buyers guide - what is a snowboard

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Before you can learn snowboarding you will first need to learn about its primary piece of equipment: the Snowboard. You will need to know what a snowboard consists of and what the different elements are before you can choose which snowboard is best for you and how you should use your snowboard. In this section you will learn that snowboards now-a-days are highly technical feats of engineering. If you have a snowboard yourself make sure to identify the following elements:

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Base

Bottom side of the snowboard, the part of the board that touches the snow. Most snowboard bases are made from a polyethylene called P-Tex. These bases are made in one of two ways: sintered or extruded. Extruded bases are melted and cut to shape. Sintered bases are ground into powder, heated, pressed and sliced into shape. A sintered base is superior - it's more durable, faster and holds wax better than an extruded base. It's also more expensive and difficult to repair. If you're looking for high performance, go with a sintered base; for a board on a budget, an extruded model will do. Even better than sintered P-Tex base is a graphite base. They hold wax even better and run even faster. Graphite basis are always deep black and are mostly found on fast racing boards.

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Camber

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The amount of space beneath the center of a snowboard when it lays on a flat surface and its weight rests on the tip and tail.This is the gentle arch the board makes when you rest it on a flat surface. It's closely related to flex: the higher the camber, the more pressure the board puts at the nose and tail. A Flat camber indicates a board may spin easily, which can be good for certain freestyle moves. In a used board, however, it may also be a sign that the board is worn out. In most new boards you want a slightly springy camber, which helps stabilize the board at higher speeds and on hard snow, and also makes it easier to turn.

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Contact Points

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The points at which the board contacts the snow with out the pressure of the rider being displaced on the board. This is also called the boards wheel base. The contact points can be found by placing the board on a smoothe, flat surface then slide a piece of paper under the center of the snowboard, slide it toward the nose or tail until it stops.

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Edge

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The metal edge on the snowboard. The toe edge is the edge at the toeside of the snowboard. The heel edge is the edge at the heel side of the snowboard.

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Effective Edge

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The length of metal edge on the snowboard which touches the snow; it is the effective part which is used to make a turn. Therefore, it does not include the edge of the tip and tail. The effective edge is in contact with the snow when the board is in a carved turn. A longer effective edge makes for a more stable, controlled ride; a shorter effective edge makes for a looser, easier turning board.

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Flex Point

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The flex point is located between the two bindings and is the point where the board begins or ends its flex and allows for sidecut radius contact.

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Nose/Tip

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The front end of the snowboard. If your snowboard has a simular front and back side then the side that is turned up higher is usually the nose. A higher nose/tip is neede for higher speed alpine riding as you will need to keep your snowboard from digging itself into the snow. Alpine boards often also have a pointier nose.

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Nose/Tip Length

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Length of board from the widest part of the boards nose to the tip of the nose.

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Nose/Tip Width

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The widest part of the board measured across the front tip or nose area of the board.

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Overall Length

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Measured from the tip of the board to the tail, usually refered to in Centimeters (cm).

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Sidecut Radius

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This is the measurement of how deeply or shallowly the boards cut is from the nose of the board to the waist (or middle of the board). This is what helps the board turn. The smaller the sidecut radius the tighter you will be able to turn. A board with a larger sidecut will make big arching turns. It is the radius of a circle that makes the hourglass shape of the snowboard and thus how it is defined and measured. It works in conjunction with the running lenght of the snowboard.

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Stomp Pad

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A stomp pad or nonskid pad is a rubber mat that you can stick on top of your snowboard next to your backfoot binding. It is used when you need to slide with only your front foot bound to your snowboard, for instance when you are exiting a lift. Without a stomp pad you could slide of your board, catch the snow with your backfoot and pull your legs apart. Could be painfull.

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Tail

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The rear end of the snowboard opposite of the nose/tip. Often the tail is flatter than the tip more square cut. Some alpine boards have a split in the tail to give more turning power and co-ordination in high speed turns. Freestyle boards will often have simular tips and noses to make it easier to ride fakie (with the frond foot in the back).

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Tail Length

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Length of board from the widest part of the boards tail to the tip of the tail.

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Tail Width

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The widest part of the board measured across the tails tip or tail area of the board.

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Top/Deck

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Opposite of the base, top of the board is where the bindings are mounted and the rider stands. Most boards have mounting holes in the deck where the bindings can be screwed into. The holes enable you to connect your bindings to your board in different angles and stances.

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Waist Width

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The narrowest point of the board. This is usually the middle of the sidecut, located between the bindings. Waist width of a board should be relative to the size of your feet. Boards with narrow waist width are quicker from edge to edge, but if your feet are size 11 or more you will most likely have to get a wider board