

Part 5

You are going to read a magazine article about a teenager called Harry Dean who went on a freestyle ski jumping course. For questions 31–36, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

Learning freestyle ski jumping

by Harry Dean

line 10 'Remember, speed is your friend, not your enemy,' said Gareth, our instructor, as we looked down the ski slope. 'Now, who wants to go first?' The assembled group looked nervous. Then one guy, David, who'd had some experience of freestyle ski-jumping, and presumably wanted to preserve his reputation as someone who knew exactly what he was doing, pushed forward, skiing off down the slope towards the jump. He hit the approach ramp fast and flew upwards, arms flailing in the air. Even to our untutored eyes, something was wrong. We held our breath. He hit the ground, losing both skis, and flipped head-first into the snow. 'Remember,' Gareth then kindly informed us, 'speed is an unpredictable beast.'

Perhaps I just wasn't cut out for this freestyle stuff. On previous skiing holidays, I'd enjoyed messing about, practising turns in the snow. I just wasn't one of those teenagers who spent their time doing freestyle tricks on ramps and half pipes in skateboard parks. Deep down, I'd always thought it looked fun, but reckoned that, with my lack of know-how, if I'd tried to join with the skateboarders, with their baggy trousers and special language, I'd have risked total ridicule.

Then my parents decided we'd have a winter holiday at a training centre for freestyle skiing in the USA. It had a huge indoor facility near the slopes, with trampolines, and ski jumps covered in artificial snow, from which students leapt, shrieking as they attempted their new tricks, then landed in pits of foam cubes. After practising their moves indoors, students headed outside. 'Progression is inevitable!' the centre's slogan cheerily assured us. 'Before places like this trained people up, inexperienced ski jumpers would just throw themselves down the slopes and hope for the best,' said Gareth. 'But remember – once you're on the real jumps, if you hit the knuckle, you'll be in trouble.'

The 'knuckle' Gareth was referring to is the flat section behind the jump before the slope steepens again to become the landing zone proper. Land in the zone and your motion continues forward, minimising impact. Land on the flat and you stop dead, which is painful. Hence the need for speed. At first, though, it was all but impossible to convince my body to ignore what my brain was screaming at me and to race straight towards the jump. My legs would virtually go into reverse as I neared the launch point, so I came slamming down onto the knuckle. I managed not to fall, but by midday I felt several centimetres shorter. 'You need to control the jump, not let it control you,' said Gareth.

Day two started on the trampolines in the centre. I'd expected to hate being stuck indoors, looking at the snowy peaks outside, but bouncing on the trampolines was addictive. Some of the drills copied moves we'd make while ski-jumping, others were aimed at teaching 'aerial awareness' – knowing what your body was doing as you spun in space. Gareth gave us a running commentary. My 'aerial awareness' apparently needed work – and it's true that, every time I tried, I was aware of the moment before take-off, and nothing more until I found myself lying in the foam cubes next to the trampoline.

We moved back to the mountain to try again. Inevitably, there were more setbacks before I finally landed properly. Gareth seemed as delighted as me, and for a few moments I was walking on air, with the sheer pride of having achieved such an elusive goal. But that was short-lived. On the final run of the day, I forced myself not to reduce speed as I approached the jump, became airborne, and came down appropriately in the landing zone. Then I noticed both skis sliding down the slope ahead, no longer attached to my feet.

- 31 Harry suggests that David
- A had thought he would be in a more advanced group.
 - B was a good role-model for beginners in the group.
 - C had not listened to the teacher's instructions.
 - D was not as skilled as he appeared to believe.
- 32 What is meant by 'flailing in the air' in line 10?
- A announcing his arrival
 - B suitably positioned for jumping
 - C waving around uselessly
 - D raised high in victory
- 33 What does Harry say about his experience of freestyle sports?
- A His fear of failure prevented him from participating.
 - B His natural ability was never fully recognised.
 - C He discovered that his original opinion of freestylers was justified.
 - D He regrets not having developed the skills necessary to do well.
- 34 During Harry's first attempts at ski jumping, he
- A felt inhibited by the warning he had been given.
 - B struggled to overcome his natural instincts.
 - C showed a determination to improve his technique.
 - D regarded the fact that he remained upright as progress.
- 35 While training on the trampoline, Harry
- A resented the fact that he had to stay indoors.
 - B wished he had realised how difficult he would find it.
 - C failed to see the relevance of what he was asked to do.
 - D felt that the criticism he received was fair.
- 36 When Harry returned to the slopes after his indoor training, he
- A managed several surprisingly competent jumps.
 - B became convinced perfect jumps were impossible to achieve.
 - C got into difficulty after managing a good jump.
 - D suffered a loss of confidence before his last jump.