

Program Principles

- The Host Program is a volunteer program sponsored by Big Sky Resort with the purpose of enhancing the guest experience at Big Sky. The women and men in the Host Program often have the most direct interactions with guests compared to other staff. Hosts are selected for the program who project a love of skiing and Big Sky and enjoy sharing that love with guests.
 - Hosts receive benefits in the form of season passes, lift ticket “vouchers”, and other discounts.
 - Lift ticket vouchers are intended for family and friends of the Host. **They are NOT to be sold.**
 - Hosts are covered by the Resort **Worker’s Compensation Insurance** while on duty.
 - Applicants primarily interested in a free pass are purposely not selected.
- Program expectations and best practices are established by the Resort and Mountain Host Steering Committee to promote safety and effective interactions with guests.
- **The safety of guests and Hosts is of the utmost importance.** At all times, Hosts have the authority to adapt or cancel host activities due to weather or surface conditions.

General Mountain Host Expectations

- All Hosts perform “plaza duty” as well as on-the-snow hosting activities. Answering questions, giving directions and other assistance to guests enhance the guest’s Big Sky experience.
- Consistent with Resort policy for on-mountain staff, Hosts are required to take an annual skiing assessment to assure the safety of the individual Host and to project an image of professionalism to guests.
 - Opportunities to improve skiing proficiency will be provided for Hosts as needed.
- Hosts recovering from injury or illness may perform “plaza-only” duty until cleared to resume full activity.
- **Be on time for your scheduled shift and fully complete the assigned time.** Sign-in and out through **Homebase** prior to your shift and after completing it. Allow sufficient time to reach the resort given road and weather conditions. If you get caught in conditions that will delay your arrival, contact (if possible) another host scheduled for your time slot so that adjustments may be made.
 - There is a Homebase app available for both Apple and Android smartphones.
- Hosts are expected to present a “professional” appearance and bearing while on duty or anytime wearing their Big Sky Mountain Host jacket.
 - Hosts supply their own black ski pants. Hats should be in good taste and not reference another resort.

- Host jackets should be zipped to present a professional image. Backpacks or fanny packs are not permitted.
- Hosts are expected to have a smartphone for use on the mountain. Verizon generally has the best on-mountain coverage. Hosts should enter contact information for all other Hosts as well as the Dispatch (ski patrol) number (406-995-5880).
- Hosts must have basic technology skills and be able effectively use the text and email applications on their phone and the Homebase application used for scheduling and clock in/outs. Training/coaching is available if needed.
- Hosts are expected to be knowledgeable, use good judgement, and be flexible.
 - Hosts are expected to have a wide range of knowledge about the ski mountain (both South and North sides), important activities/events, base facilities, and the surrounding area.
 - Hosts must be flexible and willing to change shift responsibilities to accommodate staffing or weather conditions. This could include location or tour assignment changes.
 - The Host Steering Committee conducts new host training, refresher training, and supporting materials to equip and inform Hosts.
- If a Host is injured while on duty, receiving prompt medical care is the foremost concern. Report the incident as soon as possible to a member of the Steering Committee and/or the Mountain Host Resort Liaison (Ean Darwin or his backup Joe Keszler).
- Providing mountain tours is an important and highly visible hosting activity. Hosts must be able to conduct tours on both the South (“Big Sky”) and North (“Moonlight”) Sides of the ski mountain.
 - Tour training is conducted early in the season. Watch for details.
 - When off-duty, Hosts are encouraged to take a tour led by an experienced Host to see and hear how their tours are conducted and to gain exposure to unfamiliar areas of the resort.

Select Rules/Best Practices for Mountain Hosts

Following are several “dos and don’ts” and best practices. Training provided by the Steering Committee may include additional guidelines and practices.

- In keeping with the Resort policy, Hosts are required to wear helmets while on lifts or runs.
- While on duty, or whenever wearing your Host jacket, your skiing is limited to regularly groomed green and blue runs.
- All Hosts are required to meet at the tour gathering flag (near Swift Current) 15 minutes before scheduled tour times. Contact the other Hosts on your shift if something unexpected prevents you from meeting at the tour flag. That way, your fellow hosts know you are not injured somewhere on the mountain.

- **Hosts are not permitted to use the “Authorized Personnel Only” (APO) lift lines.** Hosts may use the “Singles” lift lines when moving between locations. When leading a tour, use the regular lift line to aid in keeping the group together and to provide better opportunities to interact with the guests.
- All discussions with, or in the presence of guests, should have a positive tone and impression. Any issues with the program or the Resort should **not be discussed in the presence of guests** and need to be brought to a Steering Committee member.
- **Do not eat lunch in front of guests.** If you must eat something, limit it to a small item, such as a granola bar, and consume it discreetly.
- Moving between assigned locations on the mountain is **not a free-skiing** opportunity. Proceed directly to your next station. Always be on the lookout for guests struggling, injured, or appearing lost.
 - **If you encounter an injured guest,** follow these instructions for handling the situation:
 - Contact ski patrol dispatch (406-995-5880) and identify yourself as a Mountain Host.
 - Cross skis, if possible, above the accident to protect the guest from collision.
 - Provide the approximate location of the injured guest (for example, “Tippy’s, one third down on skier’s right”)
 - Provide a general guest description including jacket color (for example, “adult male, red jacket”)
 - Provide the apparent nature of injury, especially if the guest is unresponsive (for example, “shoulder area injury”).
 - Stay with the guest until ski patrol arrives and assist patrol if requested.
 - **If you encounter a guest struggling** with their skiing to the point that they are a significant risk to themselves or other guests, **AND** if the guest agrees, you may request a “courtesy ride” through the Dispatch (ski patrol) number to safely take the guest to the base. Give Dispatch the same information as you would in an injury situation. Stay with the guest until ski patrol arrives.

Shift Procedures

- Each day a morning text is sent to Hosts scheduled to work that day. This text stream provides a valuable avenue of communication from the resort to scheduled Hosts and between the on-duty Hosts to share timely information on conditions, lift status, opening/closing terrain etc.
 - The text comes from Resort supervision (Ean Darwin/Joe Keszler).
 - The text designates an experienced, scheduled Host to act as **Lead Host** for that day.
 - The Resort Liaison and his/her manager are included.

- The **Lead Host** will organize tours, assign Host tour leader(s) as needed, and assign non-tour Hosts to areas of the resort to “work the mountain”. The **Lead Host** has the task of putting up the tour flag at 8:30 and taking it down following the 12:30 tour departure time.
- The **Lead Host** will make the decision whether to cancel tours due to safety concerns, including tour route conditions and extreme weather. **Safety of Hosts and guests is of paramount importance.**
- All Hosts are to meet at the Tour Flag prior to scheduled tour times. If you are delayed, such as staying with an injured guest, use the text stream to inform other hosts. This is for your safety.
- We have two 4-hour shifts - AM and Midday.
 - Clock in/out using **Homebase** prior to the start of your shift and after your shift is completed.
 - **There are no lunch breaks.**
 - **The AM shift is from 8:30 to 12:30.**
 - At 8:30, Hosts are on the plaza ready to greet the guests and answer their questions.
 - If the AM shift is sufficiently staffed, a Host should go to the top of Swift Current to assist guests during the early rush.
 - At 10:15 (Fifteen minutes prior to morning tour meeting time), hosts leave the plaza to “boot up” and join the other Hosts meeting at the tour flag.
 - **The Midday shift is from 10:30 to 2:30.**
 - By 10:30, Hosts are on skis and meet at the tour flag. **Midday Hosts should be there by 10:15 if you want to be available to lead a morning tour.**
 - At around 12:15 (Fifteen minutes prior to the 12:30 tour), hosts meeting at the tour flag.

Tour Basics:

- Tours are complementary and **we do not accept gratuities.** You may, as an alternative, offer to take a guest’s donation to the Eagle Mount program and you are responsible for getting the donation to the Eagle Mount staff.
- Tours are offered twice a day and begin at the Tour Flag near the base of Swift Current lift.
 - The AM Tour starts at 10:30 and covers the South (“Big Sky”) Side of the ski mountain.
 - The PM Tour starts at 12:30 and covers the North (“Moonlight”) Side of the mountain.

- **While at the tour flag, face guests; do not stand with your back to guests.** We want to present an inviting image to guests to take a tour; not present a “green barrier”.
- Tour organization/limitations:
 - We **DO NOT** conduct tours for a single guest. Suggest he/she check back at the next tour time. With the growth in resort guest numbers and limited Host resources it is a poor use of resources to conduct single guest tours.
 - We **DO NOT** conduct “green only” tours. Our groomed green and blue run tours serve the broadest range of guests most efficiently.
 - **Minor guests must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to participate in a tour.**
 - Large tours often benefit from using a “sweep” to ensure guest safety and an effective tour. A sweep “brings up the rear” and assists the tour leader to ensure that all guests are accounted for.
 - If the tour leader feels a sweep is necessary, and the tour has **more than seven guests**, the **Lead Host** may assign another Host to be the sweep. This assumes there is sufficient staffing to permit this. A tour with seven or fewer guests may not use a Host as a sweep.
 - The **Lead Host** may limit the size of a tour for the safety of the guests.
 - Inform tour guests that they may leave the tour at any time, but they must tell the tour leader **before** they leave the tour early. This is to prevent unnecessary concern about a “lost” individual.
 - **Safety is paramount.** Conditions that are bad (or even “too good” – 18” powder overnight) may make our normal tour routes unsafe for the participants in the tour. Use good judgement whether to alter or end a tour in the interest of safety.
 - Be sensitive to **altitude sickness issues** among guests, particularly those visiting from low altitude home locations. Headache and extreme fatigue are common symptoms. Pace your tour to the needs of affected guests to allow sufficient rest opportunities.
 - When the size of a tour requires more than one chair, be sure to let all guests know where to regroup at the top of the lift.
 - When riding a lift with your tour guests sit in one of the outside positions. This will allow you to speak with your tour guests without turning away from anyone.
 - You may want to ask the guests if they are interested in hearing about non-skiing information, such as local geology or wildlife. There are information resources available on the Host website that will be useful.
 - **If a tour guest is injured** inform the other participants that the tour must be stopped. Follow these instructions for handling an injured guest:
 - Contact ski patrol dispatch (406-995-5880)
 - Cross skis above the accident to protect the guest from collision.

- Provide the approximate location of the injured guest (for example, “Tippy’s, one third down on skier’s right”)
- Provide a general guest description including jacket color (for example, “adult male, red jacket”)
- Provide the apparent nature of injury, especially if the guest is unresponsive (for example, “shoulder area injury”).
- Stay with the guest until ski patrol arrives and assist patrol if requested.
- **Hosts must be sufficiently knowledgeable about both North and South sides to conduct tours or work the mountain on either side.** It is each Host’s responsibility to seek out relevant information, including from experienced Hosts. Useful information is also available on the Host website.

“Working the Mountain”:

- Host presence at high volume signs/maps to give directions and answer guest questions is a “working the mountain” priority. The priority locations are:
 - South side: (1) top of Swift Current, (2) top of Ramcharger and (3) top of Southern Comfort.
 - North side: the top of Madison 8 and/or Iron Horse, as the circumstances demand.
- During very busy periods in the base, and if staffing permits, a midday Host may be assigned plaza duty.
- Be very careful when responding to “where do you recommend that I ski?” guest questions. First time visitors to Big Sky often don’t realize that difficulty ratings are locally based and many of our runs might be rated more difficult at other resorts. Guests also often overestimate their skill level. A good practice is to suggest starting on relatively easier terrain. **This is also a great opportunity to suggest participating in our complementary mountain tours.**
- During busy periods, be prepared to assist with congested lift lines. Southern Comfort is notorious for congestion mid-morning. Guests and Mountain Operations staff greatly appreciate assistance.
- Hosts are often asked by guests to take **cellphone pictures**. You will find yourself in a location where Crystal Images photographers are stationed to offer guests photos. The top of Southern Comfort is frequently such a location, as is Mr. K, and several others.
 - **Don’t offer to take guest pictures when Crystal Images is working in the immediate area.** Be responsive to guest requests and take their picture **when asked** while being respectful of Crystal Images by keeping a distance from them.
 - Our relationship with Crystal Images remains positive by telling guests that professional quality photos are available from Crystal Images.

“Plaza Duty”:

- Plaza duty addresses countless questions. Every Host should be familiar with ticketing, restrooms, lockers, lost/found, Snow Sports office, Big Sky Sports, etc.
- Typically, a Host is positioned between the top of the “drop off” stairs and Basecamp. Be aware that new guests cannot see the Snowcrest building so expect questions on how to find Snow Sports, rentals, lost and found, restrooms, lockers etc.
- Another important location for a Host is near the ticket lines and kiosks to assist guests and answer questions.
 - Become familiar with the handheld pass scanners to answer guest questions about the validity of their pass. Training and written instruction are available.
- Be familiar with the IKON and Mountain Collective pass procedures, particularly activating new passes and how to charge tram rides to their credit card.
- Be very careful when responding to “where do you recommend that I ski?” guest questions. First time visitors to Big Sky often don’t realize that difficulty ratings are locally based and many of our runs might be rated more difficult at other resorts. Guests also often overestimate their skill level. A good practice is to suggest starting on relatively easier terrain. **This is also a great opportunity to suggest participating in our complementary mountain tours.**
- During periods of extreme cold or key lift holds, engage with guests indoors to answer questions. Check your daily text stream to get the most current information to share with guests.
- Expect to be asked the same question repeatedly ... **patience, patience, patience!**

Shift Scheduling/Swaps

- Scheduling is done in the fall in three seniority groups. Returning Hosts “claim” shifts directly on Homebase and the “Homebase Administrator” (Ean/Joe) will confirm selections as part of your schedule. Scheduling is done in two periods of the season: roughly Opening Day to latter January, late January until Closing Day.
 - Scheduling instructions will be sent to Hosts by email.
 - New Hosts will not be scheduled until they’ve gone through orientation and had their ski assessment.
- “Full time” Hosts have a commitment of 112 hours (28 4-hour shifts) balanced across the season. “Half time” Hosts have a 56-hour (14 shift) commitment.
- You may arrange to **swap** shifts with another Host. Once agreed upon with the substitute Host, text the Homebase Administrator (presently Ean Darwin) **and** Steering Committee members Jan Barr and Rebecca Appenzeller regarding the dates/shifts

involved and copy the other Host involved. Hosts have always been highly responsive to requests for swaps ... life happens!

- **Emergency situations**, such as becoming ill the evening before a shift, may occur. Several Hosts have agreed to be emergency hosts. Contact the “roster coordinator” (presently Mike Boyer) who will contact an available emergency replacement. You are responsible for arranging an after-the-fact swap with the emergency substitute. Inform the Homebase Administrator of the agreed upon swap, copying Jan and Rebecca.