



Swimming... Many people swim because it's easy on the joints. While that's a plus for skiers, the most slope-friendly aspect of swimming is that it tones all major – and many minor – muscle groups. And because it demands a wide range of motion, it can boost flexibility, especially in your neck, shoulders, torso and hips. Swim fast intervals for an anaerobic drill, or keep a steadier pace for an aerobic workout. If you're a novice swimmer, take a lesson to learn the mechanics of a swim stroke. The better your technique, the better your workout will be.

What it Works: Shoulders, chest, triceps, biceps, upperback, lowerback, abdominals, obliques, gluteals, hamstrings, quadriceps, calves – you get the idea.

Insiders Tip: In atypical crawl stroke, about 70 percent of a swimmer's propulsion comes from the upper body. To move the focus to your lower body, grab a kick board and propel yourself solely with your legs. It won't take long to feel the burn.

Mountain Biking... If we had to pick only one cross-training activity, this would be it. It builds a solid aerobic base and taxes your anaerobic system, prepping you for intense efforts such as tight bumps and jump turns on steep slopes. Climbs strengthen your lower body, while downhill (if you don't sit) teach your legs to serve as shock absorbers. Both build muscle endurance. Mountain biking also employs ski techniques such as shifting your weight, maintaining a quiet upper body, adjusting your balance in response to changing terrain, keeping your eyes ahead to select your line and staying relaxed while hurtling downhill at high speeds. Another bonus: once you've flipped over your handlebars, trashed your body and scraped your face over rocks and dirt, wiping out on snow will seem like child's play.

What It Works: Quadriceps, hamstrings, calves, hip flexors and extensors, lower back, abdominals

Insiders Tip: The hamstrings are used in every phase of the pedaling stroke, but the greatest effort usually comes from the quads. Because skiing also emphasizes the quads, your hamstrings and quads may already be out of balance. (How to tell? If the back of your legs burn or cramp during climbs, this likely applies to you) To reduce your chance of injury and to keep from getting farther out of whack, try hamstring bridges. Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Keep your abs tight, and raise your pelvis up toward the ceiling until your body forms a straight line from your knees to your shoulders. Slowly lower your pelvis to about an inch above the ground. Do three sets of 12 reps.

Those Hamstrings

Your instinct to loosen your hamstrings is right on; tight hams can harm your stance, hinder your ability to react to changing terrain and even lead to injury. For a better stretch, check your form. People often round their backs when stretching their hamstrings – which nicely loosens the back, but not necessarily the back of the legs. Instead, lie on your back with your legs flat on the floor. Your lower back should be slightly arched with your hands stacked, palms down, beneath it. Keep your legs straight and slowly lift one leg until you feel a stretch, maintaining light pressure on your hands. Hold for 30 seconds. Start stretching now, and you'll be in fine form come winter.