

the mutt how to skateboard and not kill yourself

rodney mullen

The Mutt: How to Skateboard and Not Kill Yourself Rodney Mullen

Skateboarding is not just a sport; it's a culture, a lifestyle, and for many, a form of expression. Among the legends of this thrilling activity stands Rodney Mullen, often referred to as the godfather of street skating. His innovative tricks and unique approach have inspired countless skaters, earning him the nickname "The Mutt." This article delves into the world of skateboarding, focusing on Mullen's contributions and offering practical advice on how to skate safely.

The Legacy of Rodney Mullen

Rodney Mullen's influence on skateboarding cannot be overstated. He was born on August 17, 1966, in Gainesville, Florida, and began skateboarding at the age of ten. Mullen revolutionized the sport through his groundbreaking tricks, many of which are now staples in skateboarding.

Innovations and Signature Tricks

Mullen is credited with inventing several key tricks that fundamentally changed the landscape of skateboarding:

1. Ollie: This trick involves the skater popping the tail of the skateboard while dragging the front foot up, allowing the board to rise off the ground.
2. Kickflip: Building on the Ollie, Mullen added a flick of the front foot to make the skateboard spin beneath him.
3. Heelflip: Similar to the Kickflip, but with the heel flicking the board instead.
4. Impossible: A trick where the skater performs a full rotation of the skateboard around their back foot.
5. Shuvit: This trick involves the skateboard spinning 180 degrees without the skater leaving the board.

Mullen's creativity didn't just stop at trick innovation; he also contributed to the development of street skating as a discipline. His ability to skate on urban obstacles transformed how skaters viewed their environment.

Getting Started with Skateboarding

If you're inspired by Mullen and want to start skateboarding, it's essential to approach it with the right mindset and preparation. Here's how to get started safely.

Choosing the Right Equipment

Before you step on a board, you need to ensure you have the right equipment. Here's what you should consider:

- **Skateboard Deck:** Choose a deck that suits your style. Wider decks provide more stability, while narrower decks are better for technical tricks.
- **Trucks:** These are the metal parts that hold the wheels and allow turning. Make sure they match the width of your skateboard deck.
- **Wheels:** Softer wheels are better for cruising, while harder wheels are better for street skating and tricks.
- **Helmet:** Always wear a helmet to protect against head injuries.
- **Pads:** Wrist guards, knee pads, and elbow pads can help reduce the risk of injury.

Basic Stance and Balance

Finding your stance is crucial to skateboarding. You can either ride "regular" (left foot forward) or "goofy" (right foot forward). Here's how to determine your stance:

1. **Natural Preference:** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and have someone gently push you from behind. The foot you step forward with is your leading foot.
2. **Experiment:** Try both stances while riding. Whichever feels more comfortable is your natural stance.

Once you've established your stance, practice balancing on the board while stationary. Here are some tips:

- Keep your knees slightly bent.
- Distribute your weight evenly over the board.
- Look ahead, not down at your feet.

Learning Basic Tricks

Once you're comfortable riding, it's time to learn some basic tricks. Start with simple maneuvers before attempting more complex ones.

Essential Tricks for Beginners

1. Pushing: Start by placing your back foot on the tail and pushing off the ground with your front foot.
2. Stopping: To stop, drag your back foot on the ground or use the tail of your board to slow down.
3. Ollie: As mentioned earlier, the Ollie is foundational. Practice this trick repeatedly, focusing on the timing of your foot movements.
4. Kickturn: This involves shifting your weight to the back of the board and using your toes to lift the front, turning in the desired direction.

Staying Safe While Skateboarding

Safety should always be a priority, especially for beginners. Here are some critical safety tips:

Protective Gear

- Always wear a helmet to protect your head.
- Use wrist guards to prevent wrist injuries during falls.
- Opt for knee and elbow pads to cushion impacts.

Skateboarding Environment

- Choose a safe location for practice, like a skate park with smooth surfaces and no obstacles.
- Avoid crowded areas and busy streets until you gain more confidence.
- Keep an eye out for pedestrians and obstacles that could cause accidents.

Overcoming Fear and Building Confidence

Skateboarding can be intimidating, especially when trying new tricks. Here are strategies to help you overcome fear and build confidence:

Progress Gradually

- Set realistic goals. Start with basic tricks and gradually progress to more advanced ones.
- Celebrate small achievements to boost your confidence.

Practice Regularly

- Consistency is key. Regular practice helps build muscle memory and confidence.
- Skate with friends or join a local skateboarding community for support and encouragement.

Learn from Failures

- Falling is part of the learning process. Instead of getting discouraged, view falls as opportunities to improve.
- Study your falls to understand what went wrong and how to adjust your technique.

The Influence of Skateboarding Culture

Skateboarding is more than just tricks and techniques; it's about community and culture. Mullen's influence extends beyond his tricks; he embodies the spirit of innovation and resilience that defines skateboarding.

Community and Support

- Find a local skateboarding community or club to connect with fellow skaters.
- Participate in local events or competitions to meet new people and learn from others.

Media and Inspiration

- Watch skateboarding videos and documentaries to gain insights into advanced techniques and styles.
- Follow professional skaters on social media for tips and motivation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, skateboarding, inspired by legends like Rodney Mullen, is an exhilarating activity that can be both fun and rewarding. By starting with the right equipment, learning essential skills, prioritizing safety, and embracing the culture, anyone can experience the joy of skateboarding. Remember, it's not just about landing tricks; it's about the journey, the community, and the thrill of the ride. So grab your board, put on your helmet, and hit the pavement – just like Mullen did all those years ago!

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is Rodney Mullen and why is he significant in skateboarding?

Rodney Mullen is a professional skateboarder known as the 'Godfather of Street Skating.' He is credited with inventing many tricks that are fundamental to modern skateboarding, including the kickflip and the impossible.

What are some basic safety tips for beginners learning to skateboard?

Beginners should wear protective gear including a helmet, knee pads, and elbow pads. It's also important to practice on flat, smooth surfaces and to learn to fall safely by rolling instead of bracing with hands.

What does 'The Mutt' refer to in the context of skateboarding?

'The Mutt' refers to a unique and versatile skateboard, often customized with various components to suit the rider's style, similar to how a mutt dog is a mix of breeds.

What is one of the first tricks that beginners should learn on a skateboard?

One of the first tricks beginners should learn is the ollie, as it serves as a fundamental building block for many other skateboard tricks.

How can someone build confidence while learning to skateboard?

Building confidence can be achieved by starting with small, achievable goals, practicing consistently, and gradually progressing to more difficult tricks as skills improve.

What are common mistakes beginners make when trying to skateboard?

Common mistakes include not wearing protective gear, trying to learn tricks that are too advanced too soon, and not maintaining proper stance and balance on the board.

How has Rodney Mullen influenced modern skateboarding culture?

Rodney Mullen has influenced modern skateboarding culture through his innovative tricks and techniques, inspiring countless skaters and shaping the way skateboarding is perceived as both an art form and a sport.

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