I am a telemark skier. No I am not a telemarketer; it is a type of skiing. When I turned ten years old I put down my alpine skis to try the type of skiing my father had always loved. I too fell in love and have not looked back since. The difference between telemark skiing and the type of skiing seen everywhere today is that while telemark skiing, your heel is not attached to the binding. This means that in order to turn you must drop into a lunge position. It is very difficult to describe exactly how a telemark turn is made, so I’ve included a picture of me below to help.

I was drawn to telemark skiing because of the challenge. Growing up in Buffalo, NY, I never had big mountains to ski on. I began to get bored of alpine skiing down the same short runs every day. However, when I was learning to telemark ski, I found that even the smallest hills had their difficulties.
When I first started out, the bindings that were commercially available were essentially a cable that went around the back of the ski boot. The cable made sure that the front of the boot was held into the toe piece, which was attached to the ski. It was insecure and didn’t provide much lateral support. Telemark bindings at this time also didn’t release like alpine bindings. This means that no matter how hard someone fell, their ski would never come off. This was extremely dangerous and resulted in many injuries. In an article titled “Release! History of Safety Bindings,” Seth Masia states that before bindings could release, “about 1 percent of skiers suffered an injury on any given day.”

A few years later new telemark norm (NTN) technology came to market. This new type of binding and boot combination was groundbreaking. The article “Picking a Tele Trap” by Craig Dostie overviews the amazing features of the NTN bindings. The first thing Dostie points out is their ability to release. He says, “For those who want a safety release where the boot ejects from the binding, NTN is the way to go.” It is the only binding with this technology (Dostie). The other big improvement was in the lateral tension. The NTN binding does not use a cable at all. Instead, the front of the boot is secured by a spring loaded clamp (Dostie). This greatly increases the lateral support and overall stability while skiing.

NTN bindings have allowed me to telemark ski on any terrain at any mountain. On my old bindings I couldn’t ski extremely steep runs because the cables physically couldn’t handle the force that was being exerted on them. Also, since they didn’t release, I wasn’t comfortable going off of jumps because a bad fall could result in a torn ACL. Now, I am able to ski as hard and as powerful as I once could on my alpine skis.
This new technology is going to greatly change telemark skiing forever. For starters, more people are beginning to telemark because it is much safer on NTN bindings. Also, people who telemarked when they were younger generally stopped at a certain age because the instability was devastating to the knees. Now, the lateral strength of the NTN bindings allows for more forgiving turns. People will no longer have to switch back to alpine skiing when they get older. The best part about this new technology is that it is combining the grace of telemark skiing with the power of alpine skiing. I am excited to see the radical things people will be able to do on NTNs in the coming years.
Works Cited
