

Big Air!

Extreme Snowboarding and Freestyle Skiing

Phillip Simpson



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Snowboarding and Freestyle Skiing

Winter sports are sports that are played on ice and snow.

Traditionally, winter sports were played in winter in places where it snows. Or they were played all year round in places like the **Swiss Alps**, where there is always ice and snow.

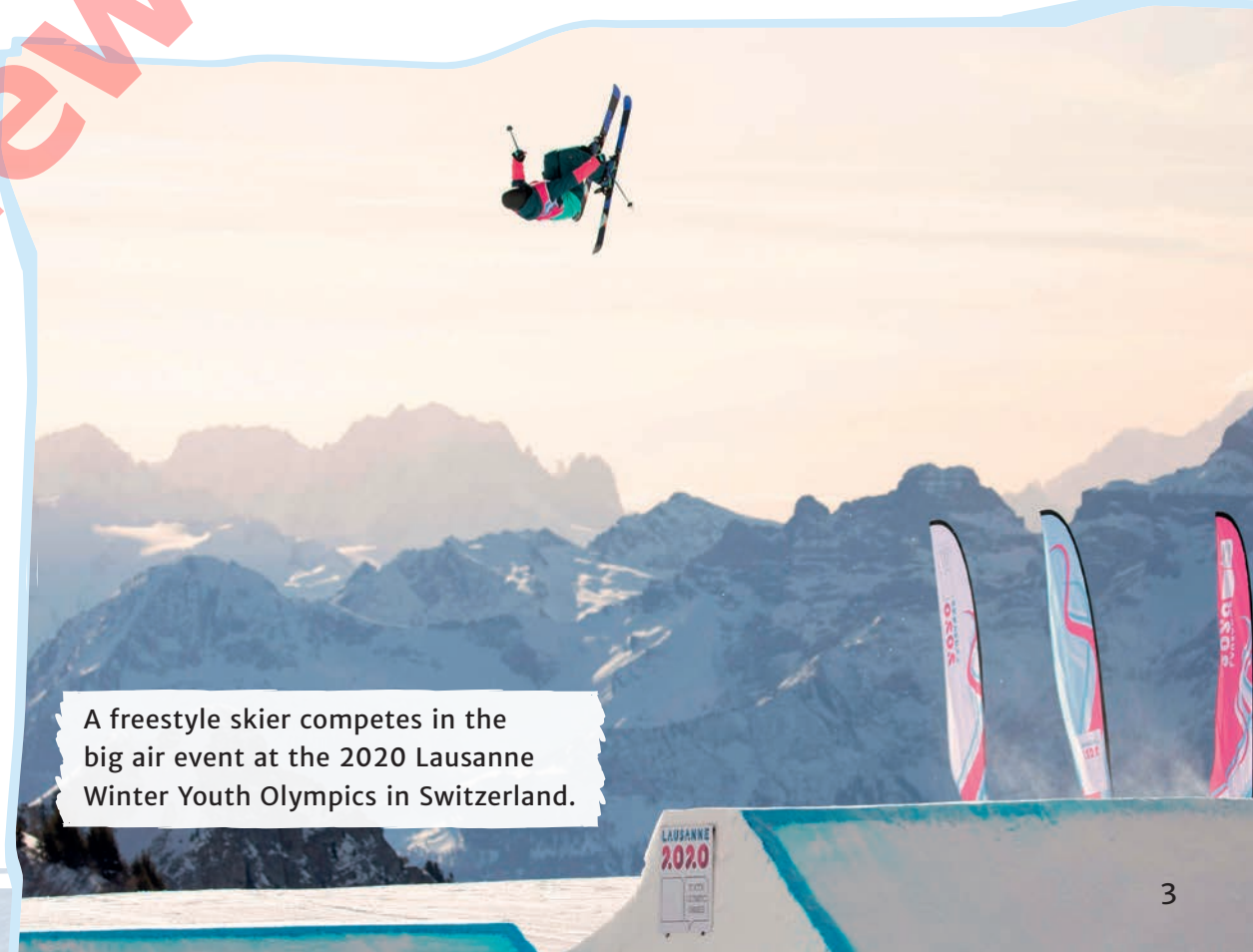
There is a huge variety of winter sports, from sledding down a giant snow-covered slope to playing ice hockey on an ice rink, or skiing or snowboarding down a snowy mountain.



A snowboarder competes at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics in Canada.

Snowboarding and freestyle skiing are two very popular winter sports. The equipment and skills involved in snowboarding are similar to surfing and skateboarding. A snowboarder uses a board to slide, jump and spin over snow, instead of over water or hard ground. A freestyle skier uses two skis and two ski poles to perform tricks, flips and spins on the snow.

Over time, snowboarding and freestyle skiing have become so popular that some athletes are able to compete in them full-time, as professional athletes.



A freestyle skier competes in the big air event at the 2020 Lausanne Winter Youth Olympics in Switzerland.

Snowboarding

How Snowboarding Started

Snowboarding began in the 1960s in the USA, when surfers and skateboarders started using their balancing, gliding and turning skills on the snow. In 1965, Sherman Poppen, an engineer from Michigan, USA, created the first snowboard by joining two wooden snow skis together and attaching a **rope tether** to the board, so that it could be steered as it glided down a snowy hill. By the 1970s, competitions offering cash prizes for snowboarders were being held.

The first snowboarders were surfers and skateboarders.



Early snowboards were like wooden surfboards for the snow, and they did not have **bindings** for snowboarders to fasten their ski boots to the boards. This meant that the snowboards were hard to control and thought to be dangerous. In fact, snowboarding was considered so unsafe that by the 1980s, snowboarding was banned at most public **ski resorts**. Despite these challenges, the sport continued to grow in popularity.



Early snowboarding was like surfing on the snow.

By the early 1990s, new ski technology and modern materials such as plastic gave snowboarders a much smoother ride. The new materials were stronger and more flexible than wood. The first “high-back” bindings were produced, which enabled snowboarders to lock their boots into place on the board.

Soon, snowboarding was the fastest-growing winter sport in the world, with an estimated six million participants. Ski resort owners, unwilling to miss out on so many paying customers, finally opened their doors to snowboarders.



a ski resort in France



Snowboarders ride the aerial lift to the top of the slope at a ski resort.