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how to tailwhip on a scooter

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How to Tailwhip on a Scooter: A Complete Guide for Beginners and Beyond

When you first see a rider perform a tailwhip on a scooter, the combination of speed, balance, and raw athleticism can seem almost otherworldly. The moment the rear of the scooter spins 360 degrees while the rider remains in mid air feels like a dance of physics and skill. Yet, like any trick, a tailwhip can be mastered with the right preparation, technique, and practice. In this guide, we'll walk you through everything you need to know about **how to tailwhip on a scooter**, from the fundamentals of scooter stunts to the advanced nuances that separate a good rider from a great one.

What Is a Tailwhip?

A tailwhip is a classic scooter trick where the rider lifts the front of the scooter off the ground and spins the board's deck around the axis of the rear wheel. The board completes a full 360 degree rotation, and the rider lands back on the ground with the scooter upright. The trick is called a "tailwhip" because the tail (rear) of the scooter whips around in a circular motion while the rider remains relatively stationary in the air.

Unlike other tricks that rely heavily on the rider's body rotation, a tailwhip is predominantly a board centric maneuver. The rider's feet stay on the deck, but the board's momentum is what drives the rotation. Understanding this distinction is key to mastering the trick.

Why Learn to Tailwhip?

Adding a tailwhip to your scooter repertoire offers several benefits:

- Showmanship: Tailwhips are visually striking and crowd pleasing.
- Skill progression: Mastering the tailwhip builds core strength, balance, and board control.
- Versatility: The technique can be adapted to other tricks such as the kickflip, heelflip, and 360.
- Community: Demonstrating a tailwhip connects you with the scooter culture and community.

Essential Equipment & Safety Gear

Before you even think about attempting a tailwhip, make sure you're equipped properly. Safety should always be your top priority.

1. Scooter Quality

- Choose a scooter with a sturdy deck, reliable bearings, and a smooth wheel set.
- A deck with a slight flex can help you maintain control during the spin.
- Wheels with a medium to high profile (55–70mm) provide the right balance of speed and grip.

2. Protective Gear

- Helmet: A certified bike or scooter helmet protects your head during falls.
- Elbow and knee pads: These pads cushion your joints if you land awkwardly.
- Gloves: Light gloves help keep your hands dry and improve grip.

3. Appropriate Attire

- Wear comfortable, breathable clothing that allows full leg and arm movement.
- Choose shoes with good grip and a flat sole to avoid slipping.

Body Position & Stance Basics

Having the correct stance is the foundation of every scooter trick, including the tailwhip. Your body should be balanced, relaxed, and ready to react.

1. Foot Placement

Place your feet in the following positions:

- Front foot: Centered on the deck, toes slightly angled outward.
- Back foot: Positioned just behind the rear axle, with the toes pointing slightly forward.

Maintain a slight bend in your knees to absorb impact and keep your center of gravity low.

2. Upper Body Alignment

Your shoulders should be level, and your chest slightly lifted. Keep your eyes focused on the landing spot, not the board. This visual cue helps maintain balance throughout the trick.

3. Core Engagement

Engage your core muscles to stabilize the board. A strong core reduces wobble and ensures the board spins cleanly.

Step by Step Tailwhip Tutorial

Now that you're prepared and understand the fundamentals, let's dive into the step by step process for learning a tailwhip.

Step 1: Warm Up and Footwork Drills

Before attempting the full trick, spend 10–15 minutes warming up:

- Jog in place or perform light hops.
- Do ankle circles and knee lifts.
- Practice "push and pull" footwork on the deck to get used to shifting your weight.

These drills improve circulation, increase joint mobility, and prime your muscles for the trick.

Step 2: Master the "Kick" Motion

The kick is the initial motion that sets the board spinning. Here's how to execute it:

1. Start in a regular stance: Front foot near the middle of the deck, back foot behind the rear axle.
2. Shift weight to the back foot: Slightly lean your body toward the rear.
3. Use the back foot to push the tail: Slide the heel of your back foot upward along the deck's edge, creating a torque that rotates the board.
4. Simultaneously, lift the front foot: As the tail kicks up, lift your front foot slightly to allow the board to spin freely.

Practice this motion repeatedly until it feels natural. The kick is the core of the tailwhip; without a solid kick, the board won't spin.

Step 3: Timing the Board's Spin

Timing is crucial. The board should complete a full 360 degree rotation while you're airborne or at least until the board is fully upright again.

- Start by kicking the board while standing still on a flat surface.
- Observe how many seconds it takes for the board to spin.
- Use a timer or a friend's help to count the seconds.
- Once you know the approximate timing, practice with a small jump to simulate the airborne phase.

Remember, the board's rotation speed depends on your kick strength and the board's mass. A lighter board will spin faster, while a heavier board will take longer.

Step 4: Incorporate a Small Jump

To perform a true tailwhip, you need a brief lift off the ground. Here's how to combine the jump with the kick:

1. Approach: Ride toward a small ramp or a flat surface.
2. Initiate the kick: As you reach the edge, shift your weight to the back foot and kick the tail.
3. Jump: Immediately after kicking, push off with both feet to lift off the ground.
4. Control the board: Keep your body centered over the deck to avoid tipping.
5. Landing: As the board completes its rotation, bring your feet down in time to catch the scooter and land on both feet.

Practice this sequence on a flat surface before attempting it on a ramp. Once you're comfortable, add a small ramp to increase the airborne time.

Step 5: Landing & Absorb

Landing correctly is as important as the trick itself. Here's what to focus on:

- Feet placement: Keep both feet on the deck, with the front foot slightly forward.
- Absorb impact: Bend your knees upon landing to cushion the shock.
- Maintain balance: Keep your shoulders level and your gaze forward.

Consistent practice will help you land more confidently and reduce the risk of injury.

Progression Tips: From Beginner to Advanced

Once you can perform a basic tailwhip, you'll want to refine your technique and explore variations.

1. Increase Speed

Speed adds a new dimension to the tailwhip. To add speed:

- Ride faster toward the ramp.
- Use a slightly longer deck for better stability.
- Practice maintaining a steady cadence during the kick.

2. Add a 360

A 360 tailwhip is a trick where the rider rotates 360 degrees while the board spins. This requires:

- Higher speed.
- Strong core control.
- Precise timing between body rotation and board spin.

Start by practicing the 360 on a skateboard before attempting it on a scooter, as the principles are similar.

3. Combine with Other Tricks

Once comfortable, mix the tailwhip with other stunts:

- Kickflip + Tailwhip: Combine a kickflip with a tailwhip for a double trick.
- Heelflip + Tailwhip: A heelflip followed by a tailwhip adds complexity.
- Pop Shove-It + Tailwhip: A pop shove-it followed by a tailwhip is a popular combo.

4. Use a Larger Deck

For advanced riders, a larger deck can provide more stability during the spin, especially at higher speeds.

Common Mistakes & How to Fix Them

Even experienced riders can fall into pitfalls. Here are common mistakes and how to correct them.

1. Over Kicking the Board

Too much force can cause the board to spin too fast, making it hard to catch.

Fix: Reduce the kick intensity and focus on a controlled, smooth motion.

2. Lifting the Front Foot Too Early

If you lift the front foot before the board is ready, you'll lose balance.

Fix: Keep the front foot on the deck until the board is fully spinning, then lift.

3. Poor Timing

Landing too early or too late can ruin the trick.

Fix: Use a metronome or count in your head to develop a sense of timing.

4. Not Bending the Knees on Landing

Hard landings increase the risk of injury.

Fix: Practice landing on a foam pad or a soft surface to feel the proper knee bend.

Practice Routine: A Structured Approach

Consistent practice is key to mastering the tailwhip. Here's a sample routine you can follow:

1. Warm Up (10 minutes): Light jogging, ankle circles, and knee lifts.
2. Footwork Drills (5 minutes): Push and pull, heel toe slides.

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