



## **YOUTH SKILLS IDEAS/SUGGESTIONS AND RESOURCES FOR COACHES TO PUT IN THEIR “TOOL BOXES”!!**

Hello VARA Members!

I realize many of you are already on snow or getting ready to head out shortly as many of our Eastern resorts are open or getting ready to open. As your VARA Youth Coordinator I wanted to touch base with all of you and remind you of the importance of fundamentals and skills acquisition as well as providing coaches with many links to videos on Eastern Skills, Canadian Skills, variations and other creative ideas on keeping it FUN!!! In everything we do, we need to remember that FUN is the KEY element and incorporating skills in a creative way (thinking outside the box) will keep our young athletes engaged and enjoying the wonderful sport of ski racing!

Quote from Chip White (USST Head Women’s World Cup Speed Coach)

*“Just going fast will only take you so far. If you learn the skills first and build from that base, then as you progress, learning how to ski fast will be easier and eventually lead to a longer and more successful ski racing career”*

To build on Chip White’s quote on the importance of skill development and to reiterate why we have focused so heavily on skills in the East let me remind all of you of our goals and strategy behind our **Eastern Skills Assessments**:

**Goal:** Reaffirm Eastern Children’s Committee’s commitment to skill development.

**Strategy:** Introduce a skills assessment which will guide appropriate skill development, provide metrics for assessing skill, and standardize the assessment of skills related to: balance, pole plant, carving, and turn shape. The tests are limited in number to provide for better utilization and standardization. These tests are the pole plant, one ski and apex drill.

Objective ski racing results continue to carry greater relative weight but this selection incentive underlines the importance of skill acquisition and recognize athletes later in their physical maturation and development who have a strong level of skill development. See the USSA Alpine Training System or Canadian Long Term Athletic Development outlines for the underlying research and basis.

Please visit the below link to see libraries of videos for U10, U12, U14 and U16 from the past few years of our Eastern Skills Assessments as well as many other videos. Our “youthskillsonline” website has extremely useful content for athletes who want to watch their peers going through the same assessments they will be doing. <http://www.youthskillsonline.com> here you will also find descriptions of our three skills along with scoring descriptions and specifications on how to set the drills up and select appropriate terrain. For our VARA Skills Assessment Protocol and scoring spreadsheet (provided by David Edry of STC) please go to <http://www.vara.org/resources/vara-youth-coordinator/12/> you can also find descriptions of the Canadian Skills there as well. The Canadian skills are the picket fence, skating drill and speiss drill.

Travis Widger of Holimont Ski Club in NY was kind enough to share all of his video from last year's U14 CanAms in Mt. Tremblant, Quebec. You need to go to [www.sprongo.com](http://www.sprongo.com) if you already have a Sprongo account then sign in with your account. If you don't have one then you need to create a new FREE account, which only takes a few seconds. Once you are in all you need to do is: SEARCH for eastern-canadian skills (must be lowercase) this will take you to 38 videos from the SL, 34 videos from the skills assessment day (apex drill, skating drill and picket fence) and 83 videos from the GS. Its awesome video and THANK YOU WIDG and HOLIMONT for sharing this video with us!!!

Below is a link to a Canadian site that provides video of young U10 and U12 athletes engaged in some of our Eastern skills, their Canadian skills (picket fence, skating drill and speiss drill) along with fun variations of these drills.

<http://www.skiquebec.qc.ca/fr/formations-et-programmes/formations/formation-en-ligne/#simple4>

One last link for another resource for all of you is always the Center of Excellence TV for USSA Skills, recent news and video <http://www.dartfish.tv/ussa>

I hope you will use these resources to add to your coaching repertoire!!! Below is a quote from Mikaela Shiffrin's parents. Mikaela just won the opening World Cup Slalom in Levi, Finland on October 16<sup>th</sup> by over a full second! This makes her World Cup SL wins at 5 to date. Mikaela's home club is BMA:

*"Mikaela has been fortunate in having had a coach who views skills acquisition and quality training, particularly during key developmental years, as critical elements to future success. Racing was always secondary to mastery. Mikaela is continually striving for improvement. She can then race feeling well prepared, confident, and supported, which makes that part of the sport so enjoyable for her."*-Mikaela's parents, Jeff and Eileen

**I will end with this but I want to be clear that it is important to remember that skills are tools that lead to mastery and not the final goal. Our goal is to make better skiers so that we can make faster ski racers!**

**VARA VISSION: Keep ski racing 1<sup>st</sup> in Vermont and Vermont ski racers 1<sup>st</sup> in the world!**

See you soon!

Sincerely,

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