



by Eric Muss-Barnes

*The following are my original questions and answers for my **Weekly Reader** article published in the Spring of 2010 regarding my **Learn To Ride A Skateboard** video.*

WHY DID YOU MAKE THIS VIDEO, AND WHY DO YOU WANT IT TO REACH AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE BY MAKING IT FREE?

My biggest motivation in creating this project was pure fun. I've been making movies and music videos for over a decade and I've been a skateboarder for twice as long as that! I thought a project like this would be a blast to create. And it was! I really enjoyed doing it.

I got the idea one day when I was at the skatepark and I saw a little boy trying to skate and his dad was coaching him. The father was giving terrible advice and it was obvious the dad didn't know anything about skateboarding and the poor kid just kept falling. Finally, the boy looked at me and told me he had only been skating for 2 days! That was part of my inspiration to create this video - to assist people who really need to learn the basics of skateboarding before they try riding terrain which is far too advanced for their skills.

Sadly, I never saw that kid at the skatepark again. And I knew that would happen, because it happens quite often. Too many people disregard and underestimate the difficulty of skateboarding. They get a board, try things far beyond their ability, can't do it, get upset, and never step on a skateboard again. Almost everyone born after 1960 has tried skateboarding at least once in their life. The two biggest reasons so many people fail to stick with it is because it turns out to be a lot harder

than it looks and people fear getting hurt. I wanted this video to help encourage people to keep trying and not give up - because every skater feels those frustrations and fears.

When I made the video, I also wanted to use it to encourage girls to skate and show girls as equal to the boys on skateboards. Skateboarding tends to be a very male-oriented activity and I wanted to show that there are a lot of really amazing girls skaters out there too. I believe the more girls are accepted and respected as skateboarders, the more support skateboarding will have in our communities with the building of more skateparks and laying a stronger foundation for the future of the sport.

HOW HARD (OR EASY?) IS IT TO GET STARTED WITH SKATEBOARDING?

Like any physical activity, some folks have a natural aptitude and can pick up skateboarding much faster than others. Most people can learn the basic skills and improve immensely in under an hour, but it usually takes weeks or months to really become confident and adept at skateboarding. For most individuals, skateboarding is exceptionally easy to start, but exceptionally difficult to master. However, rather than being detrimental to skateboarding, that difficulty is part of what makes it so much fun! Much of the appeal of skateboarding is the constant opportunity to learn something new. No matter how many years you skate, there is always a trick you haven't tried or new terrain you've never ridden. Once you become a good skater, those challenges stop being intimidating and become one of most rewarding facets of skateboarding.

WHAT DO KIDS AND TEENS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BEING SAFE WHILE DOING THIS SPORT?

Wearing adequate safety gear and learning the proper way to fall (or "bail") is essential. Every skateboarder falls. Everyone gets hurt. In fact, the best skateboarders fall the most often! Why? Because they are constantly trying to learn new tricks and meet new challenges. Skaters of every age typically have some sort of new scar or bruise all the time. If you're a real skater, something on your body will always be sore somewhere! Wearing appropriate safety gear and learning the best techniques when you bail will prevent most injuries and will reduce the severity of the bangs and bruises you do get. Some people think it's not "cool" to wear safety gear. But, you know what's really not cool? Ending up in the hospital with an injury that keeps you from skating for 2 months - especially when it could have been completely prevented by some kneepads or a helmet! Personally, I always wear safety gear at a skatepark. Wearing the gear also allows you to be a bit more aggressive in your skating and push yourself a little more, thereby improving even faster. My final advice is to make sure you purchase safety gear of great quality.

Too often, I see kids at the skatepark wearing the cheapest dime-store pads they can find. Remember that cheap gear isn't going to actually protect you when you fall - in fact, faulty safety equipment might make your injury even worse! Safety gear is not equipment you want to skimp on. Make sure your gear is an effective product of a respectable quality brand.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REWARDS OF SKATEBOARDING? IS IT GREAT EXERCISE? FUN? MEET NEW PEOPLE? AMAZE YOURSELF? (ETC.)

Skateboarding is more of an artform, like dancing or gymnastics, than a competitive sport. Not only does skateboarding encourage creativity, but the whole skate culture is built upon camaraderie. While traditional sports emphasize "winning" and "losing", skateboarders constantly support each other, educate and learn from each other, and cheer each other on when finally learning that new trick. Skateboarding is about pure fun and it provides a constant sense of accomplishment, each time you achieve something new and reach the next plateau in your skills. One of the most thrilling aspects of skateboarding is watching your own personal progression and building of one's self-confidence. That trick which was terrifying or impossible to imagine doing at one time, may be a piece of cake 6 months from now. Continually making those personal breakthroughs can inspire great self-assurance in all other facets of your life too. Skateboarding is a joyful way to teach perseverance - because you fall and get back up and try again. And again. And again.

As pure exercise, you will see how out-of-shape you are the first time you skate a pool! I've seen fit and healthy children run out of breath in under 2 minutes. Pools and ramps and all forms of vertical skateboarding are a fantastic cardiovascular workout.

One of the most amazing aspects of skateboarding is how new the sport is. Keep in mind that skateboarding has only been around for about 40 years or so. Today, that means the first generation of skateboarders are still around and are skateboarding with their kids! This is immensely significant because that never happened before in the history of skateboarding. Back in the 60s and 70s and 80s, there was no such thing as a parent who was a skateboarder. Every skateboarder was a young kid. These days there are skateboarders of all ages and generations and backgrounds - which is a first for the sport. It's a very exciting time to be a part of skateboarding because the sport is still changing and evolving and growing in popularity. No baseball players or football players can go to the local park and play with the founders of those sports. Skateboarders can do that.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU THINK IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO INCLUDE?

Sadly, many skateboarding companies and magazines tend to promote a "bad boy image" of skateboarding and some kids follow that and skateboarding can have a negative reputation because of it. But that isn't what skateboarding is about. Skateboarding is a very fun, healthy, positive activity for kids and families to be involved with. It teaches self-confidence. It encourages an atmosphere of companionship instead of competition. And most of all, it's a lot of fun! In fact, for anyone who wants to learn skateboarding, I always tell them to remember 2 things above all:

1 - Always have fun. That is number one. Skateboarding is about enjoying yourself and having a good time. If you aren't smiling, happy and excited when riding that board, you're doing something wrong.

2 - Be tenacious. Don't give up. Skateboarding is very difficult. You're going to try learning things and it may take weeks or months to gain the skill you're attempting. Be patient with yourself. Keep at it. Don't quit. Don't compare your learning curve to others. If your friend learns a trick in 2 weeks and it takes you 2 months to learn the same trick, that's okay. There is nothing wrong with that. Don't get discouraged when you are having a hard time with something. Stay persistent. Remember - there will always be someone better than you and someone worse than you; Always be supportive to those who are worse and always be inspired by those who are better.

Those are the 2 most important things to remember. Always have fun. Be patient with learning. Keep those 2 things in mind and go skate!



Try This Move

Get on Board!

Because all you really need is a hard surface to get your wheels rolling, chances are there's a way to start skateboarding in your community. Plus, it's fun—so much fun that it hardly feels like exercise.

But it's more than just a great workout, says filmmaker Eric Muss-Barnes. He's a longtime skateboarder and director of the film *Learn to Ride a Skateboard*. "Skateboarding is more of an art form, like dancing or gymnastics, than a competitive sport," he says.

Some people can pick up skating pretty quickly, while others have a tougher time, Muss-Barnes says. But don't give up! Anyone can learn to skateboard, he says. "The two biggest reasons so many people fail to stick with it is because it turns out to be a lot harder than it looks and people fear getting hurt," he says.

The best way to avoid that fear? That's an

Learn more at www.learntorideaskateboard.com or check out our Web site at www.weeklyreader.com/getupandgo for more getting-started tips.

You Can Do It!

There are so many ways you can get local and get active year-round. Here are more tips from people who helped us Get Up and Go this year.

- **Move in ways you'll enjoy.** "It doesn't have to be a specific sport," says Elizabeth W., of Alabama. Just have fun. "You'll be getting healthier without really thinking about it," she says.
- **You don't have to join a team to play a sport to get active,** says Kristen Laine, who writes the Appalachian Mountain Club blog Great Kids, Great Outdoors. You can do it on your own!
- **When you try something new, know that you might need to work hard at it at first.** "Just be patient and willing to swallow your pride when first learning," says Dick Moss, a coach and the editor of the Web site PEUpdate.com. Remember this saying: "Practice makes perfect!"
- **Set fitness goals, and work to reach them.** That's from Justin and McKenna R., siblings from California. When you reach a personal record, you'll feel strong, healthy, and proud, they say.

easy one: Wear safety gear! "Some people think it's not cool to wear safety gear," he says. "But you know what's really not cool? Ending up in the hospital with an injury that keeps you from skating for two months—especially when it could have been completely prevented by some kneepads or a helmet!"

Ready to get started? "For anyone who wants to learn skateboarding, I always tell them to remember two things above all," Muss-Barnes says.

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and recreation departments and volunteers Pedersen says that you're "There's a lot in the t require a whole lot

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ground, summer ts, Risso says. The ground is knowing they go back to e offers tools for a play space in with you or help nding both. Want

help building a bench? It has construction plans.

Another way teens can help is by contributing to the group's play space finder. Grab a camera, go to your local playground or park, and take some photos. Note the amenities at the park, such as equipment, what sports can be played there, even whether the parking is good. Then share the information at playspacefinder.kaboom.org to help others find—and use—the park. You can even rate parks to help others find the best ones (or call attention to parks that could use some improvements).

And don't forget: You're never too old to give the playground a spin for yourself. While you're there, ride on a swing, shoot down the slide, or take a turn on the monkey bars!



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The best way to avoid that fear? That's an easy one: Wear safety gear! "Some people think it's not cool to wear safety gear," Muss-Barnes says. "But you know what's really not cool? Ending up in the hospital with an injury that keeps you from skating for two months—especially when it could have been completely prevented by some kneepads or a helmet!"

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