Basics of Snowboarding

Snowboarding Attire

Appropriate snowboarding attire is required for all competitors. As a coach, you should discuss the types of sport clothes that are acceptable and not acceptable for training and competition. Discuss the importance of wearing properly fitted clothing, along with the advantages and disadvantages of certain types of clothing worn during training and competitions.

It is best to dress in layers so you can add or subtract clothes as needed. Always bring too many clothes instead of too few.

Socks

Socks are a personal preference, but it is suggested that a wool or blended-material ski or hiking sock be used for snowboarding.

It is recommended that liner socks made of synthetic or natural fibers be worn underneath insulated socks. The liners will help wick away perspiration and moisture from the foot and add more insulation layers of air. The liners will also absorb the friction between the feet and outer socks to prevent blisters.

Boots

Proper snowboard boots are perhaps the most important piece of equipment a snowboarder will own. Snowboard boots are made specifically to fit into snowboard bindings, and to give more support as well as the correct alignment.

Certain types of step-in bindings require the use of a compatible step-in boots, as discussed in the Binding Systems section below. Make sure all of your pieces fit together properly before going to the hill.

Choosing Proper Boot Fit

Boot fitting is best done by a reputable shop technician. If you will be fitting boots for your athlete, try to keep the following suggestions in mind.

- Boots should fit snugly, but should not pinch at any one point.
- When the athlete is laced in and standing up, the toes should touch inside of the front of the boot.
- Have the athlete stand with their feet shoulder width apart, and bend at the knees.
    - When the athlete is lowered into this position, the toes should not touch the front of the boot.
    - Try NOT to purchase boots with extra room, as they will tend to pack out and become roomier with use.

Putting on Boots

Most snowboard boots will have use a lace system and/or buckles that should be mastered in a warm, dry, indoor place before putting them on in the cold. Athletes should practice ensuring that they get a secure fit and that the pants and/or socks are not bunched up inside of the boot.

Clothing

Incorporate the three-layer system.

1. Inside Layer

The inside (or inner or base) layer is the wicking layer. Long underwear made of synthetic materials, natural silk or treated materials will remove perspiration from the body. Both the upper and lower body should be covered by a wicking layer. A shirt that covers the neck and fits snugly at the wrists is an effective way to conserve body heat.

2. Middle Layer

The middle layer should be an insulating layer and consist of wool (sweater or pants), fleece (top or bottom) or treated material. Synthetic insulations or phase-change treatments have also proven to be lightweight yet very effective. This layer provides warmth by trapping a layer of air around the body. Note: Except in extremely cold conditions, the legs do not need and would be constricted by this layer.

3. Outer Layer

Wind and snow are blocked by the weatherproof outer layer. For the legs, snowboard pants are appropriate. A snowboarding or ski jacket works well on top. Clothing made with laminates that are waterproof, windproof and breathable (allowing perspiration to leave the body) can be useful.

Be aware that absorbent clothing such as cotton sweatpants will provide little protection from the wind and cold. Snowboard specific pants and jackets have many useful features that make snowboarding more comfortable.

Consider the ability of your athlete and the weather when deciding upon clothing for competition. For optimal competition, strive to dress your athlete in clothing that is lightweight, breathable, layered and slick on the outer surface, and that allows unrestricted movement. Do not neglect an extra set of warm, dry clothes to change into for athletes whose competition clothes will get wet with perspiration and/or snow after competition.

Accessories

Gloves

Gloves or mittens with the same three layers—synthetic base, thermal insulation layer and wind/waterproof outer layer—are especially appropriate for snowboarding due to the amount of direct contact with the snow. Snowboard specific gloves or mittens are best.

Goggles/Eye Protection

Snowboard or ski goggles are recommended to protect the eyes from damaging ultraviolet rays, glare, wind and falling snow. Polarized lenses will cut glare, and high-quality goggles will be less likely to fog. Remember that if the goggles fog up, a goggle-friendly soft handkerchief should be used.

Helmets

A helmet approved for alpine ski racing by Federation International du Ski (FIS) is required for all athletes for training and competition. Helmets are recommended for all coaches and race officials. A good helmet is very important to protect the head during all kinds of falls and is required for training and competition. The helmet should be tight enough that it doesn't move if the athlete shakes their head, yet not so tight as to be uncomfortable.

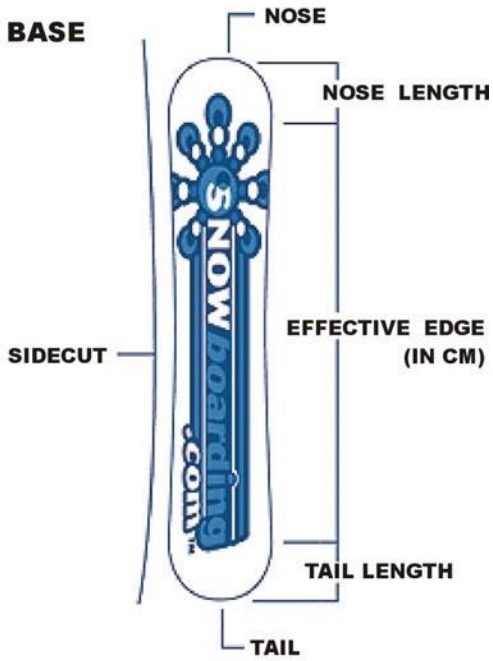
Snowboarding Equipment

Special care should be taken when choosing equipment for your athlete. This guide will help you to choose equipment that will not only enhance the learning and performance of your athlete, but will help to ensure safety as well.

Prior to on-snow training, your athlete should be comfortable with wearing and adjusting clothing, and should be familiar with the process of putting on boots and getting into bindings.

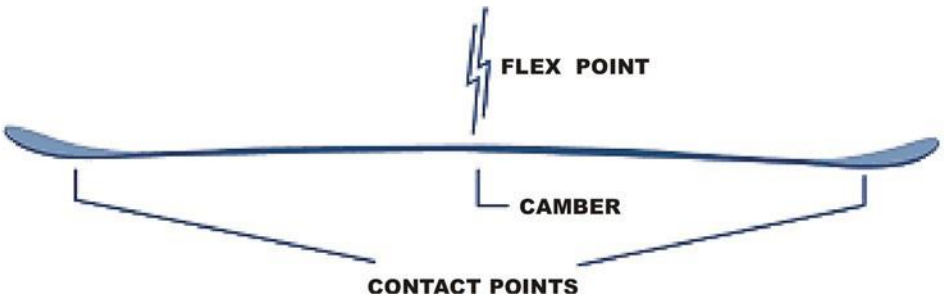
Snowboards

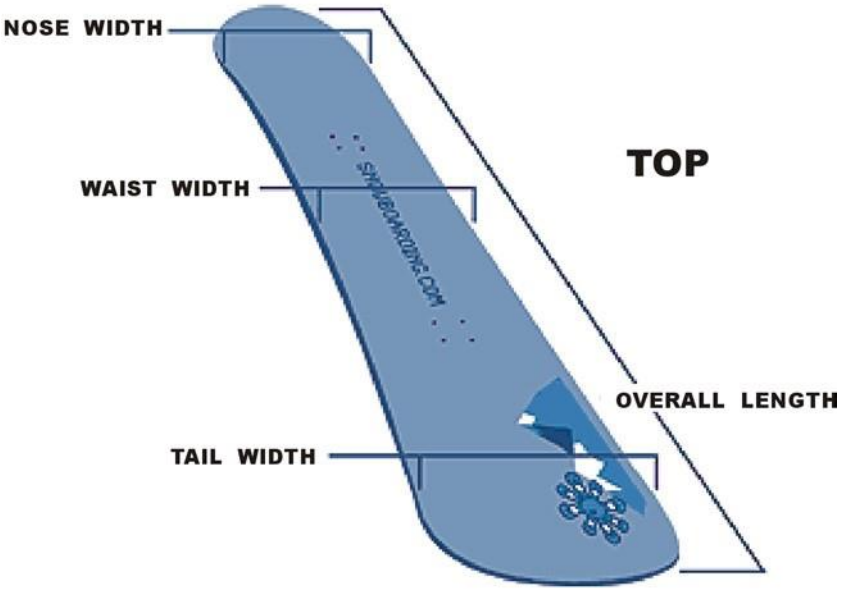
There are three types of snowboards available today: freestyle, freeride and race boards. All use similar types of construction. It is suggested that a reputable board shop be consulted when purchasing a new snowboard.



There are many snowboards on the market made of plastic that are not allowed at ski areas. A good quality snowboard will be constructed like a ski. It will have metal edges and a P-tex base.

Consult a reputable shop in your area if you aren't sure. If your athlete will be using a snowboard that has been handed down or given to them, it is suggested that it be taken to a certified technician to be tuned and checked for proper fit and safety.





(Pictures are provided courtesy of www.snowboarding.com)

Freestyle Snowboard

Freestyle boards are the most popular and most widely used. While there are many types of freestyle boards, they tend to have similar characteristics. They are wider, more stable and more forgiving to ride.

Freestyle boards are usually symmetrical in shape both from tip to tail and from side to side. They have a softer flex, which makes them easier to turn. Both ends have a shovel, and these boards are constructed to be ridden both forward and backward (fakie).

i: Freestyle Snowboard

This type of board is suggested for the beginner rider.

Freeride Snowboard

Freeride boards look similar to freestyle boards, but usually are not symmetrical from tip to tail, and they place the rider slightly behind the center of the board when riding. Sometimes referred to as "directional," these boards tend to have a stiffer, less forgiving flex and are meant to be ridden primarily in one direction (although they can be ridden fakie).

Race Snowboard

Race boards tend to be narrower in shape and are usually slightly longer. They generally have a stiffer flex, and while these boards offer a higher level of performance, they are more difficult for the beginning rider to use, and are reserved for more advanced riders. These boards are made in both symmetrical and asymmetrical styles. They tend to have a shovel only on the nose and are made to ride only in one direction.

ii: Race Snowboard

Binding Systems

There are three types of binding systems on the market today. They are the ratchet-strap binding system (the most popular in use today and the most readily available), the step-in binding system and the hard plate system.

iii: Binding System on Snowboard

Ratchet-strap Binding System

The most widely used binding on the market today, this system incorporates the use of snowboard boots that are fastened into the bindings by using two or three ratchet straps.

Care should be taken when purchasing this type of system, in that many cheap plastic imitations are available.

Care should be taken to ensure that the boots purchased are compatible and fit securely into the binding. Once tightened, the boot should fit snugly, and it should not move around in the binding when fastened in.

iv: Ratchet-Strap Binding System

v: Step-in Binding System

Step-In Binding System

It offers a significant advantage in terms of getting in and out quickly. Each step-in system requires a specific boot and the accompanying hardware. Step-in systems are made so that the boot can be secured without having to bend over.

Hard Plate Binding System

While easy to get into, this system is the least common among snowboards, and the most difficult to find. A plate system utilizes a hard, ski-type boot that locks into a plate binding. Hard plate bindings are often the system of choice for serious snowboard racers.

vi: Hard Plate Binding System

Each of the snowboard binding systems available has its own advantages and disadvantages. The primary consideration should be purchasing quality equipment that will be the safest, most durable and most convenient to use for your athlete.