

on “wider is better,” as rocker has had a big impact on the skis’ ability to float, reducing the need to always go wider for good performance in off-piste, variable snow. That said, width is often a matter of the skier’s location and preferences for snow type and terrain. In the West, many ski with a waist width of 86 to 100 millimeters as an everyday ski, while on the East Coast the daily go-to ski is usually in the neighborhood of 74 to 86 millimeters. In powder-specific gear, I’m finding skis from 95 to 120 millimeters underfoot are the norm, with specialty skis going all the way up to 145 millimeters underfoot.

If you want more float you can either go wider or select a ski with more rocker. The wider the ski the slower the initiation, and the additional weight at tip and tail requires more energy to steer it over the course of the day. Powder-specific and specialty skis are still getting wider but become less versatile and more terrain-specific.


For those favoring more groomed and hard-snow performance, early rise/low rocker provides more forgiving initiation and consistency in transitions between turns while coming close to the performance of a traditional camber ski. Remember, too, that ski design and performance is directly related to how well the skis are maintained and tuned. Traditional skis are usually tuned with 1–2 degrees of base bevel, plus the tips and tails are detuned to minimize the risk of the

tips hooking at initiation and the tails catching at the completion of the turn. Rocker skis have this built into the design.

And now for one last bit of advice before you or your student makes that new ski purchase. The best option is to demo some of the models to get a first-hand feel of the ski’s performance or talk to someone who has the models you are looking at and read the reviews to see if the traits you are looking for are there. The good news is that ski quality is really good, so it’s hard to miss.

If you take the time to get informed, you (and the students you advise) will be in for a great ride—whatever rocker option gets the nod. **32°**

Mike Porter was on K2’s product development team for 29 years, and from 1988 to 2002 served first as the training director and then the director of Colorado’s Vail and Beaver Creek Ski Schools. He was a member of the PSIA Alpine Team from 1974 to 1996, serving as head coach for 16 years.



For more specifics on rocker offerings from various manufacturers and an article on how to teach rocker-equipped students, log on to TheSnowPros.org and check out the “Web Extras” for **32 Degrees**.



OSPREY

KARVE SERIES

LIFT ACCESSED / SIDE COUNTRY RIDING

WWW.OSPREYPACKS.COM

© PHOTO: RYAN BONNEAU

