

You Don't Have to Hurt Yourself to Snowboard

by: Lauren Traub Teton Snowboarding Gear to Keep you Safe and Comfortable as you Learn and Ride Are you thinking of trying snowboarding, but reluctant because you've heard that you'll be bruised after the painful edge-catching falls of the first three days? Or have you tried snowboarding but thrown in the towel because it hurts too much when you fall? Snowboarding without Injuries-- Snowboarding without injuries is actually a possibility. If you wear protective snowboard gear you will greatly reduce the odds of hurting yourself when you snowboard. You will not have to worry as much about possible pain and injury on the slopes, and you can relax and enjoy the ride. If you are lucky enough to always ride on soft deep powder, protection is not such a big issue. But hard snow happens, especially in Eastern America. Most Websites and Magazines Do Not Discuss Snowboard Safety-- and protection for the snowboarder. In some circles, it seems there is something stoic and admirable about enduring pain. If you disagree, and want to spend quality time on the slopes instead of nursing bumps and bruises on the sidelines or sustaining slow-healing injuries that can become chronic and arthritic, read on. Main Points of Impact with Snow and Ice-- When you ride, the main points of impact where your body will meet the snow or ice are predictable: knees, hands and wrists, buttside or tailbone, and head are the target zones. Protect these body parts and you will hurt less and have a lot more fun. Knee Protection for Snowboarders-- Knee protection is one of the most important pieces of snowboard protective gear. Your knees are bony and vulnerable. And they are complex joints that are painful and expensive to fix. Wear in-line Skate Knee Pads beneath your snow pants. Make sure they are soft and well-padded on the inside and hard plastic to absorb shock and protect on the outside. Good pads will also keep your knees warm and flexible, and you can relax so much more knowing that a fall forward is not going to be painful and damaging. Beginners fall on their knees often. Believe it or not, good knee pads also help to protect your wrists. Read on. Hand/Wrist Protection for Snowboarders-- Falling forward with your weight on your hands is a good way to break a wrist. Fists should be balled up, with your thumb outside, as if you were ready to punch someone. Try to relax and fall evenly on your protected knees, and forearms. You should wear good protective knee pads so you can distribute the weight on both your knees and hands. Then you won't have to try to catch yourself with your hands. Some experts argue that wearing skate wrist guards can increase the severity of a fracture by sending the "shock" up the arm to a larger bone. A new snowboard specific safety glove and wrist guard is now on the US Market. It was designed by a French Emergency Room physician who has worked on thousands of snowboard fractures, and it is supposed to reduce snowboard wrist injuries by up to 60%. Butt/Tailbone Protection for Snowboarders-- People sometimes say "But I have plenty of natural padding on my butt." Forget it. You need padding that is not connected to your central nervous system. If you're a beginner and if you don't have anything else, you can slide some bubble wrap down the back of your pants. Use plenty! You'll hear the bubbles pop when you fall and you'll be glad you wore them. And you will have saved a lot of jarring to your spine as well as wear and tear on your buttocks and tailbone. Once you're convinced of the need to save your posterior, invest in some real padding designed for snowboarders. A hard plastic shell outside with soft padding on the inside is great. It will hardly be noticeable beneath your snow pants and it really helps. Helmets for Snowboarders-- You might think (mistakenly) that helmets are only for people who ride in the trees, or do big tricks. But the first time you catch an edge and go CLUNK! and the back of your head hits the hard hard ground, you'll reconsider. A helmet also adds the comfort of warmth and dryness, as well as cushioning for your brain. With a helmet on, you can ride in the rain comfortably, and have the slopes almost to yourself. You should buy a helmet in person at a shop. Correct fit is mandatory and tricky. Get expert help at the snowboard shop to be sure the helmet fits. And have your helmet checked for safety and fit next season if you fell on it a lot or grew dreads or shaved your head since you purchased it. Hydration for Snowboarders-- Snowboarding creates heat. That means you are perspiring, even when it's cold. Stay hydrated with water, and you will be able to ride longer and better. To replace the water lost perspiring and breathing the dry winter air, use a hydration system. It is a backpack with a water bladder, and a tube to deliver the water to your mouth. Simple and efficient. Just grab the tube, bite the valve on the end, and sip. You can easily do it while sitting on the lift. You can wear it outside your coat, or even under it on freezing days. You can do tricks and ride the pipe while wearing a small hydration backpack, no problem. You can also throw an extra clothing layer, energy bar, tool set, or whatever in the hydration backpack. The backpacks come in many different sizes and configurations. Safety for Your Board-- It's just as important to protect your trusty ride when you get off it. Hardcore riders never let their boards out of their sight. If you do, check yours at the lodge, or lock it with a small cable lock that you carry in your backpack. Also register it online at <http://www.SnowboardRegistry.com/> so if it does disappear, you at least have a chance of getting it back. And be a good citizen of the snowboard universe. Before you buy a used board, check its serial number at <http://www.SnowboardRegistry.com/> to make sure it wasn't reported stolen. Ride Happily Many a Day-- Unlike with skating and surfing, you DON'T have to endure pain to learn and ride your snowboard. Respect yourself. Dress for safety and comfort on the slopes, and you'll come back to ride happily many a day.

About the Author

Read more about snowboard safety gear at <http://www.snowboardsecrets.com/secrets.htm>. Lauren Traub Teton is an avid snowboarder and the Editor of [SnowboardSecrets.com](http://www.SnowboardSecrets.com) and the Snowboard Events Calendar at <http://www.WhatsonSnow.com>. Get "16 Secrets for Successful Snowboarding" when you sign up for the Snowboard Szine at <http://www.snowboardsecrets.com>. Copyright © 2004 Lauren Traub Teton. All Rights Reserved