

BCS Outline 2026

What is Backcountry Semester?

Backcountry semester is a 11 week online backcountry mentorship program, taught by some of the most experienced big mountain guides and skiers in the US. Our goal is to equip you with the mindset and skills to make real-life high consequence decisions in the backcountry.

We are a group of IFMGA guides, and professional skiers who have survived long careers on the leading edge of big mountain travel, but we have made many mistakes on our own journeys. Backcountry Semester is not just a curriculum, it's an unfiltered look at the hard lessons learned from real experience.

We think that great education is not about how much content you cover during a course, it's about how much you can apply after the course. Over 11 weeks, the lessons have time to breathe. We dive deeply into 1 concept per week, with a live presentation followed by a Q&A. Then, interactive follow up work and the live chat create space to dissect the lessons and hone your understanding with the instructor who taught that session.

Knowing snow becomes less about memorizing science, and more about how to make decisions with it. Knots, and rope systems become familiar, and decision making becomes repeatable and clear.

Backcountry Semester is the next step in the evolution of backcountry education: done online on a schedule that allows you to really absorb it, before the snow flies, so you start the season sharp, and clear minded.

The Backcountry Semester Story

Backcountry Semester is all of the educational content from our legendary Big Mountain Snow Safety Course, but instead of squeezing it into two days, we stretch it over 11 weeks. After 15 years of delivering our core education, we realized it was too much in too little time. Students were impressed, but overwhelmed, and their ability to apply it was compromised because of the timeframe.

In 2025, we added on to our curriculum and spread it out over 11 weeks, opening it up to not only our Big Mountain students but any backcountry traveler who wants to evolve their game.

What can you expect from the Backcountry Semester?

1. Self paced pre-course video series to refine your skills
2. 11 educational sessions, in 3 content areas:
 - Snow science
 - Decision making
 - Technical skills
3. Weekly live presentations and Q&A (1hr on Zoom)
4. PDF summaries for each session for rapid recall at any point in the season
5. Community platform for follow up assignments and chat with instructors
6. The most experienced instructor team in the US:

Who are the Instructors?

1. Who we are

[Aaron Diamond](#) is a big mountain snowboarder, an avalanche educator, forecaster and an AMGA splitboard and rock guide based in Jackson, Wyoming. With first descents in the Tetons, Alaska Range, and the Andes, Aaron is not just a rider, but also one of the most highly respected avalanche educators having taught professional avalanche education, at the highest level.

[Adam Fabrikant](#) is one of the most prolific big mountain skiers alive today having made first descents from the Alaska Range, to the Andes, and the Himalaya. He is the most prolific Teton ski mountaineer of all time culminating with a 2024 Enduro Traverse, where he skied Buck, Wister, the South, Middle and Grand Tetons, Mt Owen and Teewinot in 20 hours, mostly by headlamp. Adam is also an IFMGA guide, forecaster and one hell of an educator!

[Billy Haas](#) is a legendary guide, and an elite big mountain skier. His passion for snow covered mountains has taken him to all the major ranges, and with Adam he completed an alpine style descent of Gasherbrum I and II, at over 8000m without oxygen. Billy is longtime avalanche educator and IFMGA guide.

[Morgan McGlashon](#) is the best skier of the bunch! After years of professional freeski competition she turned her attention to adventure skiing in her home range of the Tetons. She is the youngest woman to ski the Grand Teton. She is a seasoned ski guide with Exum Mountain Guides, and an outstanding educator.

[Zahan Billimoria](#) is a lifelong skier, climber and mountain guide. He was the Lead TGR guide in the Tetons, and guided Jeremy Jones on the Otterbody Face of the Grand Teton. His personal ski adventures have taken him to Bolivia, British Columbia and the Alps. His intimate relationship with risk is captured in his 2020 documentary

'Solving for Z'. Z is an IFMGA guide, and the founder of Big Mountain Snow Safety program.

Watch [Solving for Z](#), to learn the story behind the Backcountry Semester

Watch [Brother Crow](#) to learn about Billy and Adam's approach and process

Why join Backcountry Semester?

1. Replace 'rules' with decision-making frameworks
2. Sharpen your snow science understanding
3. Develop rope systems to add margins of security in ski mountaineering
4. Meet backcountry partners with the same skills and frameworks
5. Apply for Big Mountain Snow Safety (all Big Mountain students have to complete Backcountry Semester first)

Can I get Samsara Training plus the Education?

Yes, join Backcountry Pro!

Athlete Team + Backcountry Semester

Backcountry Pro is the ultimate backcountry preparation. Go into the winter with a sharp mind and a strong body. Get backcountry Semester PLUS a whole season of backcountry training with the Samsara Athlete Team

What you can expect:

- Build the fitness for dawn to dusk days
- Gain athleticism to ski and ride more aggressively
- Develop strength to keep you crushing through the winter
- Address jointly & tendon injuries to go into winter pain free

What is the Backcountry Semester Course Schedule?

1	Sep 29	Learn the Stability Framework
2	Oct 6	Making better backcountry decisions: Observe, interpret, decide
3	Oct 13	Know your dragon: Identify avalanche problems
4	Oct 20	Fundamentals of Big Mountain rope systems
5	Oct 27	Advanced Big Mountain rope systems
6	Nov 3	Understanding metamorphism: How snow changes over time

7	Nov 10	The Evolution of Stability After a Storm: Understanding Settlement
8	Nov 17	Dealing with deep slabs
9	Nov 24	How to choose the right window to ride the big lines
10	Dec 1	Deciding how to take risk: The terrain between my ears
11	Dec 8	How to survive an avalanche