



HOW TO GO BIG

Hailey Langland, teenage snowboard phenom, on mastering something you've never done before.

DURING PRACTICE an hour before the big air finals at the X Games in Aspen, Colo., in January, the 16-year-old pro snowboarder Hailey Langland decided to try a trick she'd never tried before. It's a risky stunt called a cab double cork 1080: three full 360-degree rotations and two inverted flips, simultaneously. She had to take off down a 45-foot-tall snow-covered ramp, then launch off a colossal jump, traveling 80 feet across the night sky.

Big air, a judged contest where snowboarders are scored on style and difficulty of tricks, will make its Olympic debut at the 2018 Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea. Langland, who grew up surfing near her home in Southern California and learned to snowboard at 5, hopes to compete in big air at the Olympics next year.

That night in Colorado, Langland managed to land the trick once in practice, and then, with judges, fans and a live ESPN

television audience watching an hour later, she stuck the trick again — crashing on her first two tries but nailing the third with only 10 seconds left on the clock. The feat earned her a gold medal, her first at the X Games and the biggest win so far in her career.

How did she pull it off? "It's easier for me if I'm just having fun and randomly try a new trick, as opposed to setting a strict goal," Langland says. "That's how I push myself to learn something

new — by having fun with it."

Sure, it can feel exciting to try something new, but it can also mean getting used to lots of failure first. Langland may try a tough trick 50 or 100 times before landing it. "You can get really down on yourself, and that's hard to overcome," she says. "I try to think positive thoughts about myself and what's in front of me, like if it's sunny out and I'm having fun with my friends."

She says closing her eyes and

envisioning herself perfecting the trick helps. "Learning something new motivates you to want to do even more. After so many tries, you can finally say, 'I know I can do this.'"

Her advice for those wanting to master a new skill, whether it's on a snowboard or not: "Don't give up. If you think you can do it, if you can imagine yourself doing it, then you can do it. Maybe you don't get it in 10 tries. Or 20 or 50. But someday." *Megan Michelson* ♦