

Beginner's Guide to the Halfpipe

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this is a halfpipe.!!

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It will be your best friend, and your worst enemy. When the lift lines are too long or the trails are too icy, it will always be there, something fun to do, but if you're just starting out it can be the scariest trail on the hill. Sometimes after a nasty fall, you'll be laying in the flat bottom wishing you were on the middle of the hardest, steepest, mogul trail on the mountain. If you want to ride pipe and not be miserable, you have to do it right.

Riding pipe is hard, and it takes a long time to learn, so don't get upset if you can't even make it above the lip your first day. After a month, don't come down on yourself if you can't get 10 feet out, if you keep at it, it will come.

First thing you should do when learning to ride pipe, is stay far away from lessons. The reason people are snowboard instructors is because they want the title of Snowboard Pro, but aren't good enough to be sponsored, and most of them can't ride pipe. You are much better off to learn on your own. You need to set up your stance, probably differently than how you free ride. Set your stance back a few centimeters, so you have more nose than tail (you should generally ride like this anyway, but it is more important in the pipe.) Crank up your forward lean, that's those plastic things on the backs of your bindings. This will keep your knees bent and help you hold an edge better.

Once you have your board all set to go, hike up to the pipe, but take a run of two to warm up first. Once you are at the pipe, don't take the lift, hiking will get you in shape and make you stronger, which is important when riding pipe. Hike all the way to the top, don't puss out and try to drop in at the middle. Most halfpipes will have a flat roll in, so ride through this to get into the pipe. When you get better you should drop in on the wall, which helps you gain speed. Your first run through, just ride up to each wall, and turn about halfway up to get the feel of it. If you look over your front shoulder when turning back into the pipe it will help you stay in control. In fact, always look where you want to go, even when you start getting in the air. Once you feel comfortable doing this, start going faster. Don't speed check, speed checking is for pussies.

As soon as you can get in the air (above this lip, pushing away from the wall doesn't count), you should start trying grabs. Frontside grabs are easy, just take off with your knees bent and reach down with your back hand, grabbing between your legs. Don't grab tindy. Then look over your shoulder at your landing, put your feet down and ride away. Remember you are in halfpipe, so you have to be ready to hit the next wall, this means you don't have a lot of time to give self props. Backside airs are generally harder, so you should drop in so your first hit will be frontside, but you need to learn backside airs at some point. The best grab to learn is method. This will put you exactly where you want to be for the next wall. To

do a method, ride up the backside wall on your heel edge, push off the lip, bend your knees, arch your back and grab right in front of your front foot on the heel edge. Pull it up, but don't wait to long before putting your feet back down as not to land on your face (we've all done it a few times.)

Another fairly basic trick is a frontside 360. 360's in the pipe are easy because you are already halfway around. Just ride up your frontside wall, come off your toe edge, and rotate your shoulders forward. It sometimes helps to grab stalefish to pull you around. When you are comfortable with those you can try to learn fakie three's or Cabelilarrels, because you will be going fakie at the wall. Just do the opposite of what you did before, that is, turn your shoulders the opposite way.

Once you feel comfortable doing all the things previously mentioned, you will be good enough in the pipe to learn stuff for yourself, so I don't feel I need to continue. Just read the following halfpipe etiquette and have a good time.

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Respect the dropping order

What this means is when someone drops in, you need to give them sufficient time to be out of your way. Don't drop in on top of them. When there are a lot of people riding the pipe, it is a good idea to call dropping, that is when you are about to go make sure everyone else sees you, and when someone else calls dropping, wait for them to go. Snaking is only appropriate during jam session contests.

If you fall...

It happens to the best of us, but if you do fall, don't be too quick to straight line it to the bottom. Make sure that there is no one whose way you will be in by riding the pipe in a way which it was not intended.

Drop in from the top

Unless you feel completely comfortable on your edges, don't try to be a rockstar and drop in from the middle of the pipe. This is completely for your safety, because dropping in from a high place on the wall can hurt if you do it wrong (it's not a cliff, you're not supposed to land flat.).

Know your limits

Pushing yourself is good, but trying to ride faster in the pipe than you feel comfortable is not. You need to be able to control your airs so you don't land far out onto the deck, or in the middle of the flat. Also, don't try flips until you can do

straight airs.

Let everyone else have a good time too

Don't heckle people because they are learning, and don't yell at skiers, as much as it might suck, they now have a right to be in the pipe too