

What is an AST course?

AST stands for Avalanche Skills Training. The AST Level 1 course is a minimum of seven hours of classroom time and one full day in the field (backcountry or ski resort). Some courses offered may be of longer duration.

The AST program provides a national standard for both entry-level (AST 1) and intermediate-level (AST 2) decision making in avalanche terrain.

Who are the AST Instructors?

AST instructors are Canadian Avalanche Association (CAA) members. AST Level 1 instructors are either "Active" or "Professional" members and have completed the CAA Industry Training Program (ITP) Level 1. AST Level 2 instructors are Professional members and have completed the CAA ITP Level 2. As Avalanche Canada does not control or monitor AST instructors' personal abilities, we encourage parents to thoroughly research the instructor's experience in teaching AST courses, particularly to youth.



Founding Partner
of the AST program



Your child has enrolled in an Avalanche Skills Training (AST) Level 1 course. What does this mean?

This weekend course is not a guarantee of your child's future safety in the backcountry. Avalanche Canada is giving you this pamphlet because we are still concerned about your child after they take this course. We want to help you understand what your child will learn so you can give informed consent to participate, as well as be prepared to supervise your child once they complete the course. Here are a few things you should know:

Some young students:

- ➔ increase their risk-taking behaviour after taking an AST course.
- ➔ over-estimate what kind of decisions they are qualified to make after taking an AST course.
- ➔ lead other youth in the backcountry; they are not qualified to assume this kind of responsibility.

Things you can do:

1. Supervise your child's use of the backcountry. Be alert to increasingly bold use of avalanche terrain by your child.
2. Take the Avalanche Skills Training course with your child.
3. Ensure the course instructor is well prepared for teaching youth.



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What does this mean?



The Avalanche Skills Training Level 1 course is a terrific introduction to the complex world of avalanche safety.

It encourages students to wisely and safely use the backcountry. The community of AST instructors has observed the characteristics of young AST students over many years and wants you to know the following:

Certain risk-seeking youth interpret completion of the AST course as a license to aggressively pursue high-end activities in the backcountry such as skiing steep couloirs, “high-marking” and “hill climbing”. Students at the AST 1 level do not have the skills required for these high-end activities without the help of a mentor. If your child is a risk seeker, be sure to talk to your AST instructor—he or she may have some pertinent insights.

- AST is only the first step. It needs to be followed with mentorship in the backcountry.



Young participants in AST courses are often extremely proficient at their chosen sport. Their skills at skiing, boarding or snowmobiling can be vastly superior to their ability to assess avalanche terrain, even after taking an AST course.

Ensure your child always approaches the uncontrolled backcountry with more caution than the in-bounds areas of a resort.

- The backcountry needs a much bigger margin of safety than the terrain park.

Leading peers into the backcountry may involve such things as making “go / no go” decisions in avalanche terrain. While it is one thing to take that responsibility on a personal level, it is another order of responsibility to make that choice for others. Guides take years to perfect their craft. AST trained individuals should only venture into the backcountry with others of equal, and preferably higher, levels of training.

What are the objectives of the AST 1 course?

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Understand the basics of avalanche formation and release.
- Identify avalanche terrain.
- Know the steps required to plan and carry out a trip.
- Use appropriate travel techniques in avalanche terrain.
- Carry out a companion rescue.
- Understand the limits of their training.

What are the goals of the AST level 1 course?

AST Level 1 provides an entry-level decision-making framework that is:

- Based on the most advanced knowledge available.
- Suitable for use by people with basic training and little experience.

In addition, the course will:

- Provide the knowledge required for further avalanche training.
- Introduce and promote the AST Level 2 course as the logical next step for gaining intermediate-level decision-making skills.

Hazards will be encountered both during and after the course is completed. By taking the AST 1 course, your son or daughter is not immune from encountering and/or being harmed by avalanches.

AST 1 is an essential first step for your son or daughter to become aware of the hazards and learn how to make appropriate decisions in the backcountry. For many, AST 1 is their introduction to a life-long learning process. We encourage you to get involved and learn alongside your child.



I have read and understand this pamphlet of information pertaining to the Avalanche Skills Training Course.

I feel I have enough information to make an informed judgment regarding the participation of:

Who is a minor under my care (you must be a parent or registered guardian).

Date _____ Telephone # _____

Signature _____