

Skateboarding

Skateboarding had its beginnings in the 1930s and 1940s when young people made scooters by nailing wooden crates to boards that had skate wheels attached to them. The contraptions moved but it was a bumpy ride.

In 1958, Bill Richards and his son, Mark, built a device that more closely resembled today's skateboards. The Richardses, who ran the Val Surf Shop in Dana Point, California, took roller skate parts and attached them to square wooden boards. They sold them for about eight dollars. The boards caught on with surfers, who called the new sport “terra-surfing.”

In 1963, skateboarding got a big boost when a new type of wheel was invented. The wheels had a double-action axle, which turned the wheels when the skater leaned one way or the other. Skateboard production soared for about three years, but so did skateboard injuries. So many youngsters were getting hurt on skateboards that parents began putting the kibosh on their children's skateboard activities.

Skateboarding all but disappeared until 1973, when Frank Nasworthy developed a wheel made of tough polyurethane. The wheels were softer and handled better. Manufacturers started making boards out of fiberglass. The new skateboards were easier to maneuver, allowing riders to do a new variety of turns, zigzags, and flips.

New skate parks with ramps sprung up around the country, but by the late 1970s, many of the parks had closed because the sport was considered so dangerous. Most park operators couldn't afford to get insurance coverage. Gradually, skateboarders began to wear helmets, special high-top sneakers, and elbow and knee guards to help protect them against injury.

In the 1980s, skateboarders faced other challenges. City officials around the country created laws that prohibited skateboarders – also known as “shredders” – from

