

# WHAT'S THAT SKATEBOARD FOR?

## SILVERFISH LONGBOARDING'S GUIDE TO BOARDS AND DISCIPLINES

Skateboarding defies definition to many, but if you're just getting into longboarding or classic skateboarding, you might be blown away by the variety of purpose-built styles and construction for skateboards. It's not all popsicle sticks and teeny wheels, right?! So, here's a quick and general guide to the basic categories of boards and the disciplines they're designed for. None of this means you can't skate anything, anywhere, but for those of you wanting to figure out what all those terms mean in the rest of the Buyer's Guide, here's a look at the general disciplines and some iconic shapes and setups you might recognize...



**FREERIDING** – a term used to describe any style of skating downhill that includes drifting, sliding, hard carves and aggressive maneuvers. Any board a skater is comfortable with that affords the handling and agility can work for a freeride board. However, the current standard is a bidirectional board with deep wheel wells or cutouts and often drop-through mounted trucks of either “conventional” or “inverted” style. This is the style that varies with you, but generally involves wheels intended for sliding and thrashing, typically 70-76mm in diameter, and 78A-89A durometer.



**SPEEDBOARDING** – the sport of getting down a hill as fast as possible. Standard downhill (or “DH”) decks are rigid for stability, with moderate concave, no kicktail and lengths typically ranging from 36” to 46”. Inverted-style trucks are used, in drop-through and top-mount configurations with wheels 70-100mm in diameter and 78A-89A durometer. Look for designs intended to eliminate wheelbite, and prepare to encounter the most exotic of materials ranging from maple to monocoque composites.



**SLALOM** – usually a timed sport that involves avoiding cones either on flat land with small spacing (tight), downhill with more varied spacing (hybrid) or steeply downhill with large, spread-out spacing (giant). Most slalom boards range in size related to the style of slalom, from 30” to 36”; utilize asymmetrical concave (more in front) with a nonfunctional kicktail or footrest at the back and toe-stops on the front of hardcore race boards. The standard is for “wedged,” conventional trucks and 65-77mm wheels with durometers ranging 77A-85A.



**CRUISING** – traveling from one location to another in whatever manner the skater sees fit. Any board can be a cruiser, and this term is also used by street skaters to describe any board with “soft wheels.” Cruiser boards tend to be medium to larger-sized boards, often with wide shapes that allow many foot positions. Wheels and trucks are based on rider preference, but are often inverted-kingpin trucks with wheels to fit the board in a low to medium durometer. Soft wheels and great turning ability are the hallmark of a campus cruiser and general fun-hog longboard.



**CARVING** – the manner of riding a hill where the skater cuts back and forth in hard turns to scrub off speed and yet maintain control of the board, very much like surfing. Carving boards are often set up for maximum turning and allow the trucks and wheels to turn as deeply as possible, with typical board lengths over 36”. Flexible decks are popular but not required. Inverted trucks and high-traction design wheels with durometers 75A-85A are typical setups.



**LONG DISTANCE** – a growing style, broken into two groups: Long Distance Skating, where the focus is the actual pushing over great distances, and Long Distance Pumping, where the focus is generating momentum by pumping. LDS boards typically have a “dropped deck” for extra-low height to the road, and LDP boards are often similar in shape to slalom boards, yet slightly longer. Wheel diameters typically run 70-76mm and durometers range from 77A-84A, depending on the setup and riding style chosen by the skater.



**BOARDWALKING** – also called “dancing,” this freestyle skating focuses the upon the skater's ability to use the deck to accomplish tricks and maneuvers on the deck. Boards are typically 40” to 60” and may have concave and a kicked nose or tail. Wheels and trucks are often set up so the board's agility is easily controlled by the rider and wheelbite is impossible, and smoothness is ensured via wheel diameters 70-76mm, durometers in the 77A-84A range and pretty much any truck you like, either conventional or inverted.



**TECHNICAL SLIDING** – a specialized discipline with some crossover to street-skating gear, this is the intentional breaking of traction on steep hills to accomplish tricks that modify the board's movement down the fall line. Much more than “power sliding,” these tricks can include stalls, rotations and the use of gloves with pucks for hand-on-the-pavement moves. The decks are usually 34” to 38” with twin kicks and hard, smaller wheels on conventional trucks, but a variation growing in popularity (see “freeriding”) uses 70mm or larger “soft wheels.”

OK, that's a quick look at some of the general disciplines and skateboard styles active within longboarding and classic skateboarding. With experience, you'll learn how variations on these themes suit you and your terrain perfectly, but this should give you a great start. If you'd like more information or input, jump on over to [SILVERFISH LONGBOARDING.COM](http://SILVERFISH LONGBOARDING.COM). There are forums for “Beginner Q/A” along with discussion areas for each of these disciplines, and much more. By the skaters, for the skaters, it's the largest online skateboard community on the Internet, and it's the place to check in when you're not out shredding the concrete waves. See you out there!