GENERAL

how to ride a penny board

Published: September 3, 2026 | Index ID: #-

How to Ride a Penny Board: A Complete Beginner’s Guide

Whether you’re a skateboard veteran looking to try something new or a complete novice curious about the tiny, yet powerful, penny board, this guide will walk you through every step of learning how to ride a penny board. We’ll cover everything from choosing the right board and gear to mastering balance, riding techniques, tricks, safety, and maintenance. By the end of this article, you’ll feel confident enough to hit the pavement with your new penny board and start enjoying the ride.

1. What Is a Penny Board?

A penny board is a lightweight, portable skateboard that typically measures 8 to 10 inches in length. Despite its small size, it offers a smooth, stable ride thanks to its high-quality deck, wheels, and bearings. Penny boards are popular for commuting, cruising, and performing tricks because they’re easy to carry, require minimal storage space, and are surprisingly powerful.

Key Features

- Deck Size – 8 3 to 10 3, usually made from maple or composite materials.
- Wheels – 50–60mm diameter, 90–100A hardness for a balanced ride.
- Bearings – 608-size, ABEC 5 or 7 for smooth rotation.
- Trucks – 150mm or 160mm, lightweight aluminum for quick turns.
- Portability – Foldable or slim design for easy transport.

2. Choosing the Right Penny Board

Before you even step on a penny board, you need to pick one that suits your style, height, and intended use. Here’s how to make an informed decision.

Consider Your Riding Style

1. Commuting – Look for a board with larger wheels (55–60mm) and softer hardness (90–100A) for a smoother ride over bumps.
2. Tricks and Stunts – Choose a board with slightly smaller wheels (50–55mm) and a bit harder hardness (95–105A) for better control.
3. Cruising – A mid-range wheel size (52–57mm) and medium hardness (95–105A) balances speed and comfort.

Check the Deck Size and Width

Your board should fit comfortably between your feet. A deck that’s too narrow can feel unstable, while one that’s too wide might be cumbersome. Most adults find 8 3–9 3 decks ideal, but you can choose based on your height and preference.

Read Reviews and Test Boards

Before purchasing, read user reviews and watch video demos. If possible, visit a local skate shop to test ride a few models. Feeling the board’s stiffness and how it responds to turns will help you pick the right one.

3. Essential Gear and Safety Equipment

Riding a penny board is fun, but safety should always come first. Here's a checklist of gear you'll need.

Protective Gear

- Helmet – A well-fitted helmet protects your head from impacts.
- Elbow Pads – Cushion falls and reduces wrist injuries.
- Knee Pads – Protect knees during stunts or falls.
- Wrist Guards – Prevent wrist fractures when you fall forward.

Clothing

Wear comfortable, breathable clothing that allows free movement. Avoid loose clothing that might catch on the board's wheels or trucks.

Optional Accessories

- Grip Tape – Enhances foot traction on the deck.
- Spare Wheels – In case of a puncture or wear.
- Tool Kit – For quick adjustments and repairs.

4. Basic Riding Techniques

Mastering the fundamentals of penny board riding will build a strong foundation for more advanced tricks and longer rides. Follow these steps to get started.

Step 1: Mounting Your Board

1. Stand next to the board with the tail (rear) side facing you.
2. Place your front foot near the front bolts, with the toes pointing toward the tail.
3. Place your back foot on the tail, ensuring a balanced stance.
4. Keep your knees slightly bent for shock absorption.

Step 2: Finding Your Balance

Balance is critical. Hold a wall or railing for support until you feel comfortable. Practice shifting weight forward and backward while standing still. Once you can maintain a steady position, you're ready to move.

Step 3: Pushing Off

1. Place your back foot on the tail and push off the ground.
2. As you gain momentum, lift your front foot and place it on the deck.
3. Keep your feet shoulder-width apart for stability.

Step 4: Steering and Turning

To turn, shift your weight toward the direction you want to go. The trucks will pivot accordingly. Practice gentle turns in a straight line before attempting sharper corners.

Step 5: Braking

Most penny boards don't have a traditional brake. To slow down, shift your weight backward and let the wheels roll into a gentle skid. Practice stopping in a safe, open area.

5. Learning to Balance

Balance is the cornerstone of riding any skateboard. Here are exercises that will help you develop core strength

and proprioception.

Core Strengthening Exercises

- Plank – Hold for 30–60 seconds, repeat 3 times.
- Side Plank – Hold each side for 30 seconds.
- Bird-Dog – Extend opposite arm and leg, hold 5 seconds.

Proprioception Drills

1. Stand on one foot for 30 seconds, then switch.
2. Close your eyes and balance on a wobble board.
3. Practice riding in a straight line without looking at your feet.

6. Mastering the Ride

Once you're comfortable with basic riding, it's time to refine your technique. Mastery involves smooth transitions, efficient foot placement, and a relaxed stance.

Foot Placement Variations

- Regular Stance – Left foot forward, right foot back.
- Goofy Stance – Right foot forward, left foot back.
- Experiment with both to find what feels most natural.

Efficient Pushing

Instead of pushing with your heel, try using the ball of your foot for a more powerful and controlled push. This technique reduces fatigue and increases speed.

Riding on Different Terrains

- Flat Pavement – Focus on smooth carving.
- Inclines – Use a slight forward lean and keep your core engaged.
- Uneven Surfaces – Lower your stance, keep knees bent, and use the board's wheels to absorb bumps.

7. Tricks for Beginners

Once you've mastered the basics, you can start adding simple tricks to your repertoire. These tricks are safe, fun, and build confidence.

1. Ollie (Basic Pop)

Though traditionally a skateboard trick, you can perform a simplified version on a penny board by popping the tail and sliding your front foot forward.

2. 180° Turn

1. Ride forward, then shift your weight to the back foot.
2. Rotate your body 180°, bringing the board around.
3. Land with both feet balanced.

3. Manual (Wheelie)

Lift the front wheels slightly off the ground while maintaining balance on the rear wheels. Keep a steady pace and practice in a safe area.

4. Slide (Slide Trick)

Use a small ramp or curb. Push the board onto the curb, then slide the wheels along the surface while keeping your body low.

5. 50/50 (Half-Pipe Transition)

Approach a small ramp, ride straight up, and then smoothly transition down the other side.

8. Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Even beginners can fall into traps that hinder progress. Here are common pitfalls and how to fix them.

1. Standing Too Tall

Leaning too far forward or backward reduces stability. Keep your shoulders level and knees slightly bent.

2. Using the Wrong Foot for Pushing

Relying solely on heel pushes can lead to uneven wear and slower speed. Use the ball of your foot for a more efficient push.

3. Ignoring Safety Gear

Skipping protective gear increases injury risk. Always wear a helmet, pads, and wrist guards.

4. Riding Too Fast on a Small Deck

Excess speed on a tiny board can cause loss of control. Start slow, especially on uneven surfaces.

5. Skipping Warm-Up

Warming up muscles prevents strains. Spend 5–10 minutes stretching before riding.

9. Maintenance and Care

Keeping your penny board in top condition ensures longevity and optimal performance. Follow these maintenance steps.

Daily Inspection

1. Check for loose screws or bolts.
2. Inspect wheels for cracks or wear.
3. Look for scratches or chips on the deck.

Cleaning

Wipe the deck with a damp cloth. For stubborn grime, use mild soap. Dry thoroughly before storage.

Wheel Care

- Remove wheels periodically and clean bearings with isopropyl alcohol.
- Inspect bearings for metal shavings; replace if necessary.
- Replace wheels when they start to sound dull or lose traction.

Truck Alignment

Ensure trucks are aligned correctly. Misaligned trucks can cause uneven turning.

Storage

Store your penny board in a dry, cool place away from direct sunlight. Avoid stacking heavy items on top of it.

10. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the best wheel hardness for a penny board?

For everyday cruising, 90–100A wheels offer a smooth ride. For tricks, slightly harder wheels (95–105A) provide better control.

Can I use a penny board for downhill racing?

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