

how to do an ollie

how to do an ollie is the fundamental skateboarding trick that unlocks a universe of possibilities, from overcoming obstacles to mastering more advanced maneuvers. This comprehensive guide will break down the ollie into its core components, providing detailed instructions and actionable tips to help aspiring skaters of all levels achieve this iconic feat. We will explore the essential body positioning, the precise timing of your foot movements, and the common pitfalls to avoid, ensuring you have a clear roadmap to success. Understanding the mechanics of how to do an ollie is not just about getting your board off the ground; it's about developing board control, spatial awareness, and the confidence to push your skateboarding boundaries. This article will equip you with the knowledge and techniques necessary to execute a clean and consistent ollie, paving the way for your skateboarding journey.

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Understanding the Ollie: The Foundation of Skateboarding

The ollie is widely considered the most important trick in skateboarding. It is the motion that allows a skateboarder to jump into the air with their board attached to their feet. Mastering the ollie is crucial

because it is the prerequisite for almost every other airborne trick, including kickflips, heelflips, and grinds. Without a solid ollie, progressing further in skateboarding becomes significantly challenging. It's a trick that requires a blend of coordination, timing, and practice, but once understood, it becomes an instinctive movement.

The physics behind an ollie involve a sequence of precise actions. It's not simply about jumping; it's about using your body weight and the board's mechanics to generate upward momentum and control. Understanding these principles will help you troubleshoot your technique and improve your ollie more efficiently. The ollie demonstrates how a skateboarder can manipulate their board into the air, creating a sense of flight and control over their equipment.

Essential Gear and Preparation

Before you even think about attempting an ollie, ensuring you have the right equipment and are in a suitable environment is paramount. A well-maintained skateboard with good grip tape is essential. The trucks should be tightened enough to provide stability but not so tight that they impede your ability to pop the tail. Always wear protective gear, especially when learning new tricks. This includes a helmet, knee pads, elbow pads, and wrist guards. Falling is an inevitable part of learning to skateboard, and these safety measures can prevent serious injuries.

Finding a safe and relatively smooth practice area is also critical. A flat, open space with a smooth surface, like a paved driveway or an empty parking lot, is ideal. Avoid areas with cracks, pebbles, or significant inclines, as these can disrupt your balance and make learning more difficult. Some beginners find it beneficial to practice near a wall or railing for support, though the goal is eventually to perform the ollie in open space.

Skateboard Setup for Ollie Success

The setup of your skateboard can significantly impact your ability to learn the ollie. Ensure your wheels are properly tightened; loose wheels can wobble and cause instability. The bearings should be clean and functioning well, allowing the board to roll smoothly. Grip tape is crucial for keeping your feet attached to the board during the ollie motion. If your grip tape is worn out, it will be much harder to maintain your footing.

Protective Gear Essentials

While the thrill of skateboarding is undeniable, safety should always come first. Investing in good quality protective gear is not a sign of weakness but a smart strategy for longevity in the sport. A properly fitting helmet is non-negotiable, as head injuries are a serious concern. Knee pads and elbow pads will cushion your falls, and wrist guards can prevent sprains and fractures. Remember to check that all straps are securely fastened before each session.

Breaking Down the Ollie: Step-by-Step Guide

The ollie can be broken down into three distinct phases: the pop, the slide, and the landing. Each phase requires specific timing and muscle memory. It's crucial to practice each part individually before trying to combine them. The goal is to create a fluid motion that lifts both you and your board into the air.

The initial setup involves placing your feet in the correct position on the board. Your back foot will be responsible for the "pop," while your front foot will perform the "slide." The coordination of these two actions, timed with your jump, is what creates the ollie. Understanding the role of each foot and the corresponding body movement is the first step to mastering this trick.

The Setup: Foot Placement

Proper foot placement is the bedrock of a successful ollie. Your back foot should be positioned on the tail of the skateboard, with your heel slightly hanging off the edge. This allows for a powerful and clean snap. Your toes should be pointing towards the nose of the board, providing a stable base. Your front foot should be placed in the middle of the board, somewhere between the front bolts and the middle of the deck. The exact position can vary slightly depending on personal preference, but generally, it should be angled slightly forward. This placement allows for an effective slide up the board.

The stance should be athletic and balanced. Bend your knees slightly, keeping your weight centered over the board. This lowered center of gravity is essential for generating the necessary power and maintaining control throughout the jump. Imagine you are about to jump; this is the kind of coiled readiness you want to achieve.

The Pop: Generating Lift

The pop is the action that initiates the ollie and gets the tail of the board to hit the ground. To execute a proper pop, you need to quickly and forcefully snap your back ankle down, pushing the tail of the board into the ground. This action should be sharp and decisive, like a flick. The timing of the pop is critical; it

should occur just as you begin to jump upwards. The pop creates the initial upward momentum for the board.

Think of it as stomping on the tail. It's a quick, downward motion of your ankle. The board will pivot on the nose and the tail will hit the ground, creating a loud "pop" sound. The force of this pop is what propels the board upwards and allows your front foot to catch it.

The Slide: Leveling the Board

Immediately after the pop, your front foot comes into play for the slide. As your back foot pops the tail, your front foot should begin to slide up the board towards the nose. This slide should be a smooth, upward motion, using the laces or the side of your shoe. The goal of the slide is to guide the board upwards and level it out in the air. As your front foot reaches the peak of its slide, drag it firmly across the grip tape towards the nose.

This sliding motion is what "pulls" the board up with you. As your front foot drags, it helps to level the board out in the air, bringing the tail up to meet the nose. The pressure and direction of this slide are key to controlling the height and stability of your ollie. It's a subtle but crucial part of the trick that requires practice to perfect.

The Landing: Sticking the Trick

The landing is as important as the pop and slide. Once the board has leveled out in the air, bring your knees up towards your chest. This action absorbs the impact of the landing and keeps your feet in contact with the board. As the board comes back down, extend your legs to meet it, bending your knees to absorb the shock. The goal is to land with your feet in roughly the same position they started in, maintaining balance.

The landing requires confidence and commitment. Don't be afraid to land on the board. Focus on keeping your weight centered and your knees bent. A soft landing will absorb the impact and help you maintain your balance, allowing you to roll away cleanly. This is the moment where all your practice pays off.

Common Ollie Mistakes and How to Fix Them

Many skaters struggle with specific aspects of the ollie, leading to common mistakes. Identifying these issues is the first step to correcting them. Often, the problem lies in improper timing, insufficient pop, or an ineffective slide. The good news is that with targeted practice, these issues can be overcome.

One of the most frequent problems is not getting the board to level out. This is usually due to a weak or mistimed slide with the front foot. Another common issue is a lack of height, which can stem from a weak pop or not bringing the knees up high enough during the ascent. Understanding these typical errors will allow you to diagnose your own ollie and make the necessary adjustments.

Not Enough Pop

If your board is not getting off the ground with enough force, it's likely a problem with your pop. Ensure you are snapping your ankle down quickly and powerfully. Try practicing just the pop motion on its own, focusing on generating a loud sound from the tail hitting the ground. Sometimes, skaters are too hesitant with their back foot, which reduces the effectiveness of the snap.

Weak Front Foot Slide

A board that goes straight up but doesn't level out in the air often indicates a weak or mistimed front foot slide. You need to actively drag your front foot up the board towards the nose. Visualize scraping your shoe across the grip tape. Experiment with the angle and pressure of your front foot during the slide to see what works best. Ensure your front foot is positioned correctly and ready to slide as soon as the pop happens.

Landing Issues

Landing with your feet off the board or stumbling is a common problem. This often happens when skaters don't bring their knees up high enough to meet the board in the air, or when they are afraid of landing. Focus on committing to the landing by bringing your knees towards your chest. As the board comes down, extend your legs to meet it and bend your knees to absorb the impact. Imagine you are trying to stick your feet to the board.

Practicing Your Ollie: Drills and Tips

Consistent practice is the key to mastering any skateboarding trick, and the ollie is no exception. It's important to practice in a way that reinforces good habits and addresses weaknesses. Breaking down the trick into smaller components can make the learning process more manageable and less frustrating. Remember to be patient with yourself; progression takes time.

Repetition is crucial. The more you practice, the more your muscle memory will develop, and the ollie

will become more natural. Focus on quality over quantity; performing a few well-executed ollies is more beneficial than many sloppy attempts. Celebrate small victories, and don't get discouraged by setbacks.

Stationary Ollie Practice

Starting with stationary ollies on flat ground is essential. This allows you to focus solely on the mechanics of the trick without the added challenge of moving. Practice the pop and slide motions repeatedly until they feel smooth and coordinated. Try practicing in grass, which will prevent your board from rolling away and allow you to get a feel for the motions without the risk of falling.

Ollies While Rolling

Once you are comfortable with stationary ollies, begin practicing while rolling at a slow speed. This introduces the element of balance and forward momentum. Start with very slow rolls and gradually increase your speed as your confidence grows. The motion of the ollie will feel slightly different when moving, so be prepared to adjust your timing.

Visualizing Success

Mental practice can be surprisingly effective. Before you even step on your board, visualize yourself successfully executing a clean ollie. Imagine the feel of the pop, the slide, and the landing. This mental rehearsal can help build confidence and reinforce the correct movements. When you are on your board, try to maintain this positive mental image.

Ollie Variations and Next Steps

Once you have a solid and consistent ollie, a new world of skateboarding tricks opens up. The ollie is the gateway to many advanced maneuvers. Learning variations of the ollie can further enhance your board control and prepare you for more complex tricks.

After mastering the basic ollie, you can start experimenting with ollies over small obstacles or while turning. These variations help you adapt your ollie to different situations. The journey doesn't end with the ollie; it's just the beginning of your skateboarding progression.

Ollie Over Obstacles

A natural progression from a basic ollie is learning to ollie over small objects like a crack in the pavement or a twig. This requires timing and confidence in clearing the obstacle. Gradually increase the size of the obstacle as your skill improves, but always start small and ensure you can safely clear it.

Ollies While Turning

Ollieing while turning (often called an "ollie out of a turn" or a "frontside/backside ollie") is a more advanced technique. It requires maintaining balance and control while initiating the ollie with some lateral movement. This is a crucial skill for navigating skateparks and street skating.

Moving Towards Flip Tricks

The ollie is the foundational step for all flip tricks. Once you can ollie reliably, you can begin learning kicks flips, heelflips, and other rotational tricks. These tricks combine the ollie motion with a flick of your foot to spin the board in various directions. Your ollie's consistency will directly impact how quickly and effectively you learn these more complex maneuvers.

FAQ

Q: How long does it typically take to learn how to do an ollie?

A: The time it takes to learn how to do an ollie varies greatly from person to person. Some individuals may pick it up within a few hours of practice, while others might take several weeks or even months to consistently land a clean ollie. Factors such as natural athletic ability, dedication to practice, and the quality of instruction play significant roles in the learning curve. Consistency is key; practicing for short periods regularly is often more effective than infrequent, long sessions.

Q: Should I practice ollies on carpet, grass, or hard ground?

A: It is highly recommended to start practicing the fundamental motions of the ollie on carpet or grass. These surfaces prevent the skateboard from rolling away, allowing you to focus on the footwork and body movements without the added challenge of balance and movement. Once you have a good grasp of the pop and slide mechanics, you can transition to hard ground for more realistic practice, which will mimic actual skateboarding conditions.

Q: What is the difference between an ollie and a kickflip?

A: The ollie is the fundamental trick of jumping with your skateboard into the air. A kickflip is an advanced trick that builds upon the ollie. In a kickflip, after performing the ollie motion, the skater flicks their front foot off the side of the board to make it rotate 360 degrees along its long axis before landing back on it. The ollie is the prerequisite for performing a kickflip and most other flip tricks.

Q: My ollie doesn't seem to get very high. What could be wrong?

A: If your ollie lacks height, there are a few common culprits. First, ensure you are snapping the tail of your board down with enough force for a powerful pop. Second, make sure you are bringing your knees up high towards your chest after the pop and slide to give the board room to rise. Lastly, the timing of your front foot slide is crucial; it needs to be a distinct upward motion to help lift the board.

Q: What is the best way to practice the ollie if I'm afraid of falling?

A: It's natural to be apprehensive when learning new skateboarding tricks. To mitigate falls, start by practicing stationary ollies in grass or on carpet. Wear protective gear, including a helmet, knee pads, elbow pads, and wrist guards. When practicing on hard ground, start with very slow rolling ollies, and consider practicing near a wall or railing for temporary support. Focus on committing to the landing by keeping your knees bent and your weight centered.

Q: How important is foot placement for a good ollie?

A: Foot placement is critically important for a successful ollie. Your back foot should be positioned on the tail of the board, with your heel slightly off, ready to snap down. Your front foot should be placed around the middle of the board, angled slightly forward, to facilitate the slide up the deck. Incorrect foot placement can make it difficult to generate the necessary pop and slide, significantly hindering your ability to ollie effectively.

Q: How do I know when to pop and when to slide?

A: The pop and slide happen in very quick succession, almost simultaneously. The pop should be initiated by snapping your ankle down on the tail just as you begin to jump upwards. Immediately after the pop, as your body and the board are rising, you should slide your front foot up the board towards the nose. The timing is a rapid sequence: jump, pop, slide, level, land. Practice to synchronize these movements.

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