



# Freestyle Specialist Study Guide

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## Why Freestyle Specialist?

To become a well-rounded instructor and rider, capable of confident teaching throughout a variety of man-made and natural mountain terrain.

## Freestyle Standards

**Prerequisite:** PSIA/AASI Level I Certification, a firm grasp of teaching concepts and a willingness to try many of the freestyle maneuvers.

The Central Division Freestyle Specialist is divided into three levels; which overlap with the three levels of AASI/PSIA certification. Like traditional exams, you will be evaluated on three categories: Teaching, Riding and Technical Knowledge. As the specialist level increases, candidates are required to demonstrate stronger teaching, in depth technical knowledge and advanced riding/demonstration skills.

Teaching skills are a high priority for candidate's of all levels. Lessons should be taught with progression, clarity and safety. As candidates strive for higher Specialist, teaching lessons must focus on creatively improving the ability of class members and teaching more advanced tricks.

Freestyle riding is defined by unique personal style and imaginative tricks on an infinite variety of terrain. Because freestyle embraces individual creativity, it is difficult to require a set of compulsory tricks. There are descriptions below of each level with a brief outline of expectations. While specific tricks are listed below, the specialist is not a checklist of tricks but rather a decision based on a skilled evaluator's judgment, overall impression and technical knowledge.

Technical Knowledge questions are located at the end of this guide

Questions are the same for all levels, with a different expectation of detail in the answer based on the candidate's attempted specialist level.

**A note for skiers on rails & boxes:** When discussing rail/box tricks a 50-50 means riding straight over the feature on both skis. Skiers can only do this on boxes, so don't worry about 50-50ing a rail. Boardslide is used generically for a grind with the skis/board perpendicular to the rail/box. Skiers also shouldn't worry about frontside vs. backside as they are snowboard specific terms.

## **Level I – Beginner**

The Level I Freestyle Specialist is an introduction to teaching and riding in the terrain park intended to reach an instructor looking to either teach or to learn beginning park lessons.

### Teaching:

Introduction to the terrain park/Smart Style

Flat Land tricks (Ollie, butter, etc.).

First Jump

First Grab

180s

Intro to box (50-50)

50-50 small rail

First Boardslide on a box

Intro to Pipe

Pumping pipe walls

### Riding:

Flat Land Tricks (Ollie, butter, etc...)

Clearing small jumps confidently and in control

Basic Grabs (at least 2) over a small jump

180s both directions - at least one off a small jump

50-50 a small box

50-50 a small rail

Boardslide a small box

Pumping pipe walls

Full, smooth pipe run in the vert or above lip

## **Level II—Intermediate**

The Level II Freestyle Specialist takes instructors teaching and riding to the next level. This instructor has prior experience teaching and riding in the terrain park.

### Teaching:

- 360s both directions
- Grabbing a spin
- Stepping up to medium sized jumps
- Intermediate Grabs
- 50-50 "non-flat" rail (rainbow, kinked, etc...)
- Boardslide small rail
- Frontside boardslide a box
- Nose/tail press or slide on box
- Dropping into pipe
- Getting air in pipe
- Air to fakie in pipe
- 360 in pipe (one direction)

### Riding:

- 360s both directions off a "Bigger" small jump
- Grabbing a spin off a "Bigger" small jump
- Clearing medium sized jumps confidently and in control
- Grabs (at least 4) off a medium jump
- 50-50 a "non-flat" rail (rainbow, kinked, etc...) [box for skiers]
- Boardslide a rail (any rail)
- Frontside boardslide a "Bigger" small box
- Nose/tail press or slide on a box
- Drop into pipe
- Air to fakie in pipe
- 360 in pipe (one direction)
- Smooth run, getting air most hits with multiple grabs, small spins

### **Level III—Advanced**

Level III Freestyle Specialist is intended for masterful park riders and teachers. An instructor who achieves level III certification has proven to be a capable coach with very advanced freestyle skills.

#### Teaching:

- 360 to 540 off a medium jump
- Advanced spins (540 & up)
- Off axis spins
- Advanced/Tweaked Grabs
- Stepping up to large jumps
- Spinning onto/out of rails & boxes
- Advanced/large rails & boxes (50-50 & boardslide)
- 540 & up spins in pipe
- Mid-pipe entry/exit
- Getting bigger air in the pipe

#### Riding:

- 540 off a medium jump
- Advanced spins (multiple 540 & higher spins with grabs)
- Off axis spins
- Grabs (at least 6 total with some tweaked) off large & medium jumps
- Clearing large jumps confidently and in control
- At least 270 onto or out of medium box
- Mix of 50-50s, Boardslides & Presses on advanced/large rails/boxes
- Full "slopestyle" run through a park
- 540 & up spins in pipe
- Mid-pipe entry/exit
- Consistently getting good air in the pipe

## Definitions:

The following definitions are a rough guide to the size of terrain features each Specialist level is required to be proficient on. Each park is different, and examiners will take the park and conditions into consideration.

### Jumps

Small – 5 to 10 foot gap

Medium – 12 to 30 foot gap

Large – Over 30 foot gap

### Boxes

Small – 5 to 10 feet long, maximum of 2 feet tall, ride on or small gap takeoff, over 8 inches wide

Medium – 8 to 16 feet long, 1 to 3 feet tall

Large – Over 15 feet long and 4 feet tall

### Rails

Small – 5 to 10 feet long, maximum of 2 feet tall, ride on or small gap on, over 4 inches wide

Medium – 8 to 16 feet long, 1 to 3 feet tall

Large – Over 12 feet long and 4 feet tall

## **Passing**

To pass any freestyle specialist level, you must successfully (passing score is based on the level of Specialist the candidate is attempting) complete the written exam (given during the Specialist) and meet the following standards of Instruction, Movement Analysis and Riding Skills. Concepts, skills and ideas from your previous certifications should be shown throughout the evaluation process regardless of desired Specialist level.

## **Instructor knowledge & skill**

Applicant's knowledge and experience will be evaluated based on demonstrated teaching assignments and conversations with the evaluator. Applicants must clearly apply effective and accurate knowledge of freestyle skiing/snowboarding. They must demonstrate and understand the teaching and learning concepts when leading the group and apply class handling skills and safety awareness.

Practical application and knowledge-based questions of teaching, riding, and movement analysis can be asked on the chair lift and/or in front of the group. The evaluator is not looking for "canned" presentations, rather for a candidate's ability to present compelling teaching situations and identify ways to solve specific situations.

Participants will be evaluated in the following concepts:

- Group safety & Smart Style
- Professionalism
- Organization (Lesson Model Creativity and originality of presentations)
- Use of effective exercises and progressions
- Communication of Ideas and Concepts
- Appropriate Demonstrations
- Use of Feedback
- Presentation to Multiple Intelligences
- Linking of one learning situation to the next
- Created a Positive Learning Environment
- Use of Movement Analysis
- Pace (talking vs. Riding)
- Understanding/use of the ATML model
- Understanding/use of Teaching Concepts
- Understanding/use of Learning Concepts
- Understanding of Equipment
- Freestyle teaching experience
- Terminology of freestyle snowboarding tricks and features

## **Movement Analysis Knowledge & Skill**

During the specialist program, you must clearly demonstrate that you are able to see the movements of a freestyle rider, present an organized, detailed and useful description, use non-judgmental terminology, and give accurate Cause & Effect. There will also be the opportunity to discuss freestyle movement analysis throughout the Specialist process.

Participants will be evaluated in the following concepts:

- Student Profile
- Surroundings and Environment
- Stance and Alignments
- Rotary Movements
- Pressure Movements
- Cause & Effect



## **Riding Knowledge & Skill**

During the specialist program, you will be asked to ride various types of freestyle terrain: jumps, rails/boxes, pipes, flatland and natural features. You should demonstrate creativity in your individual riding style. Demonstrations of maneuvers or freestyle skills should be appropriate for the desired teaching situation or Specialist level. The evaluator could be watching your riding at any time throughout the test day. Environmental, terrain and snow conditions will be taken into consideration.

Participants will be evaluated in the following concepts:

- Professionalism
- Safety
- Creativity and originality in use of terrain and features
- Stance
- Rotary Movements
- Pressure Control Movements
- Blending of the movements
- Versatility on a variety of park features

Whatever your riding style or experience level, be prepared to show the evaluator what you are capable of. Have fun and show them what your skills will allow you to do (safely!).

## **Exam Format**

The Freestyle Specialist is a two day or three-night “clinic style” event (like a level I exam). The first day is a clinic and the second day is a test. The group will consist of both snowboarders and skiers, as well as all levels of park teaching and riding experience.

Day One: The first day of the Specialist will be a day of introductions, both within the group and to the local resort, and a day to share teaching and riding information. Day One is an open format park & pipe clinic. This is the day to ask questions! Based on the group’s desires and ability level (as well as the terrain and conditions available), the evaluator will cover topics that may be tested on Day Two. Use this time to get and give new ideas for teaching in the park. This is also a time to fine tune any riding issues you may have.

By then end of Day One, each member of the group should be thinking about what level of Freestyle Specialist they would like to pursue. Unlike other exams, the Freestyle Specialist is non-linear. You can choose the level you feel confident pursuing. For example, if you are a very experienced and accomplished park instructor, skip level I and go straight to II or III. Talk with your evaluator to get their feedback on what level they think you should attempt on Day Two. While you may discuss and select your desired level of Specialist, you may not change once you begin the exam on Day Two. Pick a certification level within your teaching and riding ability because you may not switch once the exam has begun.

## **Typical Exam Schedule**

### **Two Day, Weekend Specialist**

#### **Day One**

8:30 Registration at the host resort  
9:00 General Meeting / Introductions  
9:30 Morning Session on the snow  
12:00 Technical Knowledge Lunch – Ask and answer questions  
1:00 Afternoon Session on the snow  
3:30 Closing meeting / wrap up  
4:00 On your own

#### **Day Two**

8:30 Written Exam  
9:15 General Meeting  
9:30 Morning Session on the snow  
12:00 Lunch  
12:45 Afternoon Session on the snow  
3:00 On your own / scoring by examiner  
4:30 Results are handed out

### **Three Night, Weeknight Specialist**

#### **Night One**

5:45 Registration at the host resort & general meeting / introductions  
6:30 Session on the snow  
9:30 On your own

#### **Night Two**

5:45 Written Exam  
6:45 Session on the snow  
9:30 On your own

#### **Night Three**

5:45 Arrive and meet with group  
6:15 Session on the snow  
8:30 On your own / scoring by examiner  
9:30 Results are handed out

Every effort will be made to present results in a timely manner. The priority, however, is to carefully evaluate each candidate's performance and return a fair result based on constant standards.

If you are unable to stay for the results, please notify your examiner. The Central Division office can mail your results, or you can designate someone else to pick up your results at the exam. Please tell your examiner what you would prefer. Writing a brief note can help eliminate any uncertainty about how you would like to receive your results.

## How to Prepare

People prepare for tests in many ways. Explore all available resources and decide which methods work best for your learning style and riding level. There is no right way to prepare.

The first half of the Freestyle Specialist will be a clinic to help prepare you for the second, scored section. For many riders seeking a Level I Freestyle Specialist, this clinic should have you prepared for the test (much like a level I exam). With that said, extra preparation is never a bad thing when coming into a Specialist.

### Ride.

On-snow training, both in and out of the park, is a critical part of your preparation. Seek out formal and informal freestyle coaching. If possible, ride the area where you plan to take the Specialist so that you are familiar with the park and pipe.

### Read.

Use the AASI Manual to help form a base of knowledge. Then read the PSIA/AASI Freestyle Manual to get into the nuts and bolts of teaching freestyle. AASI has several other publications that can help in your preparation: Core Concepts, The Children's Manual and the AASI Snowboard Movement Analysis Handbook. Read articles in AASI's national publication, *The Professional Rider*, and in Central Division's newsletter, *The Central Line*. Also check the organizations web sites for more information. Learn about terrain park design and maintenance. You don't need to know everything about riding in the park & pipe; just find the aspects of freestyle that appeal to you and use them as a springboard for your learning.

### Watch.

There are tons of great videos about snowboarding, especially freestyle snowboarding. Use them to practice your movement analysis. Free videos can be found online by searching [YouTube](#) or at specialty sites, such as [SnowProfessor.com](#). The more snowboarding you watch, the better you will become at picking apart a rider's movements. Do this when you ride the lift too. Look at riders, tricks and tracks and try to understand how and why what you see was done. (Then go try to do it yourself!)

### Teach.

Practice teaching freestyle lessons. Shadow more experienced instructors while they teach in the park. Practice teaching all the topics in this guide. The more miles you have teaching, the more confident you will be during the Specialist.

Again, remember to find a method of preparation that fits your learning style. The road to Specialist is more important than the destination. The learning you will do in preparation for the test is by far the most beneficial part of the entire process. With proper preparation, you will be relaxed and confident during the test. You might even enjoy the experience! If you have any questions, contact the Central Division office.

## Study Questions

The following questions are not meant to be a comprehensive list of Specialist topics. Rather, they should help you understand what type of questions might be asked on the written exam and suggest some topics you should probably understand.

How do you integrate the Smart Style and the Responsibility Code in your park lessons?

How do you share your enthusiasm for snowboarding with your clients?

What is the Movement Concept?

What is the Performance Concept?

What are the fundamental movements in snowboarding?

What does each fundamental movement do to the snowboard?

What does each fundamental movement do to the rider's center of mass (CM)?

Compare and contrast rotation, counter-rotation, and a countered stance.

What is a learning pathway?

How do learning pathways affect lesson planning?

How can an instructor accommodate different learning styles in the park?

Compare and contrast direct instruction and guided discovery.

How do you balance instructional time with practice time?

What effect does fear have on a client?

When do you do movement analysis?

What is student-centered teaching?

Describe the Service Concept.

What are two categories for feedback?

Know the 4 points of Smart Style and what they mean in real life?

Learn about the different kinds of jumps, and know their parts.

Know the parts of a halfpipe.

What is the difference between Ollie and Nollie?

Learn the correct definitions of rail tricks (frontside vs. backside & boardslide vs. lipslide)

Know what ATML means and how to use it when teaching.

Know the different directions (and the terms for them) that a rider can spin.

Know different grabs, spins and rail tricks.

What is the generic term for the machine used to cut/groom a halfpipe?

How is a super pipe different from a regular pipe?

## Resources

Park and Pipe Instructor's Guide, AASI/PSAI, 2005

Snowboard Movement Analysis Handbook. AASI, 2003

Snowboard Instructor's Guide - New for 2007!, AASI, 2007

The American Teaching System (ATS). PSIA.

Core Concepts. PSIA, 2001

Online Sites:

PSIA/AASI Forums: <http://www.psia.org/forum/category-view.asp>

[SnowProfessor.com](http://www.snowprofessor.com)

Comprehensive list of terms: [http://www.valueseek.com/snowboard\\_terms.htm](http://www.valueseek.com/snowboard_terms.htm)

Watch videos on [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com), [blip.tv](http://www.blip.tv) or [Vimeo](http://www.vimeo.com) to practice movement analysis