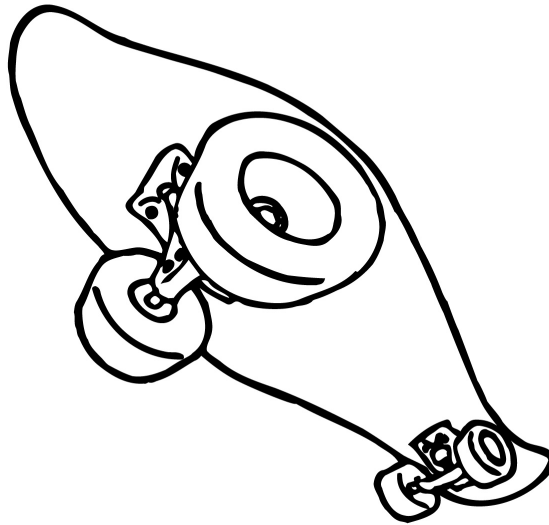


# SKATEBOARDING



Is skateboarding a hobby, a sport, a job, or a means of transportation? In fact, it is all of these. Who skates? Mostly young males. A 2002 study counted 18.5 million skateboarders worldwide. Eighty-five percent were under the age of 18, and 74 percent were male.

Skateboarding was invented in California in the late 1940s or early 1950s by surfers who wanted something to do when they couldn't surf. This is why it was originally called "sidewalk surfing." The first skateboards were wooden boxes or boards to which roller skate wheels had been attached.

Skateboarding was booming by the 1960s. It was so popular there was a national magazine, ***Skateboarder Magazine***. In 1965, the international skateboarding championships were televised nationally. Yet by the following year sales of skateboards were falling again. The fall was due partly to safety concerns. Skateboarding's popularity has gone through cycles of boom and bust since its invention.

The popularity of skateboarding fell in the late 1960s and stayed low until 1972, when Frank Nasworthy released a polyurethane skateboard wheel. This and other technological improvements made performance so much better that the sport was transformed. Skateboarding boomed again.

The history of skateboarding is a history of revolutions. Early tricks were two-dimensional, performed on flat surfaces, such as riding on only two wheels ("wheelies"), spinning on the back wheels (a "pivot"), jumps, and slaloms. A big change came with the beginning of ramp skating and the

opening of the first skateparks. They took skateboarding from a two-dimensional sport to one that was some times vertical.

The new skateboards handled better. This allowed skateboarders to invent new tricks. A drought in California in 1976 meant many swimming pools were empty. Skateboarders skated their vertical walls. This is how the vert trend started. With their new boards, vert skaters could skate faster and do more difficult tricks. Alan "Ollie" Gelfand invented a trick called the ollie in 1976 that enabled skaters to perform airs on vertical ramps. The ollie revolutionized skateboarding -- most tricks today are based on the ollie.

The new, vertical style made skateboarding more exciting, but it nearly killed it, too. The new style was dangerous. Skatepark owners had to pay higher insurance costs. Many skateparks had to close. In one country, Norway, skateboards were banned between 1978 and 1989. By the early 1980s, skateboarding was losing popularity again.

Street skating may have saved skateboarding. It is the most popular style today. Street skating became popular because most people did not have access to vert ramps. Skateboarders like Rodney Mullen invented basic street skating tricks at this time, like the kickflip or the *Impossible*. Street skaters used shopping centers and public and private property to skate. There was sometimes friction between skaters and property owners, who feared they could be sued if anyone was injured.

Most boards are about 7 to 8 inches wide and 30 to 32 inches long. The wheels are made of polyurethane, which is very hard. The wheels are small. This makes the boards lighter, and tricks are easier to perform. Board styles changed greatly between the invention of skateboarding, and the mid 1990s, but have changed little since then. The symmetrical and fairly narrow shape of modern skateboards is based on the freestyle boards of the 1980s.

Skateboarding was originally part of surfing culture. In time, though, it spread away from the coast, to places where no one surfed. When it did this, it evolved a culture of its own. This culture included a style of music and clothing. Street skateboarders had a rebellious image. Some cities still oppose skateparks because they fear they will bring crime and drugs.

Skateboarding continues to change, however. New media such as the magazine ***Transworld Skateboarding*** show skateboarders to be more diverse and controlled and less rebellious. Skateboarding is still evolving fast, and it will be interesting to see how it develops in the future.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT SKATEBOARDING**

1. Which sentence is true?
  - a. Skateboarding is a safe sport
  - b. Skateboarding is possible only on flat surfaces
  - c. Skateboarding is a rapidly changing sport
  - d. Skateboarding is most popular with men over the age of 40.
  
2. The skateboard was invented by...
  - a. European immigrants
  - b. Surfers
  - c. Alan "Ollie" Gelfand
  - d. Property owners
  
3. Skateboarding
  - a. Was never popular.
  - b. Was consistently popular.
  - c. Was originally popular, but has been growing less so.
  - d. Has gone through cycles of greater and lesser popularity.
  
4. How did the vertical style of skateboarding affect the sport?
  - a. It made it more exciting
  - b. It made it more dangerous
  - c. It nearly killed the sport
  - d. All of the above
  
5. Who invented the "ollie"?
  - a. Alan Gelfand
  - b. Frank Nasworthy
  - c. Rodney Mullen
  - d. Oliver Twist
  
6. What is the most popular style of skateboarding today?
  - a. Vert skating
  - b. Street skating
  - c. Roller skating
  - d. Inline skating

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT *SKATEBOARDING***

1. Imagine you invent a new sport. Describe it.

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2. Write about the part of the story that reminds you of something you or some one in your family have done.

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3. After reading the story what do you think is meant by “transformed”?

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4. What did you learn about skateboarding that you did not know? How will you use that new information?

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## **Answers to *SKATEBOARDING***

### **Multiple-choice questions**

1. c
2. b
3. d
4. d
5. a
6. b

### **Short-answer questions**

1. Answers will vary. Accept logical, realistic answers.
2. Answers will vary. Accept logical, realistic answers.
3. Transformed = changed, altered
4. Answers will vary. Accept logical, realistic answers.