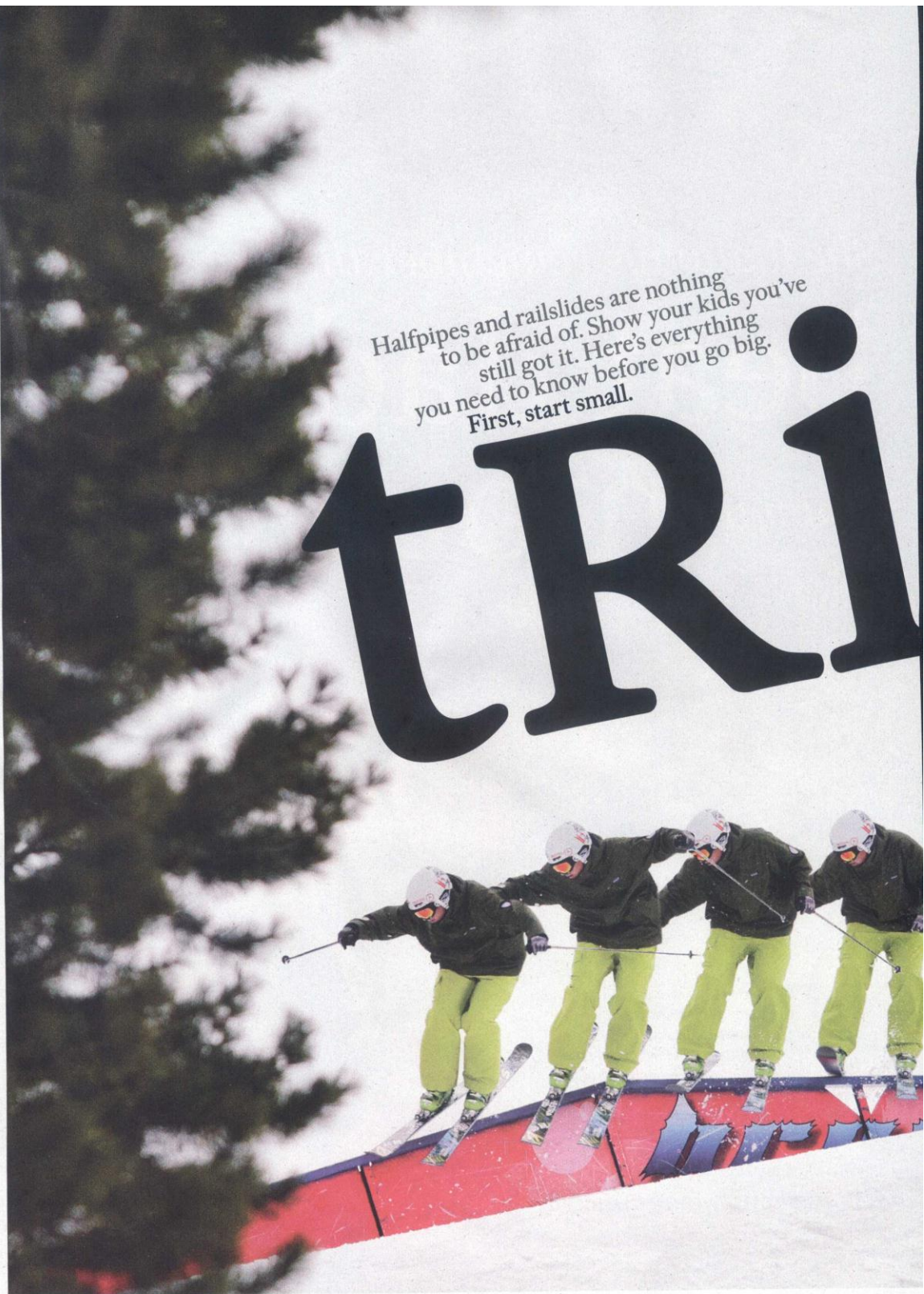


Halfpipes and railsides are nothing  
to be afraid of. Show your kids you've  
still got it. Here's everything  
you need to know before you go big.  
First, start small.

# TRI



# CKs

By David Oliver

Aren't  
Just for  
Kids

Photographs by Alex Witkowicz



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PHOTOGRAPHED IN BRECKENRIDGE, COLO.

## RICKS AREN'T JUST FOR *kids*

We're not saying you should trade your powder skis for twin tips, but spending a little time in the terrain park is a good way to spice up your skiing and validate (or mercilessly embarrass) your budding groms. And it means more family time on the slopes. Wherever you ski, you'll probably find basic boxes, jumps, rails and halfpipes in middle-age-friendly sizes. So stop complaining about how old you feel. Take a spin in the park, and feel young again.

# Box



If you've ever slid across the kitchen floor in your socks, you've got what it takes to slide a box. Thanks to their wide surfaces, boxes are the friendliest sliding features in the terrain park. The Professional Ski Instructors of America teach every box slide—and railslide and jump—using the same progression: Approach, Takeoff, Maneuver, Landing (ATML). Start on straight surface boxes at or near snow level, and progress to higher boxes with kinks and shapes.



### 1.

#### Approach

Whether you ride it straight or crooked, forward or switch (backward), approach with your legs flexed and your shoulders square to the feature. Speed is key, but you don't need a lot. Remember, your skis will gain speed on the slick surface of the box.



### 2.

#### Takeoff

The higher the box is off the snow, the more oomph or pop you need at takeoff, but remember to stay balanced in the air. Lift your core toward the sky to pop off the snow. Ride straight or spin your skis perpendicular to the box to ride it "crooked."



### 3.

#### Maneuver

Land on the box like a pro basketball player coming down from a rebound: Flex your knees and get low to absorb the forces. Keep your center over your feet and your skis as flat as possible; edging will throw you off balance and make you crash.



### 4.

#### Landing

Getting off the box is like getting off a moving sidewalk. Your skis will slow down as they transition from the slick box to the stickier snow. Lower your landing gear by extending your legs and absorbing the forces as you set down.

TRICKS AREN'T JUST FOR **Kids**

# Rail

If boxes are minivans, rails are sports cars. They have similar components and require similar skills, but one is faster and a little riskier but also more fun. You'll easily get off-kilter if your feet get ahead of or behind the sliding surface. Start on a low straight rail. If there's a gap between the ramp and the rail, judging your speed is key. Make sure you have enough to clear the gap, but not so much that you get out of balance at the takeoff.

Keep your skis flat, hold a balanced stance and let the rail take you on a ride.



1.

## The Skinny

Rails are like steel balance beams; some are flat and some are rounded. Make sure you can balance on the rail before you try to grind it. As long as there's no one in the approach zone, feel free to step onto a rail and sidestep down its length before sliding it at speed.



2.

## The Gig Line

Line up your jacket zipper with the rail on your approach so you don't have to adjust your trajectory in midair. If you're not lined up as you pop and spin your skis sideways, you'll land with your feet too far to one side of the rail or the other and you'll fall right off.



3.

## Balancing

Even though your boots are rigid, imagine the arches of your feet bending over the rail as if you were barefoot. Keep your shoulders parallel with the rail and your feet shoulder-width apart. If your shoulders or hands are too far forward or back, you'll fall.



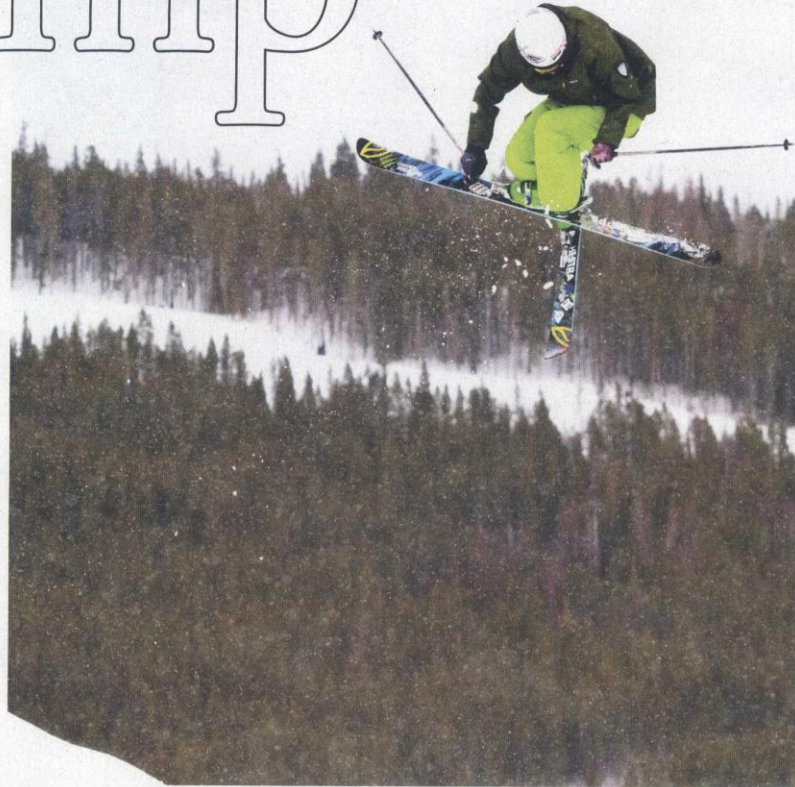
4.

## Finishing

Keep your composure to the end of the rail. Don't get too excited or anticipate the dismount too soon. It might be easier to come off and land switch, which works if you have twin-tip skis. Remember to absorb the landing in a balanced stance.

# Jump

Jumping is a hang-time activity, like diving into the pool or bouncing on a trampoline. The more speed you carry up the ramp and the more power you put into your takeoff, the more hang time you'll get and the harder it will be to control your body position in midair. If you're in flight long enough, styling your jump with spins and flips is a matter of safety. But for now, keep it simple and remember ATML.



When you're ready for more hang time, earn style points with spins and grabs.



## 1.

### Liftoff

As with the box, approach the ramp in balance and use your core to pop off the snow. Just like on a diving board, if you bounce straight up, you'll land back on the board. Instead, lift your core up and push your hands ahead of you to get forward momentum.



## 2.

### Flight Control

Once you're off the snow, it's all about maintaining an upright, athletic body position in the air. Don't overreact to the zero-gravity sensations by wildly swinging or pumping your arms. Just stay calm and in a ready position with your eyes on your landing zone.



## 3.

### Descent

Start prepping for your landing the moment gravity takes hold again and starts to pull you back to earth. Keep your hands in front of you and your feet under your hips. Extend your legs to meet the ground rather than waiting for the ground to meet you.

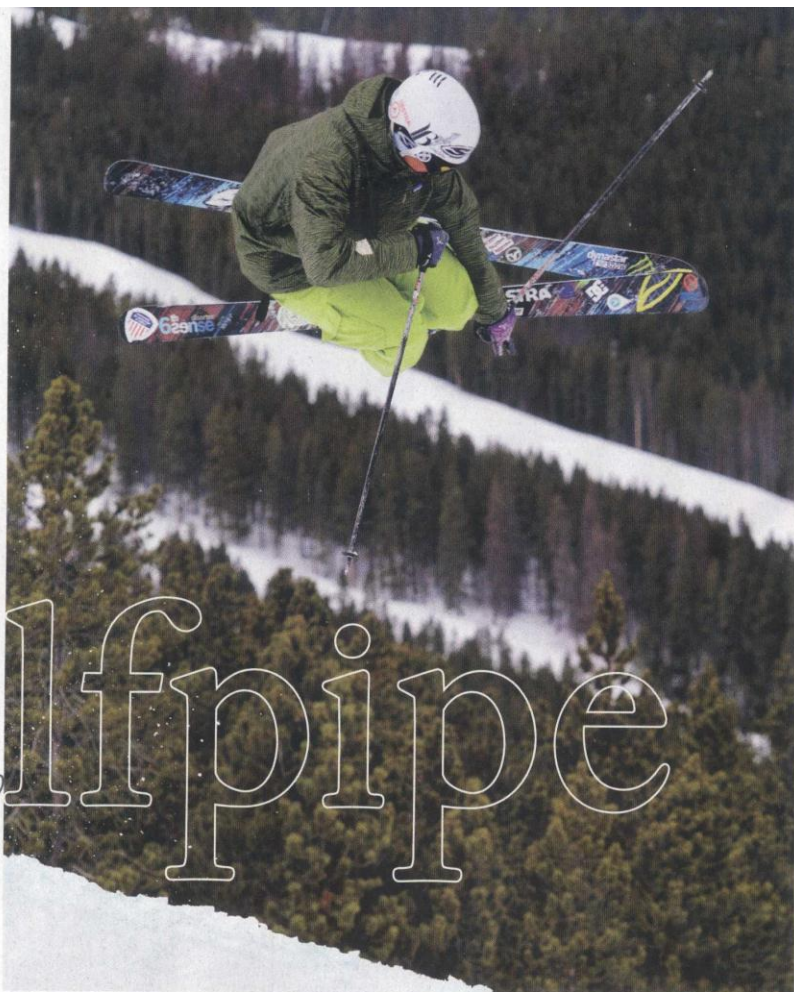


## 4.

### Touchdown

Lower your ski tips as you come in to land. Just as shocks compress to absorb an airplane's weight as the tires hit the runway, flex your ankles, knees and hips to absorb the landing. Keep your arms forward so you don't get tossed backward as your skis slow down.

You've no doubt watched fearless kids flipping and spinning out of the halfpipe. But you don't have to launch into low-earth orbit to have fun. It's called freestyle: because there's no right or wrong way to ski pipe. But there is a hard way and an easy way. The hard way: fear and fight against the pipe's vertical walls. The easy way: let the shape and slope of the pipe do the work of carrying you safely up and down each side.



# Halfpipe

*David Oliver is on the PSIA Alpine Team and the lead freestyle trainer at Breckenridge, Colo. With 24 years' teaching under his belt, he's no spring chicken. But he's still plenty springy, tearing it up on his original knees.*



1.

## Pump It

Traverse the pipe, making small, banked turns in the transitions—where the flat bottom curves upward on each side. Keep your hips over your feet, and pump your legs slightly out in front, as you would on a swing, to get your body perpendicular to the wall.



2.

## Go Vertical

When you're ready, dial up your speed to get up the vert. Use your edges *only* in the flat bottom of the pipe to adjust your line. Flatten your skis as you ride up the wall. When your upward movement stalls, turn your whole body, not just your skis, back into the pipe.



3.

## Keep Control

Using your edges—or skidding—on the walls won't slow you down. Edged skis will just carve quickly down the wall and across the pipe. By the time you make two highly edged turns, you're moving so fast, time travel is possible. Control, however, is not.



4.

## Angle of Travel

Gravity pulls you not only toward the flat bottom of the pipe but also down the hill. To control your speed, cut straight across the pipe or even slightly up it. As you come down one wall and across the pipe, aim your ski tips directly at the lip of the opposite wall.