

# Roller derby 101: A guide for beginners

Information courtesy of Pioneer Valley Roller Derby, Central Mass.  
[www.pioneervalleyrollerderby.com](http://www.pioneervalleyrollerderby.com)

Roller skating has been around since as early as 1884, and with the recent revival of Roller Derby, everyone is starting to jump into the fun! Roller Derby consists of a few basic rules and a whole lot of fun (and exercise). Join a team today and get rolling!

**Bout:** The match. Composed of 2 teams fighting to score points.

**Jam:** The individual sessions of play. May last up to 2 minutes.

**Jammer:** The point scorer. Designated by a star on the helmet.

**Blocker:** The defensive players. They form the Pack.

**Pivot:** The lead Blocker. At the head of the Pack, they designate speed and communicate with their teammates. Designated by a stripe on the helmet.

**How the game is played:**

A Roller Derby Bout is played in two 30-minute periods broken into Jams.

In each Jam the two teams put 5 players on the track: 1 Jammer, 3 Blockers and 1 Pivot.

At the beginning of the Jam the Blockers and Pivots line up together and form what is known as the Pack.

The Jammers start 30 feet behind the Pack.

At the whistle signaling the start of the jam, the Pack begins skating. When the Pack crosses the Pivot Line, the whistle blows again and the Jammers are off.

The goal of the Pack is to prevent the opposing team's Jammer from navigating through the pack while assisting their own Jammer.

The goal of the Jammer is to break through the pack in order to score points for his or her team.

After a Jammer has successfully broken through the Pack the first time (the initial pass), he or she skates around the track to catch up with the pack and break through again. All passes after the first are scoring passes.

The first Jammer to pass through the pack cleanly is awarded "Lead Jammer" status. This Jammer may call of the Jam at any point. Lead Jammer status is retained for the entirety of the Jam.

If neither Jammer is able to pass through cleanly, there is no Lead Jammer and the Jam will be played for a full 2 minutes.

Points are scored for each opposing player the Jammer passes after the initial pass. A Jammer only receives one point per opponent in a pass no matter how many times they might pass that opponent during the pass. Points accumulate in this fashion for the duration of the Jam.

Players are allowed to check members of the opposing team using their shoulders and hips into the front and side of their target. Pushing, tripping, blocking

from behind and hitting with any part of the arm from the elbow down are all illegal and may result in Penalties.

If four minor Penalties are assessed on a given player, that player will be sent off the track for 1 minute. Players can be removed immediately for major offenses such as fighting or gross misconduct or other actions which have a major effect on the game.

At the end of the second period, the team with the most points is declared the winner.

Skaters from the victorious team are required to perform several victory laps during which they will pump their fists in the air and/or blow kisses to the cheering crowd.

After beating the snot out of each other, it's customary to shake hands... sometimes they hug.

**How to pick a roller derby aame**  
*Courtesy of eHow.com*

Roller derby is part fantasy and part reality. Much like the characters in professional wrestling, a competitor may create a costume or pick an alternate name to enhance her fan appeal.

**Step 1**

Create a new identity for yourself. Part of the appeal of roller derby is the way it allows average women to transform themselves into blood-thirsty roller demons. Before you can pick an effective roller derby name, you'll need to understand what you're trying to convey about yourself through an alternate identity.

**Step 2**

Pick a name that's consistent with your team's identity and any theme it may have with costumes and personas. Your team's name might be inspired by supernatural creatures, warriors or gangs. Your individual name should be a reflection of your team's identity. For instance, if you're team were called the Gunlingers, you might call yourself Jessica James or Wild Lil Hickok.

**Step 3**

Search for inspiration all around you. Consider strong, sexy feminine icons like Florence Nightingale, Joan of Arc, Foxy Brown or Pocahontas. Think of famous women throughout history.

**Step 4**

Put a unique twist on a familiar name. Create a violent or sexual pun with your name. Employ literary devices like rhymes or alliteration to make your roller derby name as clever and unique as possible.

**Step 5**

Show true commitment to your roller derby team and your alternate identity by getting your derby name tattooed across



A group of Cincinnati, Ohio, suburban moms don roller derby costumes for a local school sports fundraiser. Included in the photo is RINKSIDER Editor Suzy Weinland (a.k.a. Bruisin' Susan, #00, colors black/blue/yellow), far left.

your bicep. Include your team's logo for an extra touch of cool.

**Step 6**

Make sure you pick a name that's short enough to fit on the back of your jersey. Pick a name that's punchy and fun. Ideally, you'll want your fans to be able to chant your name when you make spectacular plays on the rink.

**Step 7**

Check with your roller derby league's governing body about any rules they may have about names. While sexuality is a huge part of derby's appeal, certain words may be off limits. If the innuendo or crude language in a name is too strong, you may draw a rebuke from the league.

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