

Extreme sport

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Extreme Sports (also called **action sport** and **adventure sport**) is a media term for certain activities perceived as having a high level of inherent danger.

These activities often involve speed, height, high level of physical exertion, highly specialized gear, or spectacular stunts. Although many of these sports involve a high level of risk, they often require a very high level of training as well. Participants in these sports insist upon redundant safeguards to allow for the unexpected.

Overview



Ice climbing is a type of climbing.

While use of the term "Extreme Sports" has spread far and wide to describe a multitude of different activities, exactly which sports are considered 'extreme' is debatable. There are however several characteristics common to most extreme sports.

Activities categorized by media as extreme sports differ from traditional sports due to the relatively higher number of inherently uncontrollable variables. Athletes in these activities compete not only against other athletes, but also against environmental obstacles and challenges. These environmental variables are frequently weather and terrain related, including wind, snow, water and mountains. Because the understanding of these natural phenomena cannot be readily controlled, they require great skill and study to ensure maximum safety.

In a traditional sporting event, athletes compete against each other under controlled circumstances. There are often variables that cannot be held constant for all athletes. Examples include snow conditions for snowboarders, rock and ice quality for climbers, and wave height for surfers.

History

The origin of the divergence of the term 'extreme sports' from 'sports' may date to the 1950s in the appearance of a phrase usually, but wrongly, attributed to Ernest Hemingway⁴The phrase is

"There are only three sports: bullfighting, motor racing, and mountaineering; all the rest are merely games."

The implication of the phrase was that the word 'sport' defined an activity in which one might be killed.

Marketing



Hang glider launching from Mount Tamalpais

The definition of extreme sports may have shifted over the years due to marketing trends. When the term first surfaced circa the late 1980s/early 1990s, it was used for adult sports such as **skydiving, scuba diving, surfing, rock climbing, snow skiing, water skiing, snowboarding, mountain biking, mountaineering, storm chasing, hang gliding, and bungee jumping**, many of which were undergoing an unprecedented growth in popularity at the time.

The term nowadays applies more to youth sports like **skateboarding, snowboarding, aggressive skating.**

The term gained popularity with the advent of the *X Games*, a made-for-television collection of events. Advertisers were quick to recognize the appeal of the event to the public, as a consequence competitors and organizers are not wanting for sponsorship these days.

Adrenaline rush



Snowboarder drops off a cornice.

A feature of such activities in the view of some is their alleged capacity to induce an adrenaline rush in participants. However, the medical view is that the rush or high associated with the activity is not due to adrenaline being released as a response to fear, but due to increased levels of dopamine, endorphins and serotonin because of the high level of physical exertion.

Furthermore, a recent study suggests that the link to adrenaline and 'true' extreme sports is tentative. The study defined 'true' extreme sports as a leisure or recreation activity where the most likely outcome of a mismanaged accident or mistake was death. This definition was designed to separate the marketing hype from the activity. Another characteristic of activities so labeled is they tend to be individual rather than team sports. Extreme sports can include both competitive and non-competitive activities.

Reasons



Wingsuit flying is a relatively new activity.

Eric Brymer PhD (2005) also found that the potential of various extraordinary human experiences, many of which parallel those found in activities such as meditation, was an important part of the extreme sport experience.