

Chapter 8

Wakeboarding

By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Select and be familiar with typical wakeboard equipment.
- Understand terminology relevant to wakeboarding.
- Understand the best approach for driving novice level boarders.
- Teach a deep water start to a novice wakeboarder.
- Teach proper position and edging to a novice wakeboarder.
- Teach basic wake jumps, turns and wake turns to the novice wakeboarder.

Wakeboarding

Teaching beginner level wakeboarding is not difficult. It is relatively easy for a novice to learn to do a deep water start and learn the basics of wakeboarding. It is an immediate thrill which tends to make for a very motivated student.

Determining Which Foot Forward

If the rider is a slalom skier it is easy - same as slalom. If the rider doesn't ski - easier, no preference; the sooner you learn to ride both ways the better.

Equipment

There are highly buoyant roto-molded wakeboards and less buoyant compression molded boards. Wide wakeboards with rounded or bevelled side edges (rails) will tend to trick easier, while sharper rails and narrower tails will help the board edge better (but also catch edges easier). Many boards come with removable fins. The less expensive boards have foot strap bindings; whereas more expensive boards have full-wrap boot bindings that can rotate to establish varying foot stances. A variety of fins are available. The fins affect the tracking, stability and maneuverability of the board. Many of the companies offer very user-friendly boards. For starting out a basic twin tip recreation board is the right answer.

Board set-up is important. The stance should be shoulder width apart (foot position) and one inch back from centre. If comfortable, a 9 or 10 degree duck stance; or 0 degrees back foot and 10 to 20 degrees front foot. Fins for beginners: 6 cm (2.5 inches) at the back, 4 – 5 cm (1.75-2) inches at the front.

Rope Length

Rope length should be between 12 and 18 metres (40 - 60 feet). Things to consider:

- If you are riding in the rooster tail the rope is too short.
- If you lose the shape of the wake and there is too much distance between the wakes to clear in one jump the rope is too long.

Personal Flotation Device

A life jacket should be worn at all times for flotation and impact protection.

will also pull the skier out of position due to the pull from the boat once angle is established. The free hand should be kept close to the body so that it is easy to get it back onto the handle.

Photo

Rhythm

Rhythm is one of the most important elements of slalom skiing. Rhythm describes style: the smoothness and control of the whole acceleration/deceleration/turn process. Poor rhythm indicates a lack of control. Good rhythm is impossible without all of the elements of slalom skiing being implemented and coordinated to a reasonable degree. Thus, lack of rhythm is a good indicator that problems exist. It is the coach's job to identify specifically what is causing the skier's rhythm to be off and to present ideas to correct the problem.

Key Points:

- There must be proper balance between acceleration and deceleration (timing) in order to make a controlled turn.
- There must also be a smooth transition from one phase to the next (i.e turn phase to acceleration phase).
- In order to promote rhythmic style, the skier should attempt at least 6 consecutive turns before resting.
- If a skier is having difficulty maintaining good rhythm it may be beneficial to have them ski narrower. This will reduce the intensity and allow the skier to concentrate on good style, position and timing.

Pylon Extensions and Towers

Pylon Extensions and Towers aid in getting more lift for wake jumps and tricks. It is also helpful for deep water starts for beginners (especially those who have difficulty). Towers make for a more solid pull and allow the boat to handle better.

Driving

Boats

Most boats have a great wake size and shape for learning. You don't need a monster size wake built by water bags and extra weight for beginners. If you are adding weight to the boat always be aware and responsible regarding potentially dangerous overloading of the boat and violation of safety guidelines and boating laws.

Boat Speed

The boat speed will vary widely depending on the weight of the skier and the size of the board. The objective is to make the beginner boarder stable and confident. As the rider progresses, they will establish their boat speed depending on their weight and the tricks being performed. The speeds for wakeboarding generally range between 16 mph (26 kph), and 23 mph (37kph). Once a rider finds the "right" speed they will generally stick to that speed and vary the length of the rope to find the right wake for different tricks and for different boats. For most surface tricks the speed is decreased by 2 to 4 mph (3 to 6kph).

Terminology

Regular Stance: left foot forward.

Goofy Foot: right foot forward.

Backside/Heelside: cutting on your heel edge of the board with the wake to your back.

Frontside/Toeside: cutting on your toe edge with your toes pointing at the wake.

Switchstance/Fakie/Revert: riding with the normal tip of the board as the tail.

Halfcab: jumping the wake; take off riding fakie and land regular stance.

Deep Water Starts

Learn starts both regular and fakie.

Starting position:

- Board floating level, perpendicular to the boat (the board will straighten out automatically because of the larger fin on the back).
- Palms down hand grip.
- Rope between feet.
- Both knees bent to chest.
- Elbows on each side of knees for stability.

Key points as the boat takes off:

- Lean slightly forward.
- Weight equal on both feet.
- Slight bend in arms, keep the handle low, back straight and head up.
- LET BOAT DO ALL THE WORK.
- Don't stand up right away.
- Stay in crouch position (knees in chest) with low centre of gravity until you are on top of the water.
- Stand up slowly to upright position as you feel the boat starting to support your weight.

Once up - Proper position:

- Leading hip pointing at the boat.
- Relaxed - weight on both feet; slightly more weight on back foot.
- Chest up.

- Avoid overreacting (heel-toe-heel-toe), relax (keeping boat speed up helps avoid overcorrecting).

Common Problems – Detection and Correction

Deep Water Starts

Symptom	Cause	Correction
Fall forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing up too quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let the boat do all the work • Keep center of gravity low.
Plow water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straightening legs too soon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep knees into chest
Board sways or wobbles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boat too slow • Standing up too quickly • Leaning too far back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase speed • Stand up slowly • Keep board weight neutral

Getting comfortable and building confidence

Have the beginner rider stay inside the wakes doing easy, slow turns. This is accomplished with a weight shift and lean, created by bending at the ankles, in the direction they want to travel. They should be focusing on: good body position, controlled weight transfer, keeping their head up, maintaining the two hand palms down grip, keeping the handle low and HAVING FUN.

Practice Exercise – “Off the Lip”

A great way for skiers to familiarize themselves with the wakeboard is to ride up to the lip of the wake and ease back down. Another practice drill is to have the rider get on the left side of the wake (for regular left footers or the opposite for goofy foot). Have them make an easy turn toe-side towards the wake but not cross it. Once arriving at the wake they should make a solid heel cut back out to the side. This is a great way to get familiar with the different intensities of cuts and the feeling of a tight line. Do the same switchstance. Riders should start learning switch riding as soon as they have the basic start down to increase their rate of progress. When you become more comfortable - be more aggressive - turn sharper off the crest of the wake.

Common Problems – Detection and Correction

Off the Lip

Symptom	Cause	Correction
Board slides out toward boat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board or lead hip not pointed in direction going 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead with hip • Keep head, hip and board in direction of initial approach
Fall towards boat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off axis due to pull from boat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain axis slightly away from the boat

Progressive Edging and Wake Jumps

All tricks must start with a consistent set up to the wakes. To do this the rider must develop a controlled progressive edge. To teach this, have your students cut out about 3 meters to set up for a backside cut to the wake. Make sure they are patient and wait for the line to be tight before making an easy cut. On a scale of 0 to 10; 10 being the hardest edge, have the rider edge toward the wake slowly - going from 0 to 10 edge as they reach the wake. Most people turn too quickly and edge too soon. This creates slack line and a lack of control. Another common problem is that people tend to edge too hard at the start. This creates lots of speed and makes it difficult to hold the edge right through the wake which leads to flattening off, losing tension on the line and not getting pop (lift).

Key Points for all Wakeboard Tricks:

- Always make a progressive turn and cut to the wake.
- Always edge right through the wake.

- Learn to load the line and use the tension.
- Spot landings and keep the board and body position at the same angle that you left the wake.

More Tips for Wake Jumps:

- Shorten the rope so that it doesn't take a "big" jump to clear both wakes.
- To deal with the load on the line from hard edging use an extreme knee bend; almost like a squat.
- The combination of good body position, edge, timing, loaded line, and pop is the key to getting big air.

Toeside Jumps

A toeside jump takes more concentration on keeping the board tracking in the same direction as takeoff because of the body position and the pull from the boat. When you leave the wake, there is a tendency to be pulled back towards the boat. This can be handled by keeping the lead hip turned at the same angle as when you left the wake. If the rider continues to have a problem getting twisted back towards the boat, have them let go with their back hand after leaving the wake (only as a last resort).

- Approach the wake toeside (frontside).
- The board must maintain the direction it was heading on approach to the wake (board has a tendency to twist back towards the boat) - keep lead hip turned at the same angle as when you left the wake.
- Keep knees bent on the approach and landing.
- Keep arms slightly bent.
- Keep head up.
- Spot your landing.

Common Problems – Detection and Correction

Toeside Jumps

Symptom	Cause	Correction
No air off wake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No edge at top of wake • No pop off wake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build edge through top of wake, loading line • Extend as you edge through the top of the wake • Create pop by springing legs straight
Fall on landing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head down • Knees straight • Off balance when leaving wake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spot the landing • Knees bent to absorb • Slow and easy turn into the wake

Riding Fakie/Switch

Easiest way to learn is from a deep water start with a board that has small fins.

- Set up for a deep water start.
- As you begin to come out of the water, begin to rotate your front foot to back position.
- Lean back, putting pressure on tip of board that is now behind.
- Body is in sideways position, knees bent, chest up.

Common Problems – Detection and Correction

Riding Fakie/Switch

Symptom	Cause	Correction
Board slides out from under	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pulled in with arms • Handle too high 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotate feet, let boat do rest
Board will not slide to fakie (backwards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weight not forward enough to get fin out of water • Fin is too big 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More weight forward • More back foot pressure to kick fin loose to allow turn • Use smaller fin

To resume normal position - rotate the board back around and grab the handle with free hand. Be sure that your students do the switchstance start frequently. (The regular start gets easy and the switchstance adds variety and is good practice). Once comfortable with the switch position, wake jumps while riding switchstance will come without much trouble. (Both backside and frontside). Don't let riders get in the habit of throwing the handle as soon as they get into trouble. It is important to hang on to the handle until impact whenever possible. This will help gain confidence for more complex tricks later on.