One of the many brilliant aspects of this resort."

Killian

The BASI Level System

The BASI Level system consists of 4 levels, with level 1 being the entry level and level 4 the highest but what do they allow you to do?

In short, the level 1 will allow you to teach in a controlled environment, for example indoor ski centres and snow domes. You'll generally teach beginner and low intermediates of all ages.



To work in a ski school in the mountains, the level 2 is generally required (with France being the caveat where they require level 4).

The level 3 and 4 reflect a higher level of teaching experience and knowledge thus will earn you a higher salary and generally mean that you teach intermediate to expert clients with level 2's teaching beginner to intermediate levels.

To find out more about the BASI Level system click [here](#)

What equipment do I need?

BOOTS

A decent set of ski boots and skis are key when joining a ski instructor course. If you need to buy boots, we recommend buying these in a ski resort rather than a shop in the UK. In resort, boot fitters tend to be far more experienced and knowledgeable. You also have the benefit that you can go back if they need adjusting without paying for the service.

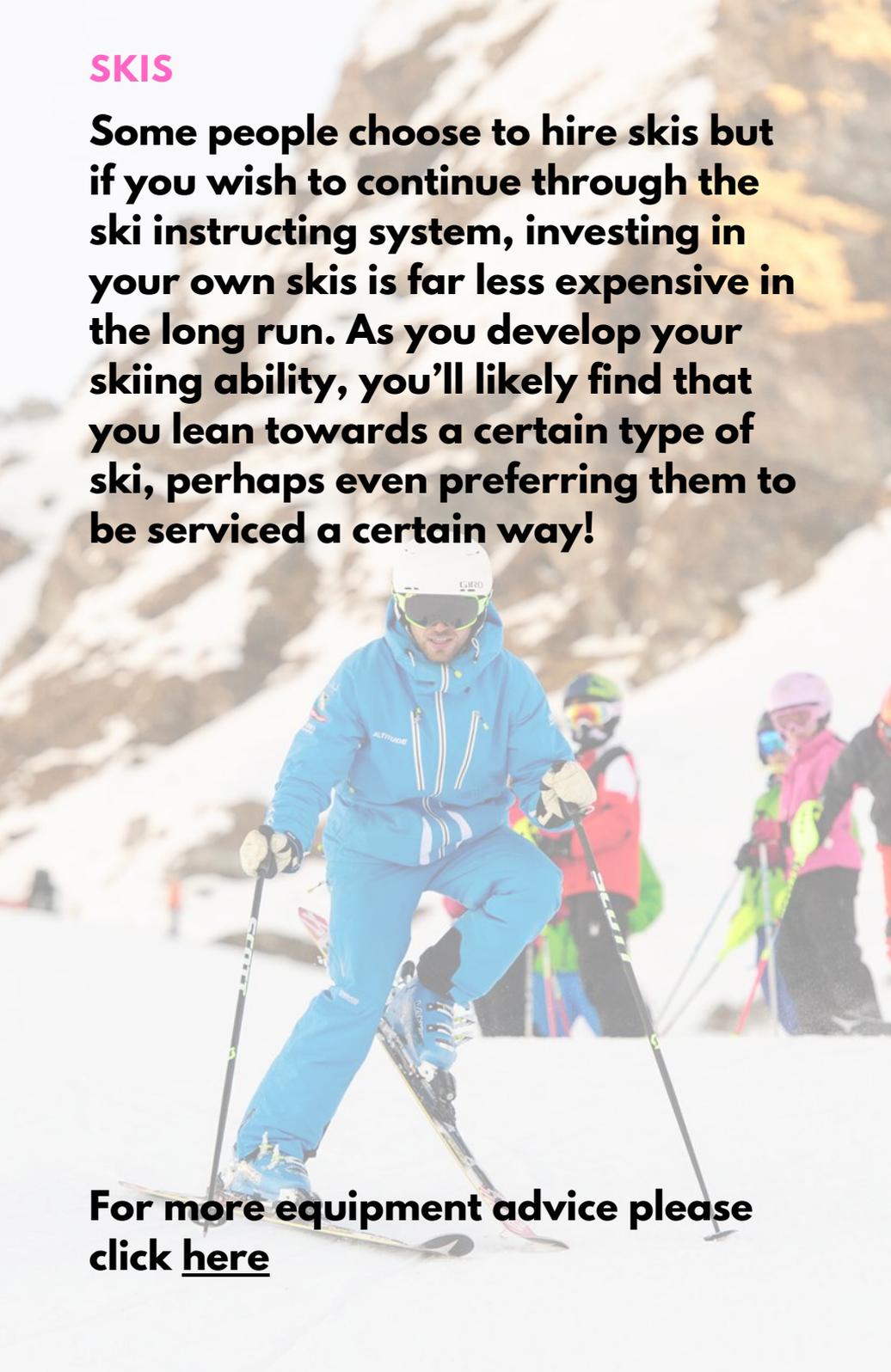


HELMET

As well as these and your regular ski clothing you would take on holiday with you, we also strongly recommend helmets!

SKIS

Some people choose to hire skis but if you wish to continue through the ski instructing system, investing in your own skis is far less expensive in the long run. As you develop your skiing ability, you'll likely find that you lean towards a certain type of ski, perhaps even preferring them to be serviced a certain way!



For more equipment advice please [click here](#)

Do ski instructors work a lot?

In Verbier, it is common for ski schools to sell lessons by half day or full day so you may work for example 9am-12pm if you have a morning lesson or maybe 9am-4pm if you have a full day lesson.

Once working as a full-time instructor in Verbier you can average anywhere between 350-550 hours in the season, the difference comes down to experience, client base and how versatile you are as an instructor.



Some instructors with many languages or a specific skill may work a lot more and likewise if you have been here for a while and have built up a regular client base, you could be busy! We have some instructors that fill most of their diary with repeat business.

In different resorts and different countries, work can really vary for example in some places it may be more common to teach full days only and not half days.

How long does it take to qualify?

LEVEL 1 EXAM = 5 DAYS

LEVEL 2 EXAM = 10 DAYS

Exams usually span 2 weeks running Monday to Friday.

Plus you need to attend a 2 day first aid course as well as show evidence of shadowing experience and a child protection module (an online course).

To validate your level 1 and 2 you are also required to take a DBS check to show you have no criminal record.



You can take the exams individually at a time that suits you, or you can look at qualifying through an intensive course, for example a 10-week gap course. Here at Altitude Futures, we offer a 10-week course, providing a fast track to gaining both the level 1 and 2 whilst also developing your skiing. You can read more here.

LEVEL 3 + 4

There are more modules involved that are taken individually. These are on average 5 days each and you need all the modules to gain the qualification.

For more information on the criteria for each level and how long it takes see here

Click [here](#) to learn more about the BASI Level system.

How good do I need to be?

Do these all apply to you?

I can ski all pistes including black slopes

I can make short rhythmical turns.

I ski down the fall line (the way a bucket of water would travel) I ski at a good speed

I can (or am keen to try) ski off-piste and in the moguls

If so, you're probably at a good level to join an instructor training course!

**BOOK
NOW**

How much does it cost?

This mainly comes down to whether you wish to gain the level 1 only or work your way up through the ranks up to the highest level which in the BASI system is Level 4. It also depends on if you take the exams individually, maybe at home at a snowdome near you (level 1 only) or if you take them as part of a fast track course, for example a 10 week gap course.

As an idea, at June 2020, a BASI Level 1 exam costs £435 and a BASI Level 2 exam costs £670.



If your skiing is at a good level and you can get hold of a BASI manual to study, and ideally a few private lessons from someone BASI qualified, you'd be set to go and have a good chance of passing. For the level 2, it's likely you will need to attend training to ensure you have the required knowledge and ability to demonstrate skiing to the required criteria to pass.

Click [here](#) for full information on how much ski instructor training costs.

"A massive thank you to everyone at Altitude especially my instructors, Jack and Ross, who trained me to pass my Level 1/2 and to Harry, Jon and Laura for organising the amazing 10 weeks. Finally, Mauricio and Alejandra thank you for your insane food!"

Nick



What do ski instructors do in the summer?

You have quite a few options here:

- Stay in the resort you are in and pick up some summer work.**
- Head back home and find a summer job, maybe something seasonal**
- Follow the snow and head to the southern hemisphere for their winter!**

Read more about what our team get up to in the summertime [here](#).

Where are the best ski instructor courses?

There are now so many ski schools providing training to prepare you for your exams it can be tricky to decide who to train with and in which country!

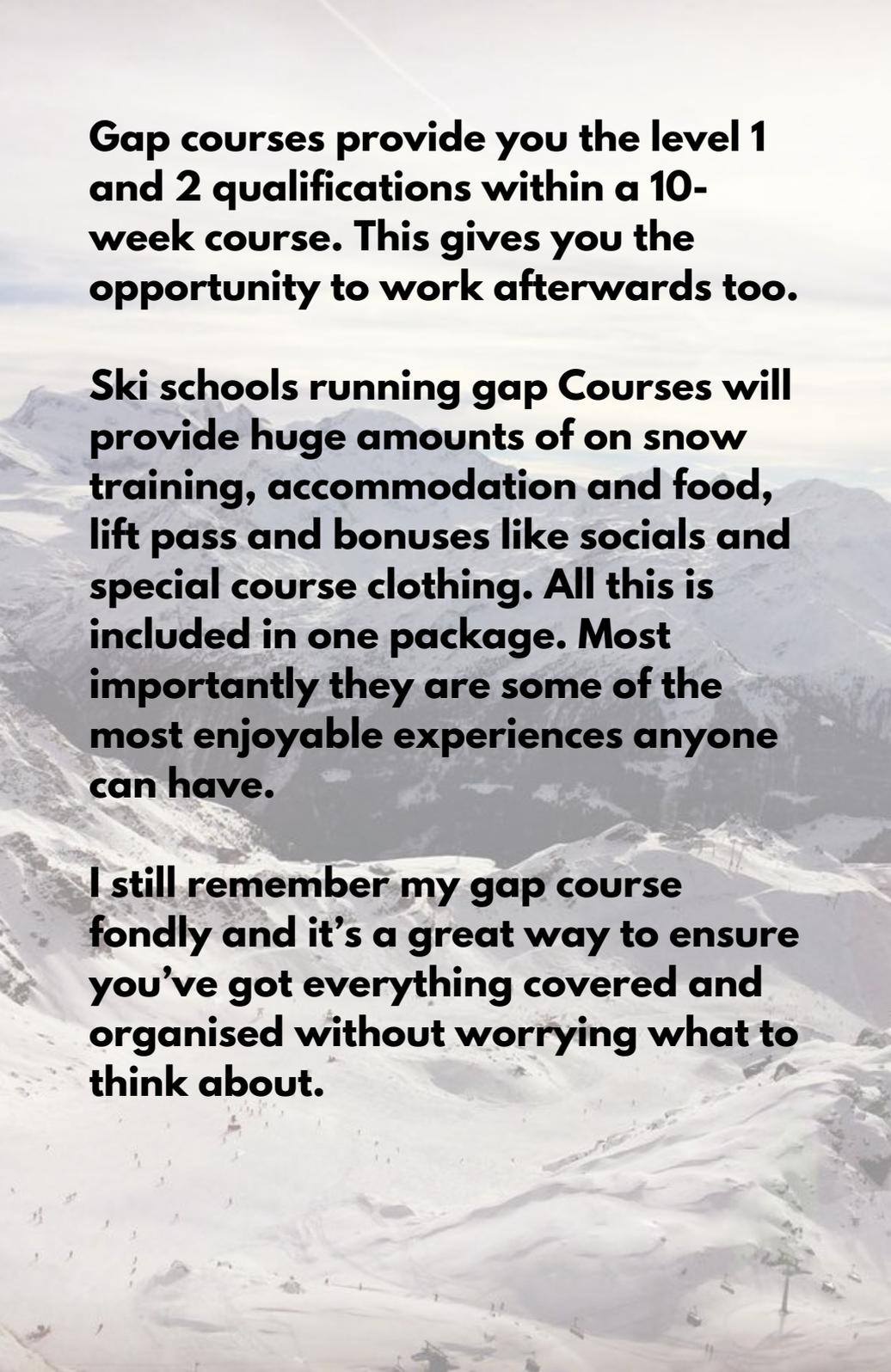
A popular route for new instructors is to enrol on a gap course, these are extremely popular within the UK market as they are run in English but BASI have also established themselves as a well-regarded and recognised qualification around the world meaning work opportunities are great if you wish to change location in the future.



A big advantage with a BASI qualification is that you can pretty much work anywhere, the world is literally your oyster.

The only caveat to this is France, where you need the higher-level qualification and to do a speed test (timed race) to work but in France this is the case whichever system you follow.



A scenic view of a snowy mountain range with a ski resort in the foreground. The mountains are covered in snow, and there are some buildings and ski lifts visible in the distance. The sky is clear and blue.

Gap courses provide you the level 1 and 2 qualifications within a 10-week course. This gives you the opportunity to work afterwards too.

Ski schools running gap Courses will provide huge amounts of on snow training, accommodation and food, lift pass and bonuses like socials and special course clothing. All this is included in one package. Most importantly they are some of the most enjoyable experiences anyone can have.

I still remember my gap course fondly and it's a great way to ensure you've got everything covered and organised without worrying what to think about.

Which country to train in is an important decision. For example, if you wish to go to Canada to train and to also work in Canada for the foreseeable future, the CSIA system may be well suited to you.





Canada

in Canada, a great course that we recommend is with the Winter Sports Company, likewise if you wish to train in New Zealand, they offer great courses there too!

Switzerland

We run our courses out of Verbier, Switzerland, and if you wish to train and work in Europe this may work well for you. The main advantage is that as you will qualify in the BASI system you can possibly move straight into employment after the course.



Summer Courses

You can also look at summer courses or pre-season courses in Europe – these can be timed so that you are qualified for the season ahead which can be great if you wish to work the full season. Just bear in mind that with no experience, you're likely to need to apply to less known resorts and not flagship resorts where more experience will often be required.

"Having just got back from an incredible winter doing my BASI levels 1 and 2 and working with Altitude, all I can think about is how much I am looking forward to going back next year and skiing again. I have had some amazing skiing days, met some really fun people and loved every minute of it!"



How much do ski instructors earn?

A ski instructor salary will vary a lot depending on where you are working. On a dry slope the salary may not be huge but in Switzerland for example, a starting salary is approximately £18 an hour and you can also earn more if you roll lessons into repeat business.

The higher your qualification and the more repeat business you obtain then your potential to earn will also increase.

Some schools will pay extra for certain skills such as a second discipline i.e. snowboarding, or additional languages. You can find out more about what you can earn [here](#).



How to find a ski instructor job

Finding a job can be a minefield if you haven't ever looked before. Ideally you first want to work out which country you wish to work in, how much you want to work (full time, part time etc) and any other requirements you have i.e. are you applying with a partner, only want to work half the season etc.



You can find out more about this from our flagship ski school in Verbier [here](#)

To find jobs themselves you can look at individual schools' jobs pages or you can also look at governing bodies. BASI for example have a jobs page [here](#).

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