

Need a lift? Mt. Hood is the place to go

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Crisp, white, chilly-snowcapped peaks; Mt. Hood is a picturesque oasis during its winter months — anyone would enjoy the view from its top.

Now imagine someone straps two sticks or a long, thick plank to your feet and tells you to get to the bottom of the mountain without rolling into a giant cartoon-style snowball.

Not so easy, right? Maybe even impossible.

This premise is the very essence of skiing and snowboarding: trying to get down a cold, snowy mountain on skis or a board and avoiding serious injury in the form of cliffs, trees and even other people.

What seems like a very daunting task for a rookie could actually be the experience of a lifetime, you just have to give it a try, but being a rookie isn't easy, no matter what you're trying to do. Whether it's being the new person at a job or trying to learn a new sport, not knowing how to do something is very normal but also can be very frustrating.

Snowboarding and skiing are sports that can be very difficult to learn, especially right away. It requires a lot of money, time and effort in order to improve.

Sam Kubiak, an avid snowboarder of Mt. Hood,

said in a series of texts, "My family got me into it! I started with skiing and then changed to snowboarding around 9 years old. I prefer snowboarding because I feel more mobile on the board. I like the ability to have more control. Plus ski boots are uncomfortable."

Kenzie Raihala, a sophomore DS on the CCC volleyball team, said over text, "I started out when I was pretty young, around 7 or 8. My dad and step mom took me up and gave us some lessons and that's what really started our tradition of going up as a family every year. I've only ever ridden a snowboard. I've talked about trying to ski, but I just haven't gotten around to it."

Money is a big factor when it comes to participating in this rugged sport because you either have to rent all your equipment, which seems like the most obvious choice for someone who's never tried it, or buy your own gear.

"Snowboarding is not a cheap sport," Raihala said. "I've finally saved up enough to buy my own gear, but if you were like me and didn't want to buy a whole bunch of expensive gear, you're looking at \$150+ in one day."

If you're willing to put the money in, however,

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—Sam Kubiak

then all you have to do is give it time in order to improve. You're not going to go in on your first day at the mountain and come out ready for the X Games.

"Getting better is just putting the hours in. You have to go up a lot, and be willing to fall and get beat up a bit," Kubiak said. "Every fall you will know what you did wrong and try to correct it for the next time."

Fear is a big part of snowboarding and skiing, since it can be very dangerous compared to other sports. No one is going to blame you for being afraid your first time going down, even if it's the bunny hill.

Kubiak said, "The hardest part about learning to snowboard is the fear of falling. Once you commit to making mistakes, you're able to try more things. People are generally too scared to fall and won't try and learn to turn both directions or go a bit faster."

Once you get the hang of it, carving the mountain can be very rewarding and could turn into a lifelong hobby, as it is to many of the people who snowboard or ski at Mt. Hood.

"My biggest piece of advice is when you get frustrated, don't get too bent up about it and get back on your board and go. Snowboarding isn't something you're just going to be great at the first time you go up," Raihala said.

The more time you put into learning and practicing the more confident and better you'll get, just like with anything else in life.

Kubiak said, "I think my favorite moment was being able to do jumps in a halfpipe. Even though I wasn't doing elaborate tricks, a halfpipe is intimidating, and it felt like the first moment I was confident as a boarder."

At the end of the day, snowboarding and skiing is a fun, exhilarating and unique hobby. If you're not taking it to the competitive level, just sit back, relax, enjoy the view and have fun with it!

