SOFTWARE & TECH

How To Tailwhip On A Scooter

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Mastering the Tailwhip: A Complete Guide to This Iconic Scooter Trick

The tailwhip is one of the most recognizable and celebrated tricks in the world of freestyle scooter riding. It is a fundamental move that serves as a gateway to countless other combinations and variations. For many riders, learning how to tailwhip on a scooter is a pivotal moment in their progression. The sight of the deck spinning 360 degrees beneath your feet while you remain airborne is not only visually impressive but also deeply satisfying to execute.

However, this trick is not something you can land on your first try. It requires a blend of timing, commitment, and proper technique. If you have been struggling to get that deck all the way around, or if you are simply looking for a structured approach to learning, this guide is for you. We will break down every phase of the tailwhip, from the setup to the landing, and address the common pitfalls that hold riders back.

What Exactly is a Tailwhip?

Before we dive into the mechanics, it is important to understand what a tailwhip actually entails. A tailwhip is an aerial trick where you kick the deck of the scooter in a circular motion using your back foot, causing it to rotate 360 degrees around the headset or fork. While the deck spins, you and the handlebars remain relatively stationary in the air. You then catch the deck with your feet as it completes the rotation and land smoothly.

The key distinction between a tailwhip and other spinning tricks is that the rider’s body does not rotate with the deck. Your focus remains forward, and your hands stay on the bars. This makes it a "whip" trick rather than a spin trick like a 360 bar spin or a full body rotation.

Prerequisites: What You Should Know First

Attempting a tailwhip without the foundational skills is a recipe for frustration and potential injury. Make sure you are comfortable with the following before you start practicing this trick.

- Basic Bunny Hop: You must be able to bunny hop high and consistently. The tailwhip is performed in the air, so if your bunny hop is weak, your whip will be too. Practice hopping over curbs or small obstacles to build lift.
- Comfort on Two Wheels: You should feel balanced and stable on your scooter. If you are still wobbling during simple maneuvers, you are not ready for an aerial whip.
- Commitment: This is perhaps the most important prerequisite. Half-hearted attempts lead to half-spins and falls. You need to be mentally prepared to follow through with the kick, even if it feels scary at first.

Choosing the Right Scooter for Tailwhipping

While you can learn on almost any scooter, some designs are easier to whip than others. A lighter scooter with a responsive deck will make the initial learning curve much gentler. Look for a scooter that has a deck length you can comfortably kick forward. Full-size decks offer more surface area for catching, while shorter decks spin faster but require tighter timing. Also, ensure your headset is tight and your compression system is secure. A loose headset can cause the bars to shake during the whip, making the trick unstable.

Step-by-Step Guide: How to Tailwhip on a Scooter

Now, let us get into the actual process. I have broken this down into discrete phases to help you focus on one element at a time.

Step 1: The Setup and Approach

Start by riding at a comfortable, controlled speed. You do not need to go fast. A moderate roll is sufficient. Position your feet with your front foot near the middle or slightly forward on the deck, and your back foot on the tail of the deck. Your knees should be bent, and your body should be loose. Before you even jump, visualize the motion of the deck spinning. Mental rehearsal is a powerful tool for learning technical tricks.

Step 2: The Jump and Scoop

As you initiate your bunny hop, you need to perform a specific motion with your back leg. This is often called the "scoop." Instead of kicking the deck straight back, you want to scoop it in a circular motion. As you lift the front wheel, push your back foot down and back, then quickly swing it around your back leg. The motion is similar to kicking a soccer ball with a curve. Your back foot should guide the deck in a circle around the base of the handlebars. Keep your front foot slightly lifted or positioned so it does not interfere with the spinning deck.

Step 3: Staying in the Air

This is where many riders fail. Once you scoop the deck, your natural instinct is to immediately look down and stomp your feet back onto the scooter. You need to resist this urge. Your job is to stay in the air as long as possible. Tuck your knees up toward your chest. This gives the deck more room to complete its rotation. If you drop your feet too early, you will block the whip or land awkwardly on the edge of the deck. Keep your eyes focused on the handlebars or forward, not on your feet. Your peripheral vision will track the deck.

Step 4: Catching the Deck

As you feel the deck complete its rotation and start to come back around, it is time to catch it. The goal is to land with both feet on the deck simultaneously. Do not try to stomp the deck down. Instead, let your feet float down onto it as the rotation finishes. Ideally, you want to land with your feet roughly where they started: one near the middle and one on the tail. If you land too far forward, you risk pitching over the bars. If you land too far back, you risk looping out.

Step 5: The Landing and Roll-Away

Once your feet are on the deck, absorb the impact with your legs. Your knees should bend deeply to absorb the shock. Your arms should remain straight, holding the bars steady. Do not yank on the bars as you land, as this can cause you to lose balance. Roll away smoothly. If the landing feels rough, focus on keeping your weight centered over the scooter.

Common Mistakes and How to Fix Them

Even with a perfect breakdown, you will likely encounter specific problems. Here are the most common issues riders face when learning how to tailwhip on a scooter and how to correct them.

Not Spinning the Deck Far Enough

This is the most frequent complaint. You scoop the deck, but it only rotates 180 degrees or less. The fix is usually one of two things: you are not scooping hard enough, or you are not giving the deck enough space. Try exaggerating the scoop motion. Really whip that back leg around. Also, make sure you are tucking your knees. If your legs are hanging low, the deck will hit them and stop spinning.

Landing with One Foot

If you consistently land with only your front foot or your back foot, you are likely rushing the catch. You are so eager to land that you put a foot down before the deck is ready. Practice staying in the air longer. Another cause is an uneven scoop. If you kick the deck sideways instead of in a smooth arc, it will wobble and be hard to land on.

Flying Forward or Backward

If you find yourself landing with your weight too far forward (nose dive) or too far back (loop out), your body position is off. A nose dive usually means you leaned forward during the jump. Keep your chest up and your center of gravity over the deck. A loop out often means you kicked the deck too aggressively without jumping high enough. You are basically pushing the scooter away from you. Focus on jumping straight up and letting the scoop happen naturally.

Grabbing the Bars Too Tightly

A death grip on the handlebars will make the entire trick stiff and awkward. You need to have a firm but relaxed hold. Your arms need to be able to absorb the motion of the whip without transferring that energy to your upper body. Let the bars sit in your hands while the deck rotates freely.

Drills and Progressions to Build Consistency

Do not expect to land a tailwhip in a single session. It is a trick that typically takes weeks or even months to master. Here are some drills to help you build the necessary muscle memory.

- Static Tailwhip Drill: Stand still on your scooter with the front wheel on the ground. Practice the scoop motion with your back foot. See if you can get the deck to spin 360 degrees while stationary. This helps you understand the foot motion without worrying about balance.
- Flat Ground Scoops: Roll slowly and practice scooping the deck without jumping. Just let the deck slide and spin on the ground. This helps you get a feel for the rotation speed.
- Hop Taps: Practice a small bunny hop where you just tap the deck with your back foot. This helps you coordinate the jump and the scoop timing.
- Bank or Incline Practice: If you have access to a small bank or slope, practice the trick on an incline. The slope gives you more air time and makes it easier to complete the rotation.

Building Confidence Through Repetition

There is no substitute for repetition. The tailwhip is a trick that lives and dies by muscle memory. Your body needs to learn the timing of the scoop, the tuck, and the catch. Set a goal of practicing ten to twenty focused attempts per session. Do not just fling yourself around randomly. Each attempt should be intentional, with a specific focus on one aspect of the trick. One session, focus on a hard scoop. The next session, focus on tucking your knees.

Safety Considerations for Learning the Tailwhip

Freestyle scooter riding carries inherent risks, and the tailwhip introduces the potential for unique falls. Because your feet leave the deck, you are susceptible to catching the spinning deck on your shins or ankles. Furthermore, landing without your feet properly positioned can lead to hard bailouts.

- Wear Full Gear: A helmet is non-negotiable. You should also wear knee pads, elbow pads, and wrist guards. Gloves can help with grip and protect your palms if you fall forward.
- Shin Guards: This is often overlooked, but shin guards are incredibly helpful when learning tailwhips. The spinning deck can slap your shins with surprising force. A good pair of shin guards will save you a lot of pain and bruising.
- Choose a Safe Surface: Learn on a smooth, flat surface. Skateparks with smooth concrete are ideal. Avoid rough asphalt or cracked pavement. Grass is soft but creates too much friction for your wheels.

- Learn to Bail: If the trick goes wrong, do not fight it. If you feel the deck slipping away or you are going to land badly, simply jump off the scooter and land on your feet. Run it out if you can. Do not try to save a bad landing at the expense of your joints.

Advanced Variations to Work Towards

Once you have a consistent, clean tailwhip, you can start exploring variations. These tricks build directly on the motion you have already learned. Common progressions include the tailwhip to fakie (landing backward), the double tailwhip (spinning the deck twice), and the downside tailwhip (whip in the opposite direction of your spin). You can also combine the whip with other tricks, such as a bar spin or a 180 rotation.

Tailwhip to Fakie

This variation involves landing while riding backward. Instead of committing to a full roll-away forward, you allow the momentum of the whip to carry your body around slightly. It requires excellent balance and a good feel for the catch.

Double Tailwhip

The double tailwhip is a significant step up. It requires much more air time and a faster, more aggressive scoop. You need to generate enough lift and rotation speed to get the deck around twice before you come back down. This trick is a true test of your jumping power and timing.

Conclusion

Learning how to tailwhip on a scooter is a challenging but incredibly rewarding journey. It is a trick that separates beginners from intermediate riders and opens the door to a world of freestyle possibilities. Remember that the key ingredients are a solid bunny hop, a clean scoop motion, and

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