



Check in with your students throughout your explanation. Are they finding your verbal descriptions useful? Or are they just being polite?

DO YOU TALK TOO MUCH?

(YUP, YOU PROBABLY DO)

By Karin Kirk

We've all been there; parked at the side of the hill while your trainer goes on and on and on. A pristine slope beckons. You want to jump in and practice. Your clinic-mates are fidgeting, creeping down the hill, and staring off into the distance. Good grief, you muse, it's a good thing I don't talk this much!

But do you? How do you know?

THE LINEAR INSTRUCTOR

1. Let's use turn shape to control our speed.
2. Glide straight down the hill until you pick up some speed.
3. Start turning, then keep the same turn going until you are pointed all the way back up the hill.
4. You will come to a stop, facing uphill.
5. Ready? Try it!

Key cue repeated: Remember to keep the same turn going until you are facing uphill.

THE JARGONER

1. Let's use turn shape to control our speed.
2. This method of speed control is optimal for most users.
3. Although... it is not necessary in all circumstances, depending on terrain, conditions, and intent.
4. Begin by proceeding directly down the fall line.
5. When a sufficient speed is attained, initiate a turn by tipping your feet, ankles, and knees to put the skis on edge.
6. Continue increasing the edge angle while also developing - and then managing - pressure over your outside ski.
7. Do not lean inside the turn; that will result in a reduction of pressure on your outside ski, while also producing ineffective postural alignment.
8. Make sure to emphasize rotational movements that originate from your lower body. The torso should not be the nexus of rotational energy, although it needn't be excessively rigid, either.
9. Continue applying directed, persistent forces, continuously throughout the duration of the turn.
10. Your velocity should decrease. You will sense negative acceleration.
11. A pole swing and pole touch is not necessary, but should you elect to use that, the poling movements should complement your edge change.
12. Ready? Try it!

Instructors who talk too much often don't realize it. There are many social cues that signal it's time to stop speaking: people stab at the snow with their ski poles, break out into side conversations, excuse themselves from the group, and so on. Researchers who study compulsive talking were puzzled by how over-talkers blow right past these kinds of signs and seem completely oblivious to the not-so-subtle feedback around them.

While it's painfully clear when someone else is prattling on and on, we rarely suspect we might do it ourselves. And it's hard to fix a problem if we don't know it exists. So, let's delve into why we tend to talk too much and how to optimize our verbal explanations.

OVER-TALKING HAS MANY CAUSES

As revealed by queries of instructors, trainers, and students - and review of psychology literature - there are many possible reasons

THE RAMBLER

1. Let's use turn shape to control our speed.
2. One time, I got going so fast, I crashed really hard. So don't do that, LOL.
3. So, you can use the shape of your turn to go whatever speed you want to go.
4. You don't have to do it this way; there are other ways to control your speed... you can scrub speed by using your edges, for example.
5. But let's try it this way, because most likely it's the best way for you. I wish I had learned it that way.
6. So, anyway, start by going straight down the hill.
7. Don't go too fast! How fast you go is really up to you, though.
8. If you do go too fast, you'll have to turn harder. By that, I mean that you may experience more pressure in the turn.
9. But regardless of how fast you decide to go, and, really, any speed is good to try, initiate your turn and then gradually (or abruptly, if you are running out of room at the edge of the trail) continue turning until you sense that you are starting to slow down.
10. Ready? Try it!

THE STORYTELLER

1. Let's use turn shape to control our speed.
2. I have taught this move to hundreds of students. And it works. It really works.
3. One time, there was a student that no one could teach. He just went straight down the hill, no matter what. I wasn't teaching him, someone else was teaching him, and he went whizzing by me at, like, 30 miles per hour. I had brand-new skis and I would have been SO MAD if he had crashed into me. But he didn't. But when he zoomed by me, I yelled "TURN SHAPE!" Really loud. Not everyone knows this, but I have a really loud voice when I need to. People were like, "Who is that with the loud voice?"; and then they realized it was me, and they were, like, "Wow. You have a really loud voice." I think they were surprised and impressed...
- takes a breath -
4. (continued) ... So, wouldn't you know it, after lunch I was assigned this same student. If he had listened to my advice from before, when he was nearly running into me, he would have known that turn shape is the key to controlling your speed. Other instructors were giving him bad advice of using a giant snowplow, but that rarely works. I mean, it sometimes works. I can make it work, but it's not the best way. Turn shape is the way to go. Not everybody knows this.
5. So, do you want to try using turn shape to control your speed?
Hello? Are you even paying attention?

why you and your fellow instructors might babble on. (One helpful, and timeless, article is "An Exploratory Investigation of Characteristics of Compulsive Talkers," by Robert N. Bostrom and Nancy Grant Harrington in the January 1999 issue of *Communication Education*.)

Here's a rundown of some root causes.

Excitement and over-flowing enthusiasm to share info - Maybe something you just learned is so cool you think everyone else must find it equally fascinating.

Nerves - First day of your exam? Chattering your way up the entire lift ride is one way to calm yourself. Besides, everyone else is probably super interested in that amazing thing your dog did this morning.



LINDA GUERRETTI

GUILTY PLEASURE: WHY WE LOVE TALKING ABOUT OURSELVES

There's a scientific reason we're no good at assessing if we talk too much. According to Diana Tamir, a neuroscientist from Harvard, talking about ourselves activates the brain's dopamine system, which releases chemicals that make the experience feel pleasurable. It's fascinating to learn that the part of the brain that responds to delicious food (as well as sex and addictive drugs) responds similarly when you regale the locker room with stories of your epic powder day.

This means that when you reflect back on a situation where you've done a lot of talking, you have a positive impression of how it went; your brain tells you, "Yeah! That was fabulous!"

But that's an inaccurate way to gauge how the situation really went. Even though you had a great time talking, did everyone else have an equally great time listening? Perhaps not. The dopamine rewards the speaker, not the listener.

This research implies that if you open the floor to other people, your brain gets less reward and feels a little less awesome, but you're likely to create a better experience for others. Share the love – and the dopamine – and make opportunities for other people to speak.

– KK

READ MORE

"The Neuroscience of Everybody's Favorite Topic," by Adrian Ward in *Scientific American*; access at tiny.cc/SciAm.

"How Talking About Yourself is Like a Drug," by Celeste Headlee; access at tiny.cc/RewireTalkingAboutYourself.

Abundance of knowledge – You are a fountain of knowledge about carving. You feel compelled to explore the depths of the topic, starting with the fundamentals of kinematic physics and an exploration of ski and snowboard sidecut evolution over the last 50 years.

Lack of knowledge – What's the best way to land a backside rodeo? Damned if I know. But if I talk about it long enough, I'm bound to get close to the actual answer... right?

Attempt to impress – Sharing your vast experience and encyclopedic knowledge seems like one way to earn the respect of everyone within earshot. What, you didn't quite hear my story of how I was the best one at my Level III exam? Let me repeat it for you.

Discomfort with silence – You have a strong urge to fill the space with words, and you may find yourself repeating things or wandering off into tangential topics in order to keep the flow going.

Yes, you do need to explain skills and drills, but you can use your people skills to keep your talks direct and to the point.

Non-linear thinking – Instead of a step-by-step progression, the lesson sequence becomes a scatterplot of loosely connected ideas. It might make sense to you but can be excruciating to follow.

Overvaluing one's contribution – Do you feel like students have no hope of success until you explain every aspect of a topic? That every sentence you utter is essential? You might be *overestimating* your role and *underestimating* your student's ability to learn on the fly.

Talking feels good – Many instructors are natural extroverts and explainers. Being in the limelight stimulates the brain's pleasure response (see **Guilty Pleasure: Why We Love Talking About Ourselves**).

HOW MUCH TALKING IS 'JUST ENOUGH'?

The development of motor skills comes primarily from experiences and practice, not words. (For more information, see "The Acquisition of Skilled Motor Performance," by Avi Karni and others; access at tiny.cc/PNASPerformanceAcquisition.) Students only need enough initial information to allow them to try something new. This can be done with as few words as, "try this" or, "flex more" and then a demo. Too much explaining often gets in the way of simply trying the movement. Challenge yourself to see how little talking you can do – you might be surprised!

Rather than frontloading a topic with a long narrative, focus your feedback to be responsive to a student's initial efforts. Strive to be encouraging and specific: "That's a good start! Now bring your back hand farther forward." Once the student 'gets it,' resist the temptation to immediately layer on more information. Allow extra practice time with minimal new information, so the new movement can take root.

REIN IN YOUR TALKATIVE TENDENCIES

Instructors dedicate frequent practice sessions to skill development, tasks, and freeriding, but we rarely practice our teaching with the same level of focus. Similarly, we're perfectly comfortable reminding a peer not to drop their inside shoulder, but we're not likely to tell someone they rattle on too long in their teaching.

Furthermore, since it's hard to gauge if we're talking too much, self-appraisal only goes so far. But these are fixable problems; and here are concrete ways to improve the brevity and clarity of our coaching.

Ask for feedback – Ask a trusted peer to observe your teaching and give you honest feedback. Do the same for them and strategize ways to keep verbal explanations short and sweet.

Video your teaching segments – You probably already know that video offers starkly honest feedback. Watching a video of your teaching may make you excruciatingly self-conscious, so it's a good idea to watch in private. You'll likely come away with immediate ideas for improving your presentation.

Time yourself – Take a 2-minute presentation and narrow it down to 30 seconds. Don't do this by talking faster! Boil it down to the essential concepts, while stripping out excess wordiness and repetitive information.

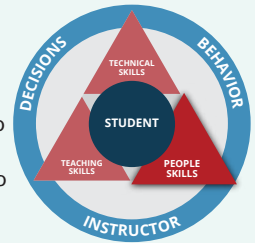
Organize your message – If you find yourself rambling to explain something, set aside some time to clarify your understanding. Make notes or run through the key concepts with a trainer. Once the concept is clear to you, it'll be easy to express concisely.

Break up your explanations into smaller parts – Your student does not need to understand the entire scope of pressure control in order to bring some absorption moves into their bump skiing. Deliver one piece of information at a time.

Be linear – There's a time and place for lateral learning and exploration. But new topics are easiest to digest if they are offered in a stepwise sequence where each new segment adds one logical piece of new information.

PEOPLE SKILLS ASK US TO LISTEN

PSIA-AASI's people-skills fundamentals encourage instructors to engage in meaningful two-way communication. In other words, you need to listen to you students to help teach them. Talking too much takes up time when you could be listening to students. Instead of trying to explain the same topic again, ask your student about their experience.



Use non-verbal cues and body language – Talking is one of many forms of communication. You can save a lot of words by using other cues.

Don't rehash chairlift conversations at the top – The people on the chair with you already heard that conversation, and at the top of a run most people are ready to focus on going down. Keep the lesson moving forward.

As with every skill, the quickest way to improve is to start with an honest appraisal, followed by some focused work to change up some well-worn habits. But the motivation could not be clearer: the less time you spend talking the more time you'll get to ski and ride. So, pipe down and move along! **32**

Karin Kirk is an Alpine Level III instructor, staff trainer, and Ridge guide at Montana's Bridger Bowl.

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