GENERAL

how to make skateboard wheels go faster

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How to Make Skateboard Wheels Go Faster: A Complete Guide for Speed Enthusiasts

Whether you're a seasoned rider looking to shave seconds off your run or a beginner eager to feel the wind in your hair, increasing the speed of your skateboard wheels can transform your skating experience. The quest to make skateboard wheels go faster isn't just about swapping parts; it's a holistic approach that blends physics, equipment selection, maintenance, and technique. In this guide, we'll walk you through every factor that influences speed, from wheel hardness and diameter to bearings, deck design, and rider posture. By the end, you'll have a clear, actionable plan to boost your board's velocity safely and efficiently.

Understanding the Basics of Skateboard Speed

Physics 101: How Speed Is Generated

Skateboard speed is the result of kinetic energy transferred from the rider's legs to the wheels. When you push off the ground, your legs generate a force that accelerates the board. The wheels convert that force into forward motion, but their ability to maintain that motion depends on several mechanical and material properties. Think of it like a bicycle: the faster you pedal, the faster you go, but friction, gear ratios, and wheel size all influence the final velocity.

Key Variables That Affect Wheel Speed

- Wheel Diameter: Larger wheels roll over obstacles faster, reducing the number of revolutions needed to cover a distance.
- Wheel Hardness (durometer): Softer wheels deform more, providing grip but losing energy; harder wheels maintain momentum better.
- Bearing Quality: Bearings with low friction (e.g., 608g or 620a) allow the wheel to spin with minimal resistance.
- Deck Flex and Stiffness: A stiffer deck translates rider input more directly to wheel rotation.
- Rider Technique: Proper stance, push mechanics, and body positioning reduce energy loss.

Step by Step: How to Make Skateboard Wheels Go Faster

1. Upgrade to Larger Wheels

One of the most straightforward ways to increase speed is to use wheels with a larger diameter. Standard street wheels range from 50 mm to 55 mm, while cruisers often use 70 mm to 80 mm wheels. A 70 mm wheel will cover more ground per revolution than a 55 /mm wheel, translating to a higher top speed.

However, larger wheels come with trade offs. They can feel heavier, and the board may become less responsive on tight corners. For straight line speed, though, the advantage is undeniable.

2. Choose the Right Hardness (Durometer)

Wheel hardness is measured on the durometer scale (typically ranging from 78a to 99a). Softer wheels (78a–84a) grip the pavement better but absorb more energy, which can slow you down. Harder wheels (87a–99a) maintain momentum but offer less traction.

To make skateboard wheels go faster, opt for a hardness of 90a or higher if you're primarily skating on smooth surfaces. For mixed terrain, a 85a–90a range offers a good balance.

3. Invest in High Quality Bearings

Bearings are the unsung heroes of speed. The **608g** and **620a** bearing series are popular in the skateboarding community due to their low friction and durability. Look for bearings rated with the **ABEC**(Annular Bearing Engineering Committee) system; ABEC 5 and above are suitable for high speed applications.

To further reduce friction, consider **lubricated** bearings or those with **sealed oil**to prevent contamination. Always clean bearings before installation and apply a thin layer of high quality grease.

4. Optimize Wheel Profile and Shape

Wheel shape influences how the wheel contacts the ground. A **round profile** offers minimal contact area, reducing friction. In contrast, a **flat or slightly concave profile** increases grip but can slow the wheel.

For maximum speed, choose wheels with a round or slightly concave profile, especially if you plan to use them on smooth, flat surfaces.

5. Select a Stiff Deck and Proper Trucks

The deck's stiffness determines how effectively your pushes translate into wheel rotation. A **stiff deck** with a **medium or high flex rating**reduces flex during pushes, ensuring that more of your effort goes into accelerating the board rather than bending the deck.

Trucks also play a role. **High speed trucks**are designed with a steeper camber and tighter pivot points, reducing lateral flex and allowing the board to maintain a straight trajectory at high speeds.

6. Fine Tune Your Bearings and Wheels

Even the best bearings can lose performance if not properly maintained. Follow these steps for optimal speed:

1. Remove the wheels and bearings.
2. Clean the bearings with isopropyl alcohol and a soft brush.
3. Dry thoroughly and apply a high quality bearing grease.
4. Reinstall the bearings, ensuring they spin freely.

Similarly, clean the wheels to remove grit that can cause micro abrasions, which increase friction.

7. Adjust Your Riding Technique

Speed isn't just about parts; it's also about how you ride. Here are key technique tips:

- Use a wide stance: A wider stance increases stability and allows for a more efficient push.
- Push with the ball of your foot: This reduces the amount of friction between the heel and the board.
- Maintain a low center of gravity: Bend your knees slightly and keep your weight centered over the board.
- Keep the board flat: Avoid unnecessary deck flex by keeping your body weight balanced.
- Use smooth, continuous pushes: A single, long push is more efficient than multiple short pushes.

8. Keep Your Wheels Clean and Dry

Water, sand, and grit can accumulate on wheels, increasing drag. After each session, wipe the wheels with a clean cloth. If you skate in wet conditions, dry the wheels immediately to prevent rust or corrosion.

9. Test and Iterate

Speed improvements often require experimentation. Keep a log of wheel sizes, hardness, bearings, and deck

stiffness. After each change, record your top speed and how the board feels. Over time, you'll identify the combination that works best for your style and terrain.

Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Over Hard Wheels on Rough Terrain

While hard wheels increase speed, they can become uncomfortable on rough surfaces. If you skate on concrete or uneven pavement, consider a slightly softer wheel or add a **grip tape** to improve traction.

Neglecting Bearing Maintenance

Dirty bearings can quickly lose their low friction advantage. Make it a habit to clean and lubricate bearings at least once a month, especially if you skate frequently.

Choosing Wheels That Are Too Heavy

Heavier wheels increase inertia, making it harder to start and stop. If you're focusing on speed, pick wheels that are lightweight yet durable.

Ignoring Deck Flex

A deck that flexes too much can absorb energy. If you notice that your board feels "soft" during pushes, consider a stiffer deck or a board with a higher flex rating.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Can I use the same wheels for both street and cruising?

Yes, but you'll need to balance hardness and diameter. Street wheels are usually 50–55 mm and 78–84a, while cruiser wheels are larger (70–80 /mm) and harder (90a+). Switching wheels between sessions is common practice.

What is the best bearing brand for speed?

Top brands include **Bones Bearings**, **Racers Bearings**, and **Ossur**. Look for ABEC 5 or higher ratings and sealed oil bearings for optimal performance.

How often should I replace my wheels?

Wheels typically last 6–12 months, depending on usage. If you notice cracks, flat spots, or a loss of grip, it's time for a replacement.

Do thicker trucks help with speed?

Thicker trucks can provide more stability at high speeds but may add weight. The key is to balance truck width with deck width to maintain a low center of gravity.

Can I add a lubricant to my wheels to increase speed?

Wheels are generally not lubricated because they have a rubber surface. Instead, focus on bearings and keep wheels clean. A light coat of **WD 40** on the wheel's edge is not recommended as it can attract dirt.

Putting It All Together: A Speed Optimized Skateboard Build

Below is a sample build that maximizes speed while maintaining stability. Feel free to tweak the components based on your preferences and local conditions.

- Deck: 7 inch wide, medium flex, 8 piece maple (stiffness for speed)

- Trucks: 1 inch wide, high speed design, 90 degree camber
- Wheels: 70 /mm diameter, 90a durometer, round profile
- Bearings: 608g ABEC 5, sealed oil
- Grip Tape: 12 /mm thick, high traction surface

With this setup, you'll experience a noticeable increase in top speed, especially on smooth surfaces. Remember, safety always comes first—wear protective gear and practice in a controlled environment before hitting the streets.

Conclusion

Making skateboard wheels go faster involves a blend of thoughtful component selection, meticulous maintenance, and refined riding technique. By upgrading to larger, harder wheels, investing in quality bearings, choosing a stiff deck, and fine tuning your push mechanics, you can unlock a new level of speed and performance. Keep experimenting, stay mindful of safety, and enjoy the rush of a faster board. Happy skating!

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