mystery science

Grades K-5
Mini-Lesson: “How were skateboards invented?”

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

VIDEO 1

Hi, it's Jay! I love checking out some of the amazing things people have invented so I was really excited when I discovered this. You're looking at the world's biggest skateboard. It's 12 times the size of a normal skateboard and even has race car tires for wheels. Wouldn't that be fun to ride? Someone named Perla is curious about skateboards. Let's give Perla a call now.

[Video Call]

- Hi, Jay!

- Hi, Perla!

- I have a question for you. How were skateboards invented?

- That's a great question.

Kids have been zooming around on toys like skateboards for a long time. Before skateboards, they had fun riding on toys like this one. It's called a coaster toy, and kids would ride it on their knees. Oh, and check out these. These are crate scooters. Crate scooters were made by nailing roller skate wheels to a piece of wood. See that wooden crate with the skinny piece of wood on top? That's to hang onto, kind of like the handlebars on a bike. Toys like these had wheels and a place to ride on, just like a skateboard, but they're not quite the same thing. I mean, skateboards

don't have handlebars to hang onto, and you can't really do tricks on a coaster toy that you ride on your knees. So how did we get from those early riding toys to skateboards that can do things like this? Before I go on, I'm curious: How do you think skateboards were invented?

VIDEO 2

I'm not sure how you answered, but you may have said that kids started standing up on coaster toys instead of riding them on their knees. And you're right, some kids probably did, and that's not all. Some kids might have even tried letting go of the handlebars on crate scooters and riding on them like the skateboards we have today. In a way, these kids might have been the first ones to invent skateboarding, though they didn't know it at the time. Standing on riding toys like these was kind of like another popular sport. Think about the shape of the skateboards we ride today and the way kids stand on them. Remind you of anything? If you took away the wheels and made the board a little bigger, it would look a lot like a surfboard. Some people think that the idea of skateboarding came from another sport, surfing. People have been surfing waves for hundreds of years, and around the time that people started skateboarding, surfing was really popular, especially in places near the ocean, like California, Hawaii, and Australia. But what if you didn't live near an ocean? Or what if you went to the beach and the waves weren't big enough? The first skateboards solved this problem. People made them the same way they made crate scooters, only without the crates. With these new kinds of riding toys, kids could surf on land. Some people even called it sidewalk surfing. These first skateboards were a lot of fun, but you couldn't really buy a skateboard in most stores yet. You had to make them yourself until skateboards like this one came around. You're looking at a Roller Derby skateboard, one of the first skateboards made in a factory. Once factories started making lots of skateboards, they were a lot easier to get and more kids started riding them. Pretty soon,

skateboarding started getting popular. Skateboarders began showing up on magazine covers and on TV. They even started having skateboard competitions where skaters could race and compete for prizes. But not everyone was excited about skateboarding. Those early skateboards weren't all that safe. See the wheels? They were made out of metal. If you hit a small rock or a crack on the sidewalk, you could crash, and that's not all. The first boards were flat and hard to steer, so skateboard makers got to work figuring out how to make them better. They invented wheels that were softer and could handle rocks and sidewalk cracks a lot better, and they changed the shape of the board. Notice how the front and back of this board bent up? Kicktails like these made skateboards easier to control and do tricks with, and that's when the real fun began. People built ramps in their backyards and started coming up with better and better tricks. Some cities even started making parks just for skating. Pretty cool! Today, skateboarding has become a huge worldwide sport. You can watch skateboarders compete in events like the X Games and even the Olympics. So in summary, the first skateboards were probably invented by kids who started standing up on coaster toys and attaching roller skate wheels onto wooden boards. Riding a board standing up gave them the feeling of surfing on land. It's cool to think about, isn't it? A toy that kids thought of while playing ended up becoming one of the most popular sports in the world. That's all for this week's question. Thanks, Perla for asking it!