



Equipment Shop American Alpine Institute

Home of The Guides Choice Testing Program | Alpine Equipment & Clothing

The Assistant Shop Manager Position In-Training

The American Alpine Institute is seeking a creative and energetic person with a great enthusiasm for people, alpine climbing, snow sports, and a desire to work for a company that is committed to providing the best mountain education in America.

This spring we are going to hire for the position of Lead Equipment Specialist with the intent of a promotion to Assistant Shop Manager at the end of the summer season. (Please see the [Lead Equipment Specialist prospectus](#) on our website that outlines duties for the summer).

Introduction to the position

We intend to fill this position in early March. As Assistant Shop Manager In-Training you will play a pivotal role in managing a busy mountaineering, ski and climbing equipment shop, with duties ranging from purchasing for a guide service to managing a 6+ person team. It is important to note that the Equipment Shop first serves the needs of the Guide Service, and secondly the public. Day-to-day operations are different from that of a normal retail shop; we spend a good portion of our time in a support role for the Guide Service.

The role of the Assistant Shop Manager is dynamic, with core responsibilities plus other, secondary tasks that arise out of a variety of circumstances that vary week-to-week. The core responsibilities include:

- Guide Service Equipment Ordering
 - Use detailed reporting to purchase proper quantities of equipment to meet all Guide Service needs. Correspond with sales reps to ensure best deals are pursued when ordering. Correspond with AAI staff to ensure equipment meets the needs, and receive input to see if different equipment needs to be purchased.
- Guide Service Equipment Inventory and Maintenance
 - Maintain an as accurate as possible inventory of all Guide Service equipment being used by the American Alpine Institute. (Local and Satellite Campuses) Ensure that proper inspection, cleaning, repairing, quarantining, and disposal of equipment is being carried out by shop employees.
- Marketing Content Development

- Shop social media (Blog, Facebook; newsletter if desired). Articles for shop website (and possibly main website), including gear category guides, reviews, etc. (modeled on the Wirecutter website).
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Inspection Lead and Coordinator.
- Provide proper training and guidance to shop employees as it pertains to PPE gear inspections for Guide Service and Rental equipment that meets the parameters of PPE.
- Co-manage a team of Equipment Specialists and help to elevate and empower them in their completion of regular Shop tasks.
- Conduct regular training for staff on new processes and skills, ranging from running a sale to sharpening ice tools.
- Winters will include ski/splitboard work including tune-ups, mounts, base repairs, etc.

Secondary tasks include but are not limited to:

- Leading AAI Course Rendezvous (Pre-climb meetings) when needed.
- Assist with the coordination of the American Alpine Institute Guide's Choice Awards, an annual gear testing program that requires facilitation of requesting equipment, getting it into the hands of AAI guides and synthesizing reviews into a slate of winners.
- Attend yearly Outdoor Industry trade shows such as Outdoor Retailer and maintain knowledge of the newest equipment and sales rep relationships.

Introduction to the company

The American Alpine Institute (AAI) is a mountain school and guide service based in Bellingham, Washington that operates in 6 states and 16 countries.

Sixteen people work in program administration and equipment services, and 55 guides lead courses and expeditions worldwide. The Institute offers programs at all skill levels in rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, canyoning, technical rescue, backpacking, backcountry skiing, avalanche skills, and expedition climbing.

The Institute is an outdoor industry leader in environmental education and protection. AAI is committed to offset 100% of its carbon emissions, including energy consumed in the office, travel, and field programs. The Institute is also committed to lead by example in business ethics and through innovative programming and operations in environmental protection, conservation, and preservation. AAI staff members serve on boards of directors of non-profit environmental research and educational organizations, and the Institute provides financial support to those organizations as well.

AAI staff members have many interests, enjoy the outdoors in general, and pursue many forms of outdoor recreation. They are kind, good humored, smart, and enthusiastic, and they are a lot of fun to work with. Many long-term friendships are established while working at the Institute.

The Equipment Shop was established to provide the highest quality equipment to climbers attending Institute courses and guided experiences as well as to climbers, skiers, snowboarders and backpackers in the general public. We have a retail shop that focuses on the best equipment available for mountain sports as well as a rental shop that rents high-quality gear. Staff in the Equipment Shop supplement the sale and rental of top equipment with education that is based on thorough knowledge of gear. If you don't have in-depth knowledge of the mountain equipment when you begin, you will by the end of the first month.

Climbers attending AAI programs work with very detailed equipment lists that we provide to them before they arrive in Bellingham. Most arrive very well equipped or with a plan to complete their checklist of needed clothing and gear with purchases at the Equipment Shop. The shop carries a complete line of clothing and equipment, so if the need were to arise, a climber could be outfitted on the spot.

The Equipment Shop also plays a major role helping the guides who work at the Institute. The Shop processes sales of gear to guides at a major discount, facilitates pro-deals for them, and helps them check out technical and specialized gear that is needed on some courses.

Desired qualifications in the candidate

A successful applicant will have a combination of at least some of the following attributes. If you don't meet all of these qualifications, please still apply for the position. We are a teaching institution, and aren't shy about building people into roles they desire:

1. Experience working in the outdoor industry with at least basic knowledge of mountaineering, alpine climbing, backpacking, and snow sports equipment.
2. Experience as a buyer balancing an annual budget against seasonal needs.
3. Experience as a ski tech or ski instructor; basic understanding of ski maintenance and repair.
4. Time spent running a point-of-sale (POS) system and a willingness to learn the backend of a POS and E-Commerce system.
5. Excellent team management and leadership skills.
6. Good communication skills.
7. Creativity in problem solving.
8. An ability to work with a high level of energy, commitment, and personal responsibility.
9. Flexibility in scheduling and a willingness to work as part of a team.

Personal characteristics of the candidate

- Strong work ethic
- Honesty and dependability
- Enthusiastic personality (!)
- Sense of humor (Ha!)
- Pride in work and a sense of achievement in bringing tasks to completion

- Ability to provide and receive feedback

Hours

The Assistant Shop Manager is a year-round position, with full-time work at 40 hours a week. Typical schedules are Monday-Friday during regular hours 10 a.m. — 6 p.m., though some weekend days will be required.

Wage and Benefits

- **WAGE:** \$19/hr. Performance bonuses available. The American Alpine Institute provides yearly raises for all Full-Time employees. Upon transition from lead equipment to Assistant manager, a small raise will be conferred.
- **COURSES:** As Assistant Shop Manager, you are entitled to take an AAI course for free once a year. Choice must take into account guide/client ratio limits and getting coverage of shop hours by colleagues.
- **MEDICAL STIPEND:** Full-time employees receive a medical stipend. Initially, this stipend is \$60 a month. Employees receive a yearly “raise” in their medical stipend as well as in their daily wage.
- **UNPAID AND PAID TIME OFF:** We have a pretty awesome dynamic in the shop in terms of working to make each other's time off for special trips work out. We are after all “outdoorsy” ourselves, and quality time for play in the mountains is really important to us. All AAI employees also accrue 1 hour of Paid Sick Leave for every 40 hours worked.
- **PRO DEALS AND DISCOUNTS:** All employees at the American Alpine Institute are able to purchase items in the Equipment Shop at 35% off MSRP. We also have many Pro Deal opportunities with companies that we work with in the Shop. Some prominent examples are Patagonia, Arc'teryx, La Sportiva, Rab Equipment, and Black Crows. These Pro deals tend to be anywhere from 40%-60% off.

Application Process

- Complete the Online Application at the following link:
<https://alpineinstitute.wufoo.com/forms/zbf61x0poxaho/>

Be sure to attach the following to your online application:

- Résumé
- Cover Letter

Your cover letter is a very important part of the application. In addition to providing us with an introduction to who you are (perhaps touching on where you've been and where you're going in life), would you please specifically address the following questions:

1. Why do you feel this job could be a “good fit” for you (in terms of both duties and hours)?
2. How do you meet the desired qualifications?
3. What aspects of the work do you think you would enjoy the most?

Thank you in advance for your application and letter!

Questions? Please feel free to email Mike Madsen at mike@alpineinstitute.com.