

## **Bio**

I'm Zoey Collins and I am a 14-year-old freeskiier from Northern Utah. Although I haven't been skiing even close to my whole life, skiing is my life. Skiing is what I love, and skiing is what I do. I am on the freeride team at Solitude Mountain resort and train any chance I get. I mostly ski at Solitude, but sometimes I'll go to other resorts for IFSA events or just to have a new adventure. I love adventures. When I'm not skiing, I like tumbling in my backyard, going camping, or swimming. I hope to go to Freeride world tour one day or do freeride as a college athlete. I try to stay positive even when I mess up and I hope to keep Ryan's legacy alive.

## **Personal Essay**

My name is Zoey Collins. I was born in Bountiful, Utah in 2012 and have been living here my whole life. I started skiing when I was 11 back in 2023 when I heard some family friends talking about it and wanted to try it out. My dad grabbed me some rental skis, got me the Ski Utah Pass (an inexpensive pass for 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders that provides three days at each Utah ski resort), and booked me a first timers lesson at Brighton Resort. I think my coach that day really set me up because I progressed quickly. By the end of my first season, I was cruising down the blue trails. My second season, I got an ikon pass, as I had aged out of the ski Utah pass, and I stacked up almost 40 days. After taking a 6-week intro to ski team course, I fell in love. By the end of my second season, I was flying down groomed blacks and introducing myself to double blacks.

This season, my third season, I started on the freeride team at Solitude Mountain Resort. I didn't know much about freeride but over the summer I did lots of research to build my knowledge so I didn't go into my first day blind. I participated in the fall dryland program offered by Team Solitude in order to prepare myself for the season. The first day on snow was nerve-wracking, but I made my first friend on ski team and really connected with the coaches. I participated in my first freeride event, starting in the U15 category, in January 2026. I took a tumble and placed last. Same thing at my second comp. At my third, I played it safe and secured a solid 7<sup>th</sup> place. Recently, I participated in the Intermountain Championships and although I once again took a soft fall, I could really see my improvement from my first event. The teams manager of my team even went to the announcement booth and talked about how it was my first year on freeride and how I was skiing at the level of people who had been skiing since they could walk. Although at first I was far behind the level of my teammates, I pushed myself and tried my best to improve. And I did. Now I can easily keep up with any other member of my team. The best thing about ski team has been making friends along the way. I really believe that the friends you make along the way and the experiences that you have are worth much more than winning.

My favorite adventure I have been on was to Jackson Hole in March 2026. I went with my dad, my brother, and my niece for my Christmas present. We stayed in an amazing tiny cabin

hotel and it was really nice. I was determined to do Corbet's Couloir, which is known for being one of the most difficult runs in the US. On day one, my dad wasn't feeling well and didn't want to go up the tram. On day two, it was closed. Again on day three. But on day four, our final day, the Couloir was open. So, the four of us went up the tram and skied to the top of the run. It was sure intimidating, but I wouldn't break the promise I made to myself. I was going to do it. And I did. After making the initial jump turn, I crashed and double-ejected. I was able to retrieve my skis with the help of some fellow skiers. I clicked back in and continued to ski down the run. As I went further down, the powder got deeper. I ended up too far forward and faceplanted in the snow. Normally, this wouldn't be so big of a deal. I would laugh it off and keep skiing. But, one of my skis flew off and even after around an hour of digging, I was unable to find it. Some other people on the mountain called ski patrol and I managed to get back down the mountain. I stayed calm, knowing I had other skis, but I was still upset that one of my skis from my favorite pair was gone. As of today, I still haven't got back my ski.

After losing my ski, I found myself skiing on much shorter skis, but I made the best of it and they were actually really fun. This season I made so much progress. I went from being scared of jumping to hitting six foot cliffs with confidence. I went from being far behind my teammates to skiing the whole mountain proficiently. And my coaches have been a HUGE part of this progression. I could never have got this good without them, and they really help me see the best in myself and celebrate even the small victories.

Another person who has been a vital part of my journey is my dad. He loves me and is proud of me no matter what happens. Even if I fall, he is still proud of me. My dad also allows me to progress because he is the one who drives an hour each way every day we ski. He will take me most of the times I want to go and I really appreciate it. And, he paid for my team this season. However, that will have to change this coming season as he unfortunately lost his job and can no longer fully support me financially. I have secured a job for this summer working at a local amusement park, but I'm not sure that I will be able to get enough money to afford paying for training and competitions as well as new gear to make up for what I lost.

I really would love to continue my freeride adventure and be able to train and compete this coming 26/27 season. This is why I have reached out to the Flyin Ryan foundation to help me. I understand if you can't because you get a lot of applications but it would really help. Ever since I found out about the foundation, Ryan Hawks has been one of my biggest role models as he always made the best out of any situation and smiled through it. Although he is not here with us today, his legacy lives on.

I follow my core values to help me live a happy life and live that life to its fullest. My core values are:

1. Do my best no matter how hard it is.
2. Don't let peer pressure guide me into bad decisions.
3. Be a team player and support my teammates.

4. Don't let anyone determine my worth.
5. Live my life unafraid to show people my true self.
6. Do it for the experience, not for the win.
7. Be proud of myself even if I mess up.
8. Do it sick, do it scared, do it for the first time. Just do it.

Thank you for considering my application!