It Feels Like the First Time....Feels Like the Very First Time - By Dana Forbes

I was that person. The one stepping on other peoples equipment and falling as I entered the pass scanner. It was as if someone played a trick on me and put extra wax on my snowboard. As I trudged through the lift line, my front foot shooting out at a speed faster than my body could keep up with, I began to sweat profusely.  Best part, this wasn't my 1st time snowboarding, or even my 2nd or 3rd. It was like my 20th but if you spread that out over 15 years, noting the majority were year one, it will always look this ugly.

You would think I would have learned my lesson as I tend to hop on this struggle bus about every three years when I decide that this will “be the year” I get “proficient” in snowboarding. While I have been out at least six times this year already and am now a solid level 4 ¾, I still feel like a beginner. Since I am so good at being a beginner, I thought I would share with you the lessons I learn from being a beginner snowboarder every year. If you haven’t put yourself in the beginner seat in a while, I strongly suggest it. It will not only make you a stronger instructor but a better all around ambassador on the hill.

* **Yield to those around you.**Skiers have no concept of other people’s space. Like seriously. I know the majority of people reading this are skiers and think it’s the snowboarders that get too close but I am here to set you straight, it’s you! My advice is whether you are a skier or snowboarder, be conscious of everyone’s space. On my first day out snowboarding, I was on the side of the trail and a skier went right between me and my sister and almost ran over my hand. I also had an instructor and his class completely cut me off in a very narrow section at the top of a beginner run. As instructors, we should be extra sensitive to anyone moving at mock turtle speed, recognizing they deserve their space so they don’t require a therapy sesh after you pass them.
* **Chairlifts are terrifying.**By this statement I do not mean that I think I am going to fall off of it... rather the exit ramps are seriously traumatizing. I am going to guess to most of you, exiting the chair is something you take for granted, and although you have seen your students struggle more than often, you really don’t remember, so take it from me….terrifying.
* **So tired.**My legs were on fire, like inferno hot. For those of you who know me, know each of my thighs measures more than some men’s waist and that I could back squat an elephant, but I can’t even begin to tell you how tired my legs got. I believe this was a combo of the stress and the fact that apparently you don’t put all the weight on your back foot locking out your front leg to snowboard properly. I lasted just under two hours and desperately needed a break...like for the rest of the day. I also had to stop every 500 feet or so. So a reminder to you all, your students (especially adults) need frequent breaks.
* **It’s all too steep.**Greens are very steep. Blues may be the death of me and black terrain will never happen! Don’t over terrain your students. Even as someone who skies everyday and knows terrain, it all seemed so much steeper as a beginner even at mock turtle. Last week I was in Beaver Creek and our very own Director of Education took me on the steepest blue I have ever seen for my first run and he knows my level of riding. After I slid down half of it on my butt, he asked “did I just over terrain you?” Insert eyeroll.
* **Turn down the heat.**I mentioned the sweating issue above and have determined it could be -20 degrees, I could be naked and still be so hot.  This is likely the cause of the stress from the skiers getting so close and exit ramps of the chairs being so steep or the melting of my quad muscles or the fact that the runs are all way too long and steep but either way I was dying hot. So as instructors dress warm because you won’t be hot, especially sliding at mock turtle. Oh and be sure to hydrate your students, I literally ate snow the other day because I was so thirsty and could not seem to get to the lodge quick enough.
* **Equipment matters.**One of the reasons I want to snowboard is I am so tired of my ski boots hurting me. But guess what? Snowboard boots can hurt as well. Apparently you do NOT downsize snowboard boots unless you want to have to amputate your middle toe after just a few hours. So be sure the fit is right and that they don't have 18 pairs of socks and long johns jammed up in there. By the way, I solved the issue by hacking apart the liner after day one. It worked but my toes are going to get cold if I ever calm down and stop sweating.
* **Take a lesson...duh!**Most of my attempts at becoming a professional snowboarder have been solo, without instruction. I am the CEO of PSIA-RM-AASI with access to the best instructors in the world and do you think I once took a lesson? NO! What is wrong with me? Well a few weeks ago Timmo from the office felt sorry for me and took me out on a few runs and guess what? He actually had some amazing advice and I got better and have plenty of things to practice now!
* **Know your goal or that of your clients.**Initially, I committed to taking my Level 1 Snowboard certification but I have quickly re-assessed that. While I do think it would be a great story to tell how your fearless leader failed her Level 1, I think I will conquer that next year. Instead, a few weeks ago, I met some rad ladies from Beaver Creek who invited me to go riding with this awesome group of little girls through their non-profit program called [Duchess Ride](https://members.psia-rm.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=1606&qid=449343). This amazing non-profit run by Rocky Mountain members Claire Altenau and Richelle Wagner, brings young girls together to cultivate TENACITY, CAMARADERIE, and CREATIVITY through snowboarding and skateboarding. While I committed to this after a shot of tequila, telling myself how hard can it be to snowboard with a bunch of little girls, I would agonize over it for the next two weeks. It did, however, give me a goal which assured that I would practice several more times before meeting up with them. Honestly I was scared every second of the day, up until the last run where we butt slid and penguin slid down some steep runs, laughing so hard my face hurt. In the end I am so glad I did it and it made me want to get better.
* **Just do it!**Recently at the Women’s Summit I spoke about two types of fear. The real fear where you could fall off a cliff and the fear of being exposed. I will admit to all of you 8,600 Rocky Mountain members (or the 5 that actually read this) that I think the reason I avoided snowboarding and never asked anyone to teach me, is I was afraid of not being good at something. I felt vulnerable and exposed. So whether you opt to learn something new, or just get better at what you do, allow it all to be seen. Here’s the thing, all of you are amazing at whatever you slide on but you can always get better. You do, however, have to allow your weaknesses to be seen. Next time you are at a clinic, go last. Let the clinician and whole group see you so you can get as much input into your sliding and then take that and grow from it. Needing to work on something is an opportunity to just do more of what you love while practicing to get better!

It’s only mid season so do me a favor, keep working on things. You all put so much time and effort into your clients or when you want to get certified so you owe it to yourself to do the same. Don’t get to the end of another season regretting that you didn’t work on something you said you would. Now I am off to snowboard, hope to meet some of you at my level one (date and time TBD) ;)!

Dana Forbes
CEO PSIA-Rocky Mountain-AASI