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Keeping Safe While Going Extreme: The Basics of eXtreme Sports

Defining Extreme Sports by Example

You have heard them talked about and may even know a few of the sports the genre includes. However, have you ever really thought what extreme sports really are? Have you thought about what makes them extreme, and more importantly, what sports are considered extreme? Probably not, but since they are seemingly the future of sports, check out a few of the examples of what extreme sports are.

To put it loosely, extreme sports include any number of newer sports that involve some level of danger and exhilaration. In most cases, some combination of speed, danger, height, and stunts are included. Those who are addicted to these sports will tell you that there is always an adrenaline rush associated with them. The best way, though, to understand what extreme sports are is to take a look at some specific examples of them.

First of all, probably the best-known extreme sport is skateboarding. It was in the mid 1960's that a short film introduced the mainstream to the sport of skateboard riding. Soon, there were national championship competitions being held and people began to take notice. Competitors jump out of man-made "half pipes," ramps, and even on the rails and stairs of urban settings. The sport soon became associated with rebellion and trouble.

Today, though, the sport has, like many extreme sports since, gained mainstream acceptance. Skateboard competitions have even gone international and found their way into the Olympics and other such worldwide athletic competitions.

Closely related to skateboarding is snowboarding. Snowboarding is essentially skateboarding on snow. The tricks are very similar, and like skateboarding, the sport has caught on internationally. Today, on any ski slope in America, you will find snowboarders. Some ski resorts have even begun to erect snowboard trick areas.

Another extreme sport that may be for a more mature crowd is sport climbing. Sport climbing is a type of mountain or rock climbing in which you are supplied with handgrips and a route that you can climb. This sport is less about the adventure and more about the athleticism and climbing strength of the participant.

BMX biking is another extreme sport. This particular bicycle sport can go a couple of ways. There is BMX bike racing where competitors maneuver around a track with dirt jumps, hills, and even obstacles to avoid all while competing with a number of other racers on the track. The other version is freestyle BMX bike competitions. In freestyle, competitors use the bikes in much the same ways snowboarders and skateboarders use their boards. Tricks are performed on obstacles and ramps.

Freestyle skiing is another example of an extreme sport. This is where skiers use obstacles to perform tricks as they come down the slope. It may be jumps, spins, or even flips depending on the specific competition. Another form of freestyle skiing may also take place on moguls where the competitors will go over the moguls and perform tricks on the larger jumps in order to increase points as they navigate the slope.

A less competitive but more popular extreme sport is skydiving. Skydiving, as you may already know, is a sport where the participant jumps out of an airplane and then releases a parachute to slow down and fall softly. The appeal of this particular sport is the danger in the initial jump. Some skydivers will work in teams to create shapes and choreography during a freefall period before chutes are released. This is where competition in skydiving comes in and has become more and more popular around the world.

With new and better competitions popping up worldwide, it is apparent that extreme sports are the new fad. Younger children are beginning to participate and the competition is becoming more popular and accepted than ever before. Whether it is skateboarding, snowboarding, skiing, skydiving, or even rollerblading, these sports seem to be here to stay. With Olympic style competitive festivals with larger winnings available as well as lucrative sponsorships, these sports are becoming less of an anomaly and more the norm.

These sports permit individualism while also allowing for team competition, which is appealing to today's youth. As the following of these sports grow among the young, the overall appeal of them will become more mainstream and more of an asset to the sporting world.

Got a Need for the Extreme? First You Have to Find Your "Zone"

Have you noticed that the people who are dedicated to extreme sports seem a little 'different' from most other people? Extreme sports enthusiasts seem to have that "darn the torpedoes, full speed ahead" attitude that runs counter to the thoughtful, considered way most people lead their lives.

They can't really help it when they are in the "zone". When they are in the zone, all that matters is the mission . . . their whole life is no more significant than the moment of execution. Those who study such things as the psychology of athletes, call the "zone" that temporary state of mind where an adrenaline high, awakened by a high-risk endeavor, is (at least temporarily) the absolutely dominant influence in your life.

The zone, as described above, may seem to symbolize a period of extreme irresponsibility, but it is actually a period of extreme focus and near-maximum control – it is a mental state that is similar to, but more intense than, taking that first-ever dive off the high dive at the deep end of the pool. It is also called "the adrenaline effect."

Adrenaline is an important key to the body's reaction in times of stress, danger or anger. At those times, your brain increases the adrenaline, which increases your heart rate and blood flow. In addition, it increases glucose production (glucose is the "food" your body burns when you exercise) and increases physical stamina -- in short, you feel invigorated. This process is

called the "fight or flight response;" it gets your body "primed for action" . . . and its somewhat addictive!

These enthusiasts are called, somewhat facetiously, "adrenaline junkies," and to these extreme sports devotees, it is a colloquialism that fits. They crave activities that require intense concentration and extreme performance, activities such as: bungee jumping, skydiving, hang gliding, mountain climbing and auto racing. Adrenaline junkies, however, are not just into extreme sports. You will find them living extreme lifestyles.

These are the same people you will find making their living as SWAT team members, emergency response personnel and members of military Special Forces such as SEALs and Green Berets. Professional gamblers and stock market traders are also "addicted" to the possibility of an enormous win or an enormous loss -- the possibilities of which will get anyone's adrenaline flowing.

So how do you find your "zone?" It is not as difficult, or as strenuous (or even as addictive) as it may sound. Those who go in for and, to some extent, become addicted to extreme sports and the adrenaline high, are extreme examples of those in the zone. In simpler and less extreme terms, the zone simply means determination and focus.

You "psych yourself up" for any particular activity (it might be an action sport or it might be passing a mid-term exam) by becoming determined to accomplish your task and by focusing on learning what you need to learn, and doing what you need to do. While you are in that mental state (that zone) you are so focused on your objective that what other people say, think or do is mere background noise. You picture the task and see yourself accomplishing it.

What's really happening here? What's happening is that you are learning to harness the power of your mind. Your body -- your muscles may be doing the work but your mind is making the work easier, making the task more comprehensible, making the task more doable. It is the extreme sports version of the "Power of Positive Thinking." Wow! Deja Vu from 1952! That's when Dr. Norman Vincent Peale's self help book was first published and when the seeds were first planted that would grow into millions of success stories.

The power of the mind is an awesome thing! Your mind is like a super-computer that is programming itself every minute of your day with ideas, concepts, idle thoughts, feelings, wishes and desires. The key is staying positive! Staying with the computer analogy, there is a saying amongst computer programmers: "GIGO," that means "Garbage In -- Garbage Out;" in other words, the result of any effort will only be as good (successful) as the effort put into it.

Normally, so the experts say, humans use only a small fraction of their mind's potential. The amount of additional potential that you might be using when in your zone has not been quantified and is not important -- what is important is that, whether participating in an action sport or trying to learn a line of poetry, the focus and determination you use will make success more possible. The only limitations we have are self-imposed limitations -- that's the secret of the zone!

Kids Fascination With the Extreme Sport Phenomenon

Nobody can deny that the newest crazes with kids are the extreme sports. The phenomenon has reached all the way down to kids as young as early elementary school. Is it a problem, or is it a blessing? Much of it depends on whom you ask, but a deeper look will shed a little bit of light on the entire matter.

The TV in your living room is starting to collect dust and burn less electricity while the video game system sits in the corner doing the same. It is exactly what you may have wanted all along, but it does mean that your child is likely deep into the fun that is extreme sports. Don't let the name fool you, extreme sports can be used to describe a number of activities, but for your child, it is likely BMX biking, skateboarding, or trickblading (tricks on roller blades specially made for the job).

Essentially, a trickblader will use a special type of roller blades that have smaller thicker wheels, wider boots, and what is called a grind plate that allows them to slide across surfaces when so desired. The blades are made so that participants may perform many of the same tricks that skateboarders do, only now you will see them on roller blades, more or less.

BMX bikers are a different sport altogether. These are special bikes with pegs on the wheels for tricks, pads on the places where impact will most likely occur, and no front brakes. The bike is made for racing and tricks, but primarily to be used on dirt or certain types of urban setups

As for skateboarding, it is the sport probably most closely linked to extreme sports. For quite some time now, boarders have been hitting half pipes, grinding, and grabbing their board. Though you may associate the sport as a boy sport, many more girls are starting to get involved in these extreme sports and are having a great deal of success along the way.

Go watch your kid working on his new extreme sports might just scare you. The first time you see your child "getting air" off of a ramp or pipe, you will be clinching with each landing. The important thing, though, is just to make sure they have the right equipment and they are as safe as with any other sport. In fact, one national safety organization performed a study and found that more injuries per participant occur in hockey, football, basketball, and soccer than in skateboarding. So you can breathe a little easier.

One important thing you can do is to make sure your child is wearing the right kind of safety equipment. Helmets, elbow pads, and kneepads are musts for the sake of safety. Most skate parks, in fact, will require kids to wear such protection before they are allowed to ride on the property. Falls are a part of the sport, but with proper protection your child will be in no more danger than on the football field or basketball court.

One problem that extreme sport kids have is finding a place to practice their new love. Many parks no longer allow extreme sports in the area, but the children need places to jump, grind, and try out new tricks. One solution that many cities have adopted is to erect extreme sport skate parks. In these facilities, ramps, half pipes, and even stairs and rails are provided so that kids can jump, grind, and get air all they want in an area free of traffic and pedestrians. This makes it safer, and in many ways more fun for the kids overall.

Extreme sports are the wave of the future. Though you may not always understand these new sports your kids are into, they are still active and healthy sports. Competition is alive, but they may be perfected without 9 others or even one other kid around. A trip to the skate park alone can end in the perfection of new trick or technique. The idea is to just support your kids and allow them to compete how they want to. Get them the right safety gear and the right facilities and before you know it you may just have a world -class competitor on your hands.

Safety Should Be First Priority in Extreme Sports

Extreme sports have gained huge mainstream popularity over the last few years. No longer reserved for the fringe of the sporting world, participants, as well as the audience, have zeroed in on the heightened speeds, more daring heights, and greater risks for bodily harm that are in store for anyone exercising these sports. Unlike the firmly established sports, such as soccer or baseball, the rules and goals of these activities are fluid and change whenever there are new breakthroughs in the manufacturing or design of the sporting equipment.

The goals are usually adjusted to push the sport and its participants to greater risks that are just within the very edge of the safety zone. It is not surprising that so many young people enthusiastically embrace these kinds of activities much to the chagrin of their parents. Accidents very often lead to debilitating risks of limbs, and at times may even result in death.

Would you believe that some extreme sports have been around for decades? Mountain biking, skateboarding, mountain climbing and even surfing all fall under the umbrella of extreme sports. Yet while these tried and true sports have long since entered the mainstream, for many younger sporting participants they are only a stepping stone to more daring and more dangerous exploits. For these folks bungee jumping, elevator surfing, and whitewater kayaking are the new adrenaline chasers.

As with any sport, safety precautions must be taken to ensure that a participant will remain as healthy and unharmed as possible. While many a skateboarder will gladly purchase the latest and greatest skateboard, it is quite apparent that he or she is not in such a rush to also purchase the latest and greatest safety equipment.

This error in judgment has caused many injuries, some of them even fatal. Since skateboarding has become an accepted activity for children, it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that adequate safety precautions are taken. Here are some tips to remain safe in any extreme sport:

Learn from the experts. No matter what sport you or your child will wish to participate in, be sure to take to a seasoned veteran of the sport. He or she will be able to alert you to pitfalls, point out necessary gear, explain the advantages of some brands of gear over others, and also help you to pick out a good starter kit.

Remember that you are mortal. While it is tempting to immediately jump off the highest cliff just like the pros, remember that it took them a while to work their way up to this cliff. Start small and work your way up to bigger, faster, more dangerous stunts. Beginning skiers

usually start on the bunny slope and work their way up to the black diamond run. The same is true for any sport; yet extreme sports aficionados sometimes forget this tried and true rule in their enthusiasm to get started.

You get what you pay for. Safety gear is not where you want to pinch pennies. As a matter of fact, it should take up the lion's share of your sports budget. While there may be flimsy imitations of safety gloves and goggles on the market, the odds are that they will wear through quickly and leave your skin exposed to harm. The same is true for second hand gear that may be available for sale through the newspaper or at flea markets. While you may be able to find some great bargains, be cautious that you do not buy someone else's ineffectual discards.

Listen to your doctor. If you do get injured, be sure to seek immediate medical attention and explain in detail what you were doing when you got hurt. Your physician will be able to give you some tips on how to avoid getting hurt again. Similarly, if she or he warns you against participating in certain activities in the future, you will be wise to listen. After all, what good is it to hold the record for most daring BASE jump in your club for two weeks, if you will have a stiff leg for a lifetime?

As you can see, extreme sports also mean the risk for extreme harm. Yet with a little bit of preparation and know-how, many injuries can be avoided.

Correct Climbing Gear Can Be a Life Saver

Free climbing is an up and coming sport in the United States. In fact, the number of people who participate in this extreme sport number in the hundreds of thousands in this country alone, and that number gets even larger world wide. Much of what has helped the sport grow is due in no small part to advances in the climbing technology.

Equipment now makes free climbing safer than it ever has been before, which makes it more accessible to more people than ever before. Having the right equipment not only makes the sport more enjoyable, but it can also save your life. Consider some of the equipment you need to climb for enjoyment and in safety.

Perhaps the most important equipment purchase you can make is in a good pair of climbing shoes. The new technology that has been put into the shoes makes it so that things previously thought to be un-climbable are now more accessible. Though climbing shoes are not a piece of safety equipment traditionally, they do make climbing easier. Easier climbing means safer climbing. So, in an indirect fashion, the shoes can be a big lifesaver.

A true piece of safety equipment is the modern climbing rope. Made with a kern, which is continuous braided nylon, and an outer sheath mantle, the construction is superior to the traditional ropes. The outer part of the rope actually protects the inner core, where all of the strength really is, from the elements and thus damage.

These ropes will even stretch under pressure so that if they are catching you, a falling climber, you will bounce more than being just jerked back. Most ropes are around 160 to 170 feet in length and can be purchased for under \$200 in most cases.

No matter what climbing technique you are using, you will likely need carabiners. Carabiners are solid aluminum rings that have a spring-loaded gate so that they can be opened to let a rope in. The spring, then, will hold it closed to keep the rope inside. Carabiners are very strong (able to hold over two tons) and very inexpensive with many priced under \$20 each. There are many varieties of carabiner, but the one most familiar is the "D" type because the shape will keep the rope against the side away from the gate.

A harness is crucial to both climbing technique and safety. To attach yourself to a rope, you need a sewn harness. Typically, this piece of equipment will be made up of a nylon belt that fits around your waist and two leg loops that hold your thighs. When in the harness, the majority of your weight will be put on your legs instead of your hands which makes hanging much more comfortable. There are a number of types of harness available for purchase, so the prices vary a great deal. However, most can be had for under \$100.

A belay device is a must-have for the sake of safety when climbing. The belayer is what holds the rope to stop a climber who is falling. The most common belay device is the figure 8 type. It is two metal rings that are each about an inch in diameter that are joined together. A loop of the climbing rope is put through one of the two rings, and then it is put around and under the other ring. When the rope is pulled tight then, the 4 right angles created will make the rope virtually impossible to move, thus saving the climber from the fall.

These are just a few of the safety equipment must-haves for a climber. The sport of rock climbing, as was said before, continues to grow with the improved technology that makes it safer and more accessible to everyone.

Proper safety techniques leave the climber free to concentrate on the task at hand and thus improve technique and overall climbing fitness. Relative amateurs are now scaling walls that were never thought to be climbable, and what seems to be sheer face has become accessible to the pros. All of it is due in great part to the advances in the equipment that not only make it easier to climb, but make it much safer to climb as well.

A Load of Bull: The Draw of Spain's Running with the Bulls

The festival is best known for its Pamplona roots, but it is actually a tradition in many small towns all over the country of Spain. That ritual, of course, is the Running of the Bulls. It happens annually around the second or third week in July. It is in honor of the patron saint of Pamplona, San Fermin and the festival is actually known as Sanfermines. The actual running of the bulls act is a culmination of the event and is called Encierro.

Obviously the Encierro is the most well known part of the festival, and it undoubtedly the biggest draw for foreign visitors to the festival. This Running of the Bulls actually takes place over an 800-meter course through the streets of the town. The bulls themselves will travel to

the afternoon bullfight via the course and all the participants in their way. Between July 7th and 14th, six bulls are released every morning. The streets are packed with the runners and when they hear the rocket indicating the release of the bulls they begin their run.

Part of the draw for many is the danger factor. Between 1924 and 1997 there were 14 deaths and well over 200 serious injuries. There are also a large number of close calls, which is the real thrill. In 1995, in fact, an American tourist actually died via a bull goring. Many of the locals, who use the running as a sort of rite of passage, blame the influx of foreigners for making the running more dangerous than it was in its earlier days.

Locals are experienced in being around bulls, while those from other countries have often never been around them and don't know how to avoid them efficiently. They end up clogging up the course and causing more injuries.

The run starts at Santa Dominga Street, which is at the beginning of the 800-meter course, but participants may also start farther along the course at either Mercaderas or Estafeta. As participants wait for the release of the bulls, they sing a traditional song asking for blessing as they run from the bulls. The other option that many tourists take is to simply watch. If you want to watch, you can do so from behind double fences that will protect you from the bulls as they run the street.

After the running of the bulls, the focus is still on these massive animals at the afternoon Corridas, or bull fights. They take place at the town's main bullring. This is usually the first time that many of the locals emerge from their long slumbers since there is so much partying at night. The bullfights in the afternoon are a big part of the celebration and when the real partying actually starts all over again and then carries into the night.

The running of the bulls has actually been a tradition that dates back about 600 years. The saint to whom it is dedicated became a martyr when he was dragged up and down the streets by bulls. Now the festival celebrates him every year by focusing on the running of the bulls.

Though it is a very old tradition, and it actually did not gain worldwide popularity until one of the most famous American authors and adventurers took note. In his classic novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, Ernest Hemmingway talks about the festival and event. The book is one read by many a freshman and certainly glorifies this dangerous tradition.

Spaniards of the area, though, are torn by the popularity. While they fear the tourists make it dangerous and taint the tradition, they also crave the money that comes into town and the opportunity to spread their culture around the world.

The running of the bulls is a fantastically spectacular event. Every July, Pamplona Spain becomes the focal point for those who love culture, history, and adrenaline. Thanks to Ernest Hemmingway and his worldly life, the tradition has found its way into the collective mindset of the western world.

From throughout the United States and Europe, people flock to the area to watch or participate in this traditional and dangerous event. While giving Spain the opportunity to spread their

culture throughout the world, they may fear the damage done by those who are inexperienced more than that.

An Overview to Skate Sailing

In its simplest application, skate sailing refers to an athlete who wears skates, yet is propelled by the wind, which catches in a sail the athlete is holding. If the sport is played on ice, then ice skates will be used. If a different surface is the playing field, the roller skates are acceptable. Due the many different kinds of skates available, this activity can be done anytime in the year, during any season, at any time.

There really are no particular rules to observe, and many of the suggestions that are made to avid skate sailors are simply common sense:

You will need to learn how to stop and make turns while holding a sail. While this is easier said than done, it can be learned in a few hours.

You will need to get to know your tolerance for speed and know when to slow down.

Safety gear is highly recommended, and usually a pair of durable long pants and some safety goggles will do the trick.

Obviously, you want to dress appropriately for the season; thus, if you skate sail in winter, you will want to dress in warm clothes. Avoid cotton since it retains any moisture and keeps it close to your skin. Dress in layers so you can shed some or add some, depending on your comfort level and outdoor temperature changes.

Pay attention to others around you. Since you will quite possibly gain a lot of speed, you want to make sure that you do not run into anyone or anything.

Of course, while these ideas truly are common sense suggestions, you will soon find that skate sailing is a lot easier to describe than to actually do. The biggest hurdle for many novices is how to accurately handle the sail while keeping the balance on the skates is usually not that hard to do. Here are some tips and tricks that will help you to navigate your sail without losing your grip, or worse, heading toward places you did not intend to:

Positioning your hands on the front edge of the sail and then maneuvering it above your head in a horizontal fashion accomplish stopping. Do this while you are pointing in the direction of the wind. When the sail is in this position, the wind will not add speed to your movements and you will be able to easily stop your movements via skating stop and slow motions.

Sailing happens when you move the sail to the shoulder that is exposed to the direction of the wind, actually putting the sail like a shield between the wind and you. As you turn into the direction you wish to skate to, lean against the sail and let the wind actually hold you up. When you switch sides, always bring the sail back to the stopping position. This will allow you to

switch sides without jerking around suddenly but while you are loosing momentum which will make your movements much more fluid and thus easier on the joints.

If you believe you are loosing control of your sail, or have lost control already, simply let it go. There is no sense in trying to hold on and either breaking the sail or getting hurt while holding on for dear life. Instead, let go, break your speed, and then go after the sail.

As you can see, there is a lot more to skate sailing than meets the eye. While it looks like effortless elegance when done by a pro, don't feel like the sport is not for you simply because the first few outings do not go smoothly. Instead remember that even the apparently effortless pro started out small, and probably had to let go of the sail quite a few times before she or he finally got into the groove of things.

So go ahead, dust off your skates, make sure the blades of your ice skates are properly sharpened, and get yourself a sail. This inexpensive sport is a lot of fun and can be enjoyed alone or with others. Best of all, it will get you out into the fresh air and allow you to enjoy the beauty of nature year round.

Ramp it Up: The Lengths Skateboarders Go to Just for the Thrill of It

Notice all those young kids on skateboards, not only skateboarding on the sidewalk, but also skateboard on park benches, sidewalk rails and anything it seems that may be just a few inches or several feet in the air? They will try anything and go anywhere just to get some "air." There are even some home movies made showing them trying to skateboard off their roof.

Now, obviously if you are a young person reading this, do not go out and climb your parents roof with your skateboard. Why, do you suppose, they are so eager to continue learning tricks that push the boundaries of extreme sports, besides being of the belief they are invincible? It is called the adrenaline rush or just for the thrill of it!

Experimenting with different types of skateboards, different types of wheels, the number of wheels, and the overall design of the skateboard is how many individuals move past the normal experience of skateboarding and go forward into the extreme tricks of the trade. With each new design comes the possibility of a new thrill – something that will set them apart from the other millions of skateboarders out there. The thought of injury is of no consequence; in fact it fuels the desire to push the boundaries of skateboarding techniques.

Skateboard parks have been developed all over Northern America and the world, yet there still seems to be those skateboarders who are not satisfied with these parks and continue to seek out different avenues to express their creativity. One reason the thrill of a new skateboard park diminishes so quickly is that once they have mastered all it has to offer, the thrill is gone and they are off seeking or creating new thrills.

The adrenaline rush that comes from attempting the rails, pipes and the tricks created comes crashing to a halt, as they are no longer considered a challenge. Until someone invents a skateboard park that can change with the imagination of the rider they will always be searching

for that bigger and better thrill. What are some of the ways that skateboarders accomplish this thrill?

They do so by skating where they are not supposed to go. This provides prime opportunity to try out new tricks that they have thought of and new ways of performing those feats, primarily on the streets and sidewalks of the cities where they live. The fact that most states make skateboarding in and around the city illegal only compels them further towards these avenues. Another thrill for the skateboarder is in not knowing whether or not a particular trick can be done or whether it can be done on different types of surfaces.

One length skateboarders will gravitate towards in finding the new thrill is the constant improvement of the skateboard itself. From its original design in the 1900s, which consisted of steel roller skate wheels attached to planks of wood to the newest invention yet – the motorized skateboard! This skateboard allows the rider to push the extreme in heights, speed, and techniques that were not possible with “regular” skateboards.

The new electric skateboard is not meant for the beginner or the rider that has a passing interest. These boards have been specifically created for the extremist in mind and will provide hours of new experiences as you try new tricks, heights, grinds, pipes, and speed on this skateboard. Depending on the board chosen you could reach a top speed of 25 miles per hour and be able to break on a dime.

The challenge of learning new tricks is part of the thrill for skateboarders always searching for new ways to beat the champion while at the same time watching in awe as the champion performs tricks that seem physically impossible.

Another part of the thrill of extreme skateboarding is the way those in the sport ramp it up is by ignoring or trying to prove wrong the possibility of injuries. In fact, the more likely they are to receive an injury while doing the trick the harder they try. Therefore the very nature of the likelihood of injury is what draws them to continue to push the boundaries and they are only limited by their imagination.

Your Guide for Skateboarding to the Extreme

When you think of extreme skateboarding, do the images of young boys with jeans and t-shirts skateboarding everywhere but in an actual skateboard park come to mind? Some of you might even have those teenagers living next to you, or down the street, or most likely in your own home.

Skateboarding has been around for at least a century. It dates back to the 1900s when inventive kids took apart their roller skates and nailed, glued and taped whatever they had available – those wheels on to two pieces of wood and off they went. Suffice to say, movement was limited and do not forget about painful splinters from trying to hold on or falling off. Not to mention other injuries such as broken bones.

The term sidewalk surfing became popular due to the increased popularity of surfing. The only difference was that either you were surfing the waves or the sidewalk. Now, the way the skateboard is put together has gone through hundreds of modifications to get what they use today. This provides for a smooth ride and allows for all the extreme moves that are accomplished.

The very first professional skateboard and skateboard team was formed in the 1960s and the first skateboard contest was held at a junior high school in California. Now you can say this lit a fire in the kids of the day and they began skateboarding on and in everything, including empty swimming pools. Empty swimming pools are still used for those who may not have access to a skate park. Perhaps those who began skateboarding in swimming pools actually began the concept of extreme skateboarding.

For a few short years, skateboarding was being banned from cities all over the country due to safety hazards. Back in the day, the skateboards were not constructed as they are today, nor had the concept of safety gear come into play and there were fatalities. However, that was all about to change as the manufacturers of the skateboards began experimenting until that perfect board emerged and skateboarding, in all its glory, filled the hearts, minds, and wallets of teenagers and their parents everywhere.

The state of Florida gets the claim to fame of having built the first outdoors skate park. This is ironic since most of the boom of skateboarding occurred first on the west coast. Soon, however, they would not be able to hold this claim for long because skateboard parks began exploding all over North America. The kids were no longer content with skateboarding horizontally, they now needed to move to vertical – they wanted “air”.

Now, as the skateboarders are flying through the sky, they are also connecting with the new music craze of punk rock. This new wave sound serves to fuel their passion all the more, as well as their hair and clothing styles.

As extreme skateboarding continued its climb, so did the salaries of those who were top in their chosen sport. If you knew what you were doing, your income was guaranteed to be no less than several thousand per month. They began flying off the ramps that were built. Flipping, not only one time in the air but several times and contorting their bodies and boards into what appears to the normal eye, unnatural. The adrenaline rush kept them coming back for more.

The extremeness of the skateboarding world came full force when it became a part of the Extreme Games on ESPN2. There was no stopping these daredevils of the skateboarding world and everyday, somewhere in our world another skateboarding champion is born – it could be your child.

In conclusion, skateboarding has died several times since its inception, but like a fine wine, it never really goes out of style. This extreme sport has rebounded several times to become the popular sport it is today. There are magazines, videos, movies, and even cartoons that show kids of today how to perform the awesome moves that are done in the skateboarding world. There are hundreds of skateboards to choose from every shape, size, color you can even have skateboards special ordered! There is no limit to what is available or as it seems to what can be done on a skateboard.

No Snow? No Problem! Just Go Streetlugging

Picture this: You're laying on your back on an extra long skateboard, traveling feet first at speeds between 60 and 70 miles per hour (depending on the grade) down a winding mountain road with no brakes. If that mental image gives you a thrill and a desire to try it for yourself, you might be ready for streetlugging. You might be . . . but read on.

You have probably seen the luge event at the winter Olympics and that's pretty much what streetlugging is all about, minus, and of course, the snow and ice. Minus the snow and ice, however, is more than just an afterthought, it is the catch. If you 'wipe out' (go out of control and get thrown off your luge) on snow and ice, you can at least look forward to a fairly frictionless slide to 'oblivion'. Streetlugers, on the other hand, have cement, asphalt or worse to deal with in the event of a wipeout -- lots of friction there.

The street version of the luge, called a "rail" or a "sled" by the lugers, is a new generation of the skateboard that is approximately eight-feet long and is equipped with tiny wheels that put you just about two-inches off the ground. The wheels, however, are designed to withstand the high speeds experienced in streetlugging . . . at least most of the time. Streetluge wheels have been known to melt and/or catch on fire.

Leaning left or right to the point (on a sharp turn) accomplishes turning, where the luger's shoulder or elbow might contact the ground (remember, they are laying on their back and just two-inches off the ground). Most rails have "foot pegs" to help keep your feet on the board, but braking is accomplished in true Fred Flintstone fashion, by putting your feet on the ground and burning rubber (quite literally).

Before attempting this sport or even seriously considering it, search for a streetlugging competition somewhere in your area. Go there and watch the action. If you are still interested at that point, talk to some of the lugers or the organizers and try to find a local streetlugging club or organization.

Also, attempt to find out if there is any way a person can try streetlugging before making the financial investment in equipment. Some clubs have special days when people can come in and rent all the equipment and spend the day learning and practicing on private roads with wide shoulders (and big bales of hay to soften your impact if you go out of control).

Speaking of going out of control, if you haven't guessed it by now, streetlugging is a very dangerous sport. Participants, as you'll see if you go to a competition, regularly get scrapes, bruises and breaks, if they are lucky. The unlucky ones get a long stay in a hospital or a permanent stay somewhere else.

Obviously, what you wear while streetlugging is of vital importance. Normally streetlugers wear full body thick leather garments, top-quality helmets and shoes with thick enough soles for breaking.

Still interested? If so, make sure your instructor is a very experienced streetluger and make careful note of everything he or she tells you so that when you are on your back on that

winding mountain road doing 70 miles per hour, you can mentally review his or her every word. If you do that and keep your cool, you'll be OK!

To help you on your way to being accepted as a streetluger, following is some of the terminology of the streetluger:

amped: Overcome by the adrenaline rush that comes with streetluge racing.

bacon: A very rough or otherwise hazardous stretch of road.

banana: The guy who always seems to wind up wiped out.

buttboard: A short version of the streetluge with no foot pegs. (The buttboard is also called a "classic luge").

flame: When the streetluge's wheels catch on fire.

junkyard: The luges that are left in the track after a multi-luge collision.

melt: Streetluge wheels when they get soft from the heat of a run.

nerf bar: a bumper strategically placed on the streetluge to minimize damage in the case of a collision.

puke a wheel: Loosing a wheel from a "melt" or a "flame."

road rash: Scrapes and skin burns from streetlugging.

scrambled eggs: A bad road, but not as bad as "bacon."

skeleton: A face-first run down a road, just for fun.

Have an Extreme Adventure: Try Dog Sledding

When it comes to adventure filled vacations, most enthusiasts will think of skydiving or white water rafting. Yet another activity is slowly gaining in popularity: dog sledding. Have you ever considered the thrill of traversing a snow filled wilderness with a team of dogs? Have you heard of the Iditarod and wondered what it must feel like?

Vacation resorts in the snow filled area of the country are in tune with you and now offer you the opportunity to live these dreams. You do not need your own team of dogs, months of training, or any experience at all! As a matter of fact, families with children find this a marvelous new way of connecting and enjoying the great outdoors together.

Vacation promoters offer many different dog sledding adventures. There are short trips that may only last a few hours. Longer trips or day trips may allow for a campfire and meal in the

wilderness, but you will return to your lodge safe and snug in the evening. For the more extreme adventurers, there are overnight trips and even weeklong adventures that will take them and their dogs into the backcountry and some prized fishing locations. Of course, as with any outdoor adventure, there are some things to keep in mind to remain safe and have a good time:

Choose a reputable vacation promoter. These outfits will have properly trained dogs, new equipment that is properly maintained, and experienced guides who will help you to stay safe and may actually save you from yourself if you get too ambitious. Before signing up with any sledding outfit, be sure that they have been in business for a while and have already had a number of successful expeditions. Word of mouth is the best advertisement in this case.

Know your limits. Do you like dogs? If you don't or anyone in your party does not, then perhaps this is not a good adventure to go on. After all, you don't want to spend a week with a child who is mortally afraid of dogs and will howl in fear every time you place her or him onto a sled. Similarly, if you have never had an outdoor vacation in a cold climate, start slow. You don't want to sign up for a weeklong expedition only to be freezing and miserable twenty minutes after leaving the camp.

Be prepared to learn and work. Even though a guide should be accompanying you on your outings, do not expect her or him to be rigging up your dogs. This is an extreme adventure vacation and this means that it is up to you to do the work! Your guide will teach you the proper techniques of dog handling and how to rig them to the sled, take off the rigging, and also care for the dogs at the end of a sledding day, and she or he may even lend a helping hand, but do not leave all this work to your guide. This is the kind of vacation where you will need to get down and dirty and do a lot of it yourself.

Choose your clothes wisely. Sure, you many have a lot of winter gear in your closet and are ready to pack your toasty socks and sweaters, but keep in mind that this is not a Sunday afternoon shopping trip to the local mall where you may have to brave a few snow flurries. In this setting you will be faced with snow and ice and you must remember that the first rule of keeping warm in any winter environment is to stay dry.

Did you know that many wilderness survival kits warn you never to wear any cotton in winter? The reason is quite simply that cotton takes too long to dry, and once it gets wet, it will keep the moisture against your skin. This moisture will freeze or at least get uncomfortably cold, and you will not be able to stay warm. Your clothes should be made of synthetic fibers since they do not hold on to water the way cotton will. Wool does so as well, but to a much lesser extent.

Skijoring: What is it and How It Got Its Start

Skijoring is a unique sport indeed. The idea behind skijoring (Norwegian for ski-driving) is that if you have a dog and you own a set of skis, grab some rope and you have a new sport! Is the image becoming clear? Think of being pulled in a dogsled, now minus the sled and insert skis and you have skijoring!

Skijoring began in Scandinavia (can you think of a better place?) where they would hook themselves to horses and reindeer to get to their destinations. Eventually dogs proved to be more manageable and some even had three dogs at a time connected. In the 19th century Scandinavian immigrants are believed to be the ones who brought skijoring to the United States. Minnesota has proved quite popular to the skijoring community.

While you are enjoying the thrill of being pulled by your dogs, remember that small breed dogs do not fit the bill here. You have to also have to remember that you do not control the speed, direction, or the breaks and you could reach 15 miles per hour or more. The breed that works the best for this sport are dogs that weigh at least 35 pounds and love to run in the snow. Yes, you have your poles, and most likely you have enrolled in a course to show both you and your dogs how it is done.

Many ski areas are beginning to allow both the skiing enthusiast and their beloved dogs to join them on their winter vacations. Although you do not have to go to a ski resort to enjoy skijoring, this sport can also be done in public parks, golf courses, snowmobile areas, and most any cross-country trails. The type of skiing you do is called "skate skiing" which is more of a side-to-side motion rather than a forward motion.

If you are familiar with sled dog races, you know that sled dogs are known for moving at fast speeds over a large portion of the snow (15 or 20 miles is easy) and enjoy doing so. If you were to fall, your dog may or may not feel like stopping-- just as when you are playing fetch with them they may or may not feel like bringing the ball back to you, remember they are having fun!

How can you tell if your dog is right for skijoring? Most dogs love to run, even when you are walking them with a leash. Even if you dog have never pulled you before but love pulling things, all you have to do is put them in with a lead sled dog and they will learn by example.

If you are seriously considering the thought of trying skijoring, you do not want to cause injury to yourself or your beloved pet, therefore, invest in the proper equipment. The harnesses you use to walk your dog are not adequate for skijoring, as the force of pulling is not adequately distributed over their body and could cause injury and never use only a collar.

Choking can be a problem if this is done and can injure your beloved pet. They make harnesses specifically for skijoring. It is also a good idea to buy a harness for yourself that has a quick release in case you fall and your beloved dog thinks this is just another way for them to pull you. Getting started in the sport of skijoring may set you back about \$70.

If you have never used your dog for skijoring before, please remember that they will get tired as we do and do not expect them to react as if they have been pulling a sled or you all their life. Start slowly and build up that in turn will give you a chance to recover also.

Can you imagine the delight you dog must experience for being allowed to pull you and not get yelled at? Training your dog to walk with a leash is a task in itself and if you are a proud owner of a dog who thinks it is their life purpose to pull you while they are taking their walk then grab a pair of skis because your pet has the temperament for skijoring.

Snowboarding Basics

You have just purchased your first snowboard or it was given to you as a gift after you begged and pleaded for one. Now you want to know how to use it. This article will look at what you will need to get started in the sport, as well as some basic snowboarding techniques.

The most important thing to figure out is if the snowboard is the right size for you. If your board is too long or short, wide or narrow, this could affect the way you perform and can make your snowboarding much more difficult. Now that you have figured out that, and you have the right board, it is time to go over some fundamentals.

If you have enjoyed the sport of skiing you will find that snowboarding is quite similar regardless of what you have heard or think about that. The way you move and position your body is very similar to skiing as is the design of the board.

When you are riding your board, it is very important to stay relaxed when you tense up you increase your chance for injury.

Do not lock your knees; keep them slightly bent and relaxed. Look at your knees as if they were shock absorbers, if they are stiff going over those bumps is going to hurt, keep them bent.

Now that you are relaxed and your knees are bent, try riding your board with one foot strapped in (your front foot) and try going across the hill before you attempt going down the hill. Comfortable now it is time to strap in the other foot.

It is now time to start going down the hill and remember that you use your front foot, not your back foot, to steer. Now lift your toe up and press your heel down and move those hips backward, and you are snowboarding – congratulations. Stopping is just as simple. Simply turn yourself so that you are facing up the hill and that will slow your progress and you will stop.

When you are ready to snowboard, are you sure that you have the right board for what you want to do?

Freestyle Boards: are most popular with beginners. This style of board is comparatively short, wide, and flexible. Learning to turn with this board is relatively easy. As you advance in your techniques, you can also use this board as you learn tricks and show your skills in the snow parks. Unlike other boards, the nose and tail of this one are identical. When buying a boot for this board you want to look for one that is soft and short.

Freeride Boards: is a board that is used for a variety of terrains and snow types. With this board you can enjoy the trails or go off the trails – enjoy the snow wherever you find it. You will notice with this board that it is longer and thinner than the freestyle board a bit more rigid. This style of board also has two categories the freeride and freecave. They vary slightly in how they perform. When purchasing boots for this type of board you want to look for soft and tall as well as soft bindings.

Alpine or Race Boards: You will see the board primarily in competitions. The tip is less curved and the tail is almost completely flat. This allows for the greatest edge contact between

the snow and the board. This board is also thinner than the other boards, which makes it more stable and this allows for reaching high velocities and quick turns. These boards perform best in packed snow, but do not discount them in the powder. This board also has two categories: giant slalom and the slalom. When purchasing a boot for consider one similar to a ski boot that will provide the maximum in support and control.

Boots are usually bulky and come in either high or low styles depending on what you prefer and remember when you purchase boots for the snowboard they usually run a size bigger than you would normally wear. If you are not sure that you are ready to invest in the gear necessary for the sport of snowboarding, you may want to consider going to the slopes and renting what you will need the first couple of times.

This will help you make certain you are ready to make an investment in the sport of snowboarding. There are the very basic steps to get you out on the snow and as you become more confident, consider taking a lesson or two you will learn the sport of snowboarding much faster that way.

Surf the Cold White Stuff: Try Snowboarding!

It is not easy to pinpoint when snowboarding actually started. Men and women, boys and girls have been sliding down hills with or without snow for as long as there have been mountains. History can backtrack to when snowboarding became the sport that most people are familiar with today.

You will be surprised to know that the first person actually to try to slide down a snowy hill with their feet strapped to a single board, occurred in 1929. M.J. Burchett attempted to tie his feet to the board with clothesline and horse reins, snowboarding has come along way since 1929. The next time the snowboard made an evolution was in 1965, thirty years later by Sherman Poppen. He made a snowboard a bit more stable by connecting two skis together and attaching a rope at the nose so that his daughter could stand on it. This added stability to the board.

In 1969, Dimitrije Milovich began making snowboards, as he based his idea on a combination of the surfboard but with the flexibility of skis. He called his design "Winterstick." In 1977, Tom Sims created his version of the snowboard by gluing carpet to the top of a piece of skateboard and covering the bottom with a sheet of aluminum.

In 1980, the official snowboard design is produced by Burton, who combines ski technology into the snowboards he created. In 1982, the first National Snowboard race was held outside of Woodstock, Vermont.

Snowboards, like skis, come in different styles depending on what you want to accomplish here are a few different types of boards and what they are designed for:

Burton 2006 Custom: this board is used to ride on powder as well as park and pipe. The tip and tail shapes of the board remain stable when the snow becomes choppy whether you are taking off landing.

Snowboards

Ride 2006 Havoc: If you are a snowboarder who likes a lot of punch and a good drive, this board is for you. The core is versatile and provides a stiff flex and response. If you are looking for a board that provides high-energy do not pass this up.

M3 2006 Discord: This board is used often in freestyle snowboarding. It is great for a variety of terrains and shredding.

Bindings

SPX 88-Men's: provide lightweight precision with perfection. They are made with exceptional ergonomic quality in the ankle and provide the best in comfort and control made with a reinforced base plate of carbon fiber.

Pro FS-Men's: this provides great response to freestyle, park, and pipe boarding and provides the greatest range of motion.

Poison-Women's: Every aspect of these bindings was made with the women's anatomy in mind not simply modified men's bindings. If you are looking for high performance and comfort consider these bindings.

Cinch 05-women's: These bindings offer women ease of adjustment as well as entry and exit. The performance and precision is unmatched as these bindings have an ergonomic high back and contoured straps.

Boots

Burton ION-men's: This could well be the most agile all-terrain boot made for the snowboarder. Engineered with ultra-light Ion, this boot provides performance versatile flex that will give extra power when the rider hits natural kicks or enjoys being creative in the snow park.

Burton Supreme-women's: This boot features a lacing system that allows you to adjust the upper and lower laces independent of each other and features the ultimate in comfort and support.

Snowboarding Backpacks

Camelbak SnoBound: This pack easily and securely carries your board vertically along with anything that you may need to hike in and out of the backcountry for some great snowboarding adventures. You also can carry 100 ounces of hydration with you. This pack is comfortable, rugged, and stable and can carry anything you need while traversing the backcountry.

Camelbak SnoDawg: This pack can carry all you want and more along with enough water to assure you will not become hydrating while you hit the slopes. This pack has 780 cubic inches of storage space and a container that holds up to 70 ounces of water.

The Appeal of Freestyle Snowboarding

The appeal of freestyle snowboarding has grown over several decades. The ones who enjoy the sport do not simply enjoy winter sports, but many others as well. The draw for freestyle may come because the sport incorporates skateboarding, surfing, and windsurfing. Therefore, the athletes that enjoy freestyle are the same ones who enjoy sailing through the air on any type of board or equipment that they can get their hands on. The thrill of defying gravity and sailing at top speeds make this sport a huge success.

The term freestyle explains many of the reasons this sport has become so popular and there are different freestyle categories.

Halfpipe: The snowboard-halfpipe is longer than the skateboarding halfpipe and needs to be built upon a hill that you can sail down through. You often see competitions on television with the athletes running down the half-pipe trying to make the biggest jumps, turn, and difficult rotations possible.

Jump Contest: The goal of the athlete is to take off the jump and create the most difficult awesome combinations in the air before landing.

Power Snow-Driving: the absolute joy of snowboarders who enjoy freestyle. You simply find a steep hill that is covered in powdered snow and begin carving your way down the hill. This may be the most beautiful part of freestyle snowboarding because as you are sailing over this snow you feel as though you are flying.

Boarder Cross: This type of course is taken from the motor cross scene with a course complete with ramps, jumps, obstacles, and tight turns. This starts like a race with four to five boarders at the starting line with only one taking home the prize.

France is a big draw to snowboarders who love the vertical drops and trails, some of them being on a glacier. The trails extend over three slopes, the longest being 3,233m and vertical drops that are up to 3,300m altitude make this a place that thrill the snowboarders who can perform their freestyle techniques from sunrise till sunset.

Have you ever enjoyed watching the freestyle professionals perform their maneuvers on television and then turned the volume down because you did not have a clue what the announcers were saying? Here is a list of terms you can listen for the next time you want to enjoy watching your favorite professional perform their jumps, turns, and tricks.

Air: when the snowboarder leaves the ground this can be combined with a trick or two as well.

Bonk: is when the snowboarder rides over an object and then will slap the object they just rode over with their snowboard.

Carve: this is when they use the edge of their snowboard to make a turn.

Duck Stance: this is the position the snowboarders feet are in on the board.

Edges: these are the metal strips that are on the sides of the snowboard. They use this to cut into the snow and to control their board to do a turn, carve, or come to a stop.

Fakie: you have heard of someone who can bat both with their left and right hands, the same holds true in the sport of snowboarding. There are some who can lead with their right foot or their left.

Fall Line: is in reference to a direct route down the mountain you may hear this when they point their board straight down the hill at this point they are generating the most speed.

Garland: this is known as the snowboarder going across the slope. They do this by pointing their board straight down the slope and then turning it back across the slope without going back in the other direction.

Halfpipe: this is the manmade trench in the snow that the snowboarder uses to drive down and perform tricks. You will also see them get a lot of air between them and the sides of the halfpipe.

Kicker: this is a small jump that is used so that the snowboarders can get air and perform a trick.

Lip: this is where they will normally begin to perform their trick. It is at the top of the halfpipe or the end of a jump.

Moguls: are bumps that have been created in the snow by the other riders who turn.

Now when you watch the freestyle snowboarders perform their magic listen for a few of these terms and you may start to understand what they are doing just a little bit better.

Snowmobile Racing aka Snowcrossing

What is it that draws so many people to snowmobile racing? Is it the snow, the snowmobiles themselves, or perhaps the crisp fresh air of winter? Suffice to say the draw is all of the above mentioned. Snowmobile racing is a cross between watching the Daytona 500, speed skating, and roller derby. Throw in a few hairpin turns and paint the snowmobiles bright neon colors, and you have yourself a snowmobile race. Where are some of these snowmobile or snowcross races held?

Eagle River, Wisconsin has had a snowmobile derby for the past 41 years and this race and location is rich in history. In 1944 the first snowmobile (well at least one that closely resembles the models of today) was built. It basically consisted of a toboggan on skis that could be driven over the snow.

During the 1960s is when the thought of using snowmobiles in the form of a sport caught the attention of many. The idea came as a way to boost the winter economy and boost, it did. The snowmobile derby in Eagle River today can draw crowds upwards of 50,000 people.

West Yellowstone in Montana has some excellent areas for experiencing the thrill of riding your snowmobile and they also have the Snowmobile Expo. There are also several snowmobile race competitions to enjoy. The races bring in the cream of the crop and you will not be disappointed watching the freestyle techniques of the professionals!

The Three Bear Lodge is a great place to stay due to the fact that you are near the best trails and action around. After a long day on the trails, you can come back to the Lodge and relax. Then you will make your way to the Expo and races all are within a close proximity to your accommodations.

Salem, New Hampshire has a snowmobile-racing site also at Rockingham Park. The racers will go over jumps that could be as much as 30 feet high and take them a distance of more than 80 feet in the air. This is an amazing race to watch as the skill level ranges from beginners, semi-professionals, to professionals all racing through bumps, turns, ramps and going as much as 60 miles per hour.

There is also the International 500 that began in the 1960s and is run entirely by volunteers. The volunteers prepare the track; the snowmobile racers come, qualify and race at top speeds. The spectators love it and you will, too. This great race began with the simple comment of one man asking another man how many miles can snowmobiles run consecutively. Thus the International 500 Snowmobile Race came to life. Come and visit Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

The Maritime Snowmobile Racing Federation (MSRF) began in 1978. With each passing year the MSRF abounds with more and more individuals wanting to join the race. They come from all over the Northern United States and Eastern Canada. As diverse as their racers are, the locations are spread throughout cities all across the Northern United States and Eastern Canada. To watch these professionals in action is surely an event you do not want to miss. You can contact your local snowmobile outfitters and they will have a schedule of when the MSRF will be near your city.

Island Pond, Vermont has joined the ranks of many other states hosting the snowmobile racing teams. The particular team that met up in Vermont is part of the Rock Maple Northeast SnoCross Series. If you have the opportunity to watch these professionals in action, it is amazing to see them flying across the snow. They reach upwards of 60 miles per hour as they try to make the hairpin turns, fly over the bumps without hitting another racer or wiping out themselves. It is truly exhilarating!

If you want to know all there is to know about snowmobile racing, you may be interested in the Snowmobile Hall of Fame and Museum in St. Germain, Wisconsin. Within this museum, you will see the past come to life while viewing sleds, clothing, and trophies from years gone by. They even have a theater, which shows amazing racing videos. Each year they have a Classic Sled Roundup when the owners proudly display their snowmobiles from the past this is a great time to be had by all.

Racing to the Extreme: The Growing Craze of Adventure Racing

One of the newest and fastest growing extreme sports is adventure racing. This is not one sport with one set of rules; this is more like the extreme Olympics. The name gives you a tip-off about the nature of the sport -- it's all about competition. The first one (or first ones, if it is a team event) across the 'finish line' (be it real or symbolic) is the winner. And one warning is in order, in case you didn't know it, the combination of a competition sport combined with the concept of extreme sports is highly addictive.

Just a note for those of you entirely unfamiliar with the concept of extreme sport; extreme sport isn't about a death wish or even a desire to take wild and ridiculous chances (although all of the above are possibilities). Extreme sport is about an individual challenging him or her to beat the odds, regardless of the odds. It is about an individual achieving a level of focus, determination and results in accomplishment that an individual had previously doubted him or herself capable of achieving. In a nutshell, that's extreme sports.

There are several sports 'officially' involved in this world of adventure racing, following is a look at some of them. Some of these races, by the way, may be quite long and involve training like you would do for a marathon.

Hiking/running/scrambling: This competition is held on mixed terrain and, like most extreme sports, in any weather. Most of these competitions start out with a run from a starting point to a piece of difficult terrain that requires you to hike up or scramble. Scrambling, in case you are not familiar with the term, is climbing without the use of ropes and using your hands only for balance (not for grabbing or pulling yourself up).

Paddling: You may be paddling a canoe or rowboat, but usually a kayak across a pool, a lake or a bay, so water conditions can vary from smooth to very choppy. Getting good at paddling in all of these conditions is a real advantage in adventure racing because it's the weakest event for many adventure racers. If you are good, it can give you, or your team, a great lead.

Navigation: Many adventure races have a section where navigation is an actual event but even where it is not a standalone event. It is an important component in any cross-country event. What this is all about is your ability to read a terrain (topographical) map and read a compass and put the two together to find a target location (before anyone else). If you do this well, it's like paddling. Many adventure racers are weak at navigation so you will have a real advantage.

Mountain biking: Your first instinct for a mountain biking course is to get rid of the extra weight, like the headlight. In the world of adventure racing, you may well be biking at night so scratch that instinct. Instead replace a heavy, clunky light with a lightweight light that gives you a bright light for the rough terrain and a lower-power light for the roads. Another tip, if you are racing with a team, ideally everyone should have the same bike to make parts swapping possible (if necessary).

Climbing: Some races will have a climbing or rappelling (the opposite of climbing) component. Practice in this event, as in all events, makes perfect and another thing that will be perfect is

buying lightweight climbing gear and be a minimalist so you don't weigh yourself down too badly.

Teamwork: No, teamwork isn't a competition . . . just a necessity. If you are racing with a team, as many races require, your teammates will be more than just fellow adventurers, they will be extra arms, legs and brains. At their best, the team will function like a well-oiled machine and will move as a unit, to a successful finish. At their worst, individual preference will grapple with unity and, like Humpty Dumpty, the team will need an army to reassemble it as it falls to pieces far short of the finish line.

Make no mistake; the winning team in any race will not necessarily be the one with the strongest or fastest or even the most skilled individuals. The winning team will be the one that does not have individuals -- just team members. This team member mentality is by no means easy. Competitive sports can get very emotional and emotions can lie to waste the tightest teamwork.

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