

CARRY YOUR OWN DAMN GEAR



"My daughter, Nora Abrams, age 3, heading out for a day of skiing at Alpine Meadows, CA. Nora first got on skis at 2 years old and although we've tried to encourage her to carry her own gear from the start, it often required bags full of gummy bears and the promise of hot chocolate to even get her to the lift, let alone carry her own skis."

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Ever since I was a kid, my mom has always had this rule: If you're going to go skiing, you'd better carry your own ski gear. Which meant I was the 3-year-old slowly dragging my skis uphill to the beginner lift, complaining the entire way, while I looked over to other parents carrying both their children and their children's tiny skis.

When I was a teenage ski racer, I learned how to carry multiple pairs of skis at once over both shoulders—training and race skis or GS and slalom skis (my mom may have been tough in some aspects, but I was clearly not wanting for much in my youth). I had stopped complaining by then and instead took pride in how much I could carry on one trip through the parking lot. I began to understand my mother's thinking: If you're going to ski down fierce, snow-covered mountains, you'd better be strong enough to haul your own crap.

As a ski magazine editor in my 20s, I cringed when being put up in glitzy slopeside hotels where valets would try to lift my skis out of my beat-up Subaru. Ski valets? Give me a break. This ethos created a few awkward moments, like when the shuttle bus driver or airport baggage handler offered to help with my skis, but I would insist on doing it myself, despite the fact that I was already carrying way too many other heavy

bags. When my husband carried his 70-year-old mother's gear to the chairlift for her, gently placing each ski flat on the snow, I rolled my eyes under my goggles. Fancy ski resorts with escalators (I'm looking at you, Beaver Creek), slopeside lockers and butlers ready to lend a hand, frankly, make me never want to ski there.

I know of all the things in this crazy, messed-up world to care about, this should be low on the priority list, but hear me out: I believe carrying your own gear is character building. If you're going to call yourself a skier, then you'd better be prepared to not only carry your own stuff but also skip the chairlift entirely and hike up the mountain. (Shouldn't we just call backcountry skiers "skiers" and everyone else "elevator-takers"?)

Last winter, my daughter, Nora, was 3 years old and learning to ski. While heading to Meadow Chair at our home mountain of Alpine Meadows, CA (which is also where I learned to ski), I told her, "It's time you carried your own gear, just like I did when I was your age." You can probably guess what she did? Complained. Cried. Whined for gummy bears. And then when I told her this was the only way to the lift, she picked up her own damn skis and walked there. §