

# What Makes a Good Skateboard?



**PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION**  
Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

Without a proper skateboard setup, learning to skate can be frustrating and potentially dangerous. Fortunately, Portland is a skate hub and there are many skate shops around town that are happy to give you great service and build the right board for your child. A skateboard is comprised of the deck, trucks, bushings, wheels and bearings. Each of these items comes in a variety of sizes and styles and each board should be custom assembled to fit the height, weight and interest of the skater.

You may have seen, or even purchased, toy skateboards sold at one-stop shopping marts. We recommend that participants in our skate programs do not use this type of board during instruction. Toy boards are made with materials of inferior quality and simply will not perform in the ways a quality skateboard should. They have weak components that will not stand up to repetition or respond to stance, balance and movement the way a quality board will – this may slow skill development and increase risk of injury. Portland Parks & Recreation has quality loaner equipment available for participants to borrow when needed. Please call 503-444-0476 or email [Craig.Ward@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:Craig.Ward@portlandoregon.gov) to reserve at least 5 days in advance.

## So, what makes a good skateboard?

The **Deck** should be made of wood. The industry standard is 7 plies, or layers, of Canadian Maple. The deck should not flex too much when stood on. Graphics and professional endorsements on the underside of the deck are unimportant for performance, and blank decks tend to cost less. Most skate shops will also have less expensive “shop decks” that will perform just as well.

The **Trucks** are the axles of the skateboard and should be made of metal. Look to see that there is a name brand printed on the truck somewhere. Within each truck there are two bushings. Nuts and bolts fasten trucks to the deck.

**Bushings** are the urethane cushions that the trucks pivot on as the board turns. Bushings should be made of urethane, not hard plastic. If bushings are too hard, the board will be nearly impossible to turn. Softer bushings are often recommended for lighter weight riders.

**Wheels** should be made of urethane, not plastic. Urethane wheels are made in a variety of durometers (hardness) from soft to hard. The hardest urethane wheel will have a durometer of 101a, and the softest will have a durometer of around 76a. Softer wheels are easier to skate on rougher streets by absorbing vibrations, rolling over cracks easier, and gripping the ground in a way that can help prevent sliding. Harder wheels are usually preferred at smooth skateparks and in situations where the skater wants to perform tricks or slide their wheels. There are two **bearings** in each wheel (for a total of 8 bearings) which spin on the axle of the truck. There are a variety of bearings available, but they are all structurally similar and are interchangeable. It is important to keep bearings clean and out of the rain - dirty or rusty bearings won't roll properly.

**Safe Storage:** Keep your skateboard dry and out of direct sunlight or moist conditions. Skateboards are made of wood and can warp or delaminate when exposed to drastic changes in temperature or climate.

## Here are a few local Portland skate shops that can help you get started:

### ***Shrunken Head***

531 SE Morrison St  
(503) 232-4323

### ***S.M.A.R.T. Collective***

6923 SE Foster Rd  
(503) 946-8134

### ***Cal Skate***

210 NW 6th Ave  
(503) 248-0495

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Commissioner Amanda Fritz | Director Mike Abbaté

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