In the mid-1960s, Sherman Poppen fastened two skis together so his daughter could “surf” down a snowy hill at their Michigan home. Coined from the words “snow” and “surf,” the “Snurfer” would eventually evolve into today’s snowboard, and within three decades become an Olympic sport, debuting in Nagano Japan in 1998.

By the mid 1980s, the sport was popular across the country, but because most of the early snowboarders were adolescent males who sported the sometimes boisterous personalities of adolescent males both on and off the slopes, they received a “cold shoulder” and a rebel reputation from skiers. And, oh, the clothes they wore! Downhill skiing is not only a sport, it is a fashion show on snow! As skiers in their color-coordinated expensive ski finery glided gracefully down the hard-packed snow, the sight of baggy-clothed snowboarders with both feet stuck into a board made style-conscious skiers cringe. Snowboarding was not allowed in many ski areas in the early days, but has since become a sport embraced by young and old alike. Despite its increased acceptance, a few ski resorts still do not allow snowboarding today.

In 2000, snowboarding was found to be the fastest-growing sport in the country, just ahead of skateboarding, its “close cousin.” Many snowboarding competitions, both national and international, take place every year.
including halfpipe, boardercross, slopestyle, 
and parallel giant slalom.

So much for the history — now let’s 
compare snowboarding to skiing — two activities 
that take place alongside one another at ski 
resorts, but yet are very dissimilar sports. 
Why snowboard when you can ski? There are a 
number of reasons, not the least of which is 
there is less equipment to lug around — a board 
compared with ski equipment consisting of heavy 
boots that make walking very difficult, two 
poles, and two skis. And snowboarding is easier 
on the body — most of the moves use the body’s 
large muscle groups, compared with the stress 
that skiing places on certain areas, such as 
the knees. Snowboarders also argue that 
boarding is more fun than skiing. They say the 
sensation of snowboarding is difficult to 
describe — it is a freedom of body movement, an 
addictive experience. Snowboarding is simpler 
than skiing — and, except for the first two or 
three days spent learning the sport (tenacity 
and perseverance required here), it is easier 
to learn. A novice snowboarder can master the 
sport in half a season, while it could take 
years to become a great skier. Also, 
snowboarders get to wear comfortable shoes. 
Last, but not least, snowboarding is cheaper. 
The ease, comfort, and simplicity of 
snowboarding has won many downhill skiers over 
to the sport, and for many of them, there’s no 
turning back.