

Getting Started

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While we'd always advise learning the very basics from an RYA qualified instructor, we can appreciate that you're probably just gagging to get out there. So here's a quick guide from **BOARDS** technique maestro Simon Bornhoft to the basics of windsurfing – enough to get you going, steering and turning around...



Climbing Aboard

Position the board in the water so the sail is downwind of the board and get on, holding on to the uphaul to give yourself something to balance against. With one foot each side of the mast, your weight over the centreline of the board, and your back to the wind, start pulling the rig up, keeping your knees bent. Keep your back straight and pull the sail up using your legs, not your back. As the sail pulls clear of the water, the wind will naturally reposition the board so it's at right angles to the wind (if it isn't already).

Getting Going

When the rig is clear of the water let it swing freely downwind of you, with your hands on the uphaul or mast. This is the 'secure position'; you should feel balanced and comfortable. When you're ready to go, place your front hand on the boom and pull it across your body until the rig is upright and away from you to improve your *Balance*. Use your *Vision* to look up and in the direction you want to go, which should be at about 90° to the wind. Take a step back towards the tail with your back foot to ready yourself for the pull from the sail, and put your back hand on the boom. By pulling your back hand and the boom in towards you, you create *Power* in the sail to accelerate the board forwards.



Facing Forward

This shows the same sequence of actions for getting going, but from a different angle. Note how the body resembles a '7' and is facing forward, with the front foot parallel to the direction of the board rather than facing across it. This helps direct the power of the rig into forward motion of the board.



IN STRONGER WINDS

If the wind is blowing more than just a few knots, you will find that the sail pulls a bit more strongly. To cope with this, your '7' stance shifts gear towards a super-7 stance by dropping the hips and weighting the heels. To do this, flex the back leg and use your bodyweight (rather than bending the arms) to pull against the rig. As the pull increases further, you can shuffle your feet slightly out towards the edge of the board, to give yourself more room to lean out.

CARRYING YOUR KIT

Most modern entry level boards have a carrying slot in the deck, making it easy to tuck the board under your arm. If the board doesn't have one, then use the daggerboard case. If it doesn't have a daggerboard case, then get help from a friend, or carry the board on your head. The sail can be carried at waist height by the downwind side of the body, one hand on the boom, the other on the mast above the boom. Always keep the clew downwind of you.



Steering

In windsurfing you can't think of steering as turning right or left, you have to think of it in relation to the wind direction. Steering is accomplished by leaning the mast towards the back of the board to make the nose turn towards the direction that the wind is coming from, or by leaning the mast towards the front of the board to make the nose turn away from where the wind is coming from.

In the picture sequence here I am progressively turning the nose of the board up towards the wind by leaning the sail towards the back of the board (pix 1-3), and then 'bearing away' (i.e. turning the nose away from the wind again) by leaning the rig forward (pix 4-5). You have to be quite forceful – it won't work if you just incline the rig back or forward a few inches. Experiment to see how far and fast you can make the board turn! Remember always to use your *Vision* – look where you want to go, and the board will follow...

SAFETY FIRST

Don't go out in strong winds, strong currents or offshore winds. A buoyancy aid is highly recommended when you are new to the sport. Make sure someone on the beach is keeping an eye on you. Flat and shallow water with light winds, as shown here, is the best learning environment. And let's not forget the most important factor of all – ENJOY YOURSELF!

Turning Around

Turning Around

TURNING

Turning right around through 180°, so that the wind comes on to the other side of the sail and you reposition on the other side of the board, can be done in either of two ways; upwind (tacking), or downwind (gybing).

Tacking

To tack (where the nose of the board passes through the eye of the wind), bring the nose up towards the wind by leaning the rig right back towards the tail. Step forward with your front foot as the board turns into the wind, and transfer your front hand to the mast. Keep the turn going by keeping the sail leant back as the body moves forward. Shift your weight onto the front foot and then switch the feet around the mastbase as the nose of the board passes through the eye of the wind. You are now on the other side of the sail. Set yourself up as described in the *Getting Going* section; look forward and re-establish your '7' stance to start sailing again.



BOOM HEIGHT ▶▶

It's often quite difficult to work out exactly the right height for your boom when rigging the sail on the beach. When you're on the water check that it is roughly between shoulder to just under chin height.



KEEP THAT RIG AWAY! ▶▶

You'll find windsurfing much easier if you work on your Balance by extending your arms (particularly the front one) and using your '7' stance to lean back slightly to oppose the weight and pull of the rig.



Gybing

To turn the board through 180° so the nose of the board rotates away from the wind, you lean the mast towards the nose, and as the board 'bears away' you keep adjusting your stance so you are always facing the rig, which means standing progressively more across the board. Once the nose is downwind you need to 'rotate the rig' – let go with the hand furthest away from the mast and allow the boom to swing away from you. As the board turns back the way you came from, sheet the boom in on the new tack to complete the gybe.

NOTE: This is only the briefest of brief summaries – we do not have the space here to offer a full in-depth lesson detailing all the subtleties and intricacies of the techniques described here. Your instructor will cover these in much greater depth!

SIMON BORNHOFT
WINDWISE

If you have any questions regarding your technique, or any subjects you'd like covered in the magazine, you can contact sb@windwise.net

For more information on Technique, Tulsion and Travel call Simon Bornoft @ WindWise on:
01243 572442
sb@windwise.net www.windwise.net

Simon Bornoft is the founder of FastFwd, the coaching system used within the RYA National Windsurfing Scheme. FastFwd focuses on learning and developing certain essential windsurfing skills, which then become the foundations of all further techniques and skills you learn as you progress through the sport. These five foundation skills are encapsulated in a simple Formula to help you remember them on the water. You'll soon discover how your Vision, Trim, Balance, Power and Stance will play a large part in your windsurfing future.

VISION helps maintain your sailing line

Where you look and your sailing line should always be your first considerations. So always keep your head up and look where you want to be going – not down at the equipment. If you want to head upwind, look upwind. If you want to head downwind, look downwind. It really does make a big difference.

TRIM keeps the board flat

Having a flat, stable platform increases the ease with which you can control the board and rig in any situation. So always try to position your feet to keep the board flat (i.e. not nose-down, tail-down, or tilting to one side or the other). Ideally, the front foot should be facing forward to control the board's pitch, and the back foot facing across the board to control the tilt.

BALANCE forms your framework

Balance refers to the continuous aim of maintaining plenty of distance between your body and the rig (primarily by extending the front arm) and always counterbalancing the rig's pull, position and movement with your body. So if the rig moves one way, the body moves in the opposite direction to counter-balance.

POWER channels the rig's forces

Power is all about using the force of the wind against the sail and directing it into forward motion. To create power and drive in the sail, you 'sheet in', by pulling the 'back hand' in closer to you.

STANCE is how you use your body

How you position and angle your body has a massive effect on being able to control the rig's pull. To develop a good stance, imagine your body as a number 7 – your legs and back make up the upright section of the 7, with your horizontal arms the 'bar' of the 7.

