Opinion Writing

Debate

Directions: Read the article. Study the facts. Decide what you think. Write an opinion essay.

These sports should be off-limits to kids. But would that be going too far?

**Extremely Dangerous**

Extreme sports are intense. They involve speed and stunts. Snowboarding and snowmobiling are extreme sports. So are skateboarding, BMX biking, skiing, and motocross.

These sports pack big thrills. But they’ve caused more than 4 million injuries since 2000. Many of these injuries are simple fractures and cuts. But some are worse. Caleb Moore was a snowmobiler. Two winters ago, he died after a crash. In 2009, Olympic-bound snowboarder Kevin Pearce fell during a practice run. The fall caused a permanent brain injury.

These sports are risky at any age. But experts say the risks are greater for kids. Part of the problem is that kids are less likely than adults to think about risks. “Kids tend to think about what is happening this minute, not what could happen an hour from now,” says psychologist Jesse Matthews. Video games and YouTube clips make hard stunts look easy. Many beginners try stunts that are too hard for them. A third of all skateboarding injuries happen to kids who

Some kids have a need for speed. But is the thrill worth it?

They fly down mountains on BMX bikes. They flip in the air on their skateboards. They soar off ski jumps on their snowboards. They’re extreme athletes. And there are more of them than ever before.

Extreme sports can be thrilling for young athletes. But the thrills come with danger. In fact, many experts feel that some of
have been skateboarding for three weeks or less.

Soccer players have coaches. But many extreme athletes practice on their own. They go to skate parks and mountains far from adult eyes. Helmets are routine in some extreme sports. But few skateboarders use them. That puts these athletes at greater risk for serious head injuries in a fall.

**Worth the Risk**

A lot can go wrong. So why do people take part in extreme sports?

Of course flying down a mountain at 60 miles an hour brings thrills. So does soaring high on a skateboard.

But it’s not all about the thrills. There are millions of kids who don’t enjoy team sports. Extreme sports give those kids choices. Matthews says that extreme sports can give kids more freedom than sports like football or soccer. Kids can invent stunts of their own.

Extreme sports can also make kids braver. These sports can get kids to make themselves practice. And like any sport, they help kids stay fit.

There are ways to make these sports safer. Wearing proper helmets and pads is key. So is learning from skilled experts. Trying to be Tony Hawk on the first run down the half-pipe is risky. Smart choices can make extreme sports a bit less extreme, especially for kids.

1. **YES** They’re great activities!
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

2. **NO** They’re too dangerous!
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

Study the points on both sides of the argument—and think about your own opinion. State your opinion in one sentence below. It can become the thesis statement for an opinion essay on this topic.

---

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**Should kids participate in extreme sports?**

Go back to the article and find information to support each side. Write the information on the lines below.

**FIND AN ACTIVITY SHEET ONLINE!**

---

**STORYWORKS.SCHOLASTIC.COM • NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014**

29