

{ Feasible freestyle for everyone! }



FREESTYLE FOR EVERYONE

PART 2: SWITCH STANCE SAILING AND PIROUETTES

JIM COLLIS CONTINUES THIS MONTH with the second of a succession of articles designed to help us consolidate our general windsurfing skills, whatever our ability level, by building and developing our rig and board confidence whilst having fun out on the water.

Having looked at the first two freestyle skills in the last issue, namely lifting/dragging a foot and kneeling/sitting/lying down whilst sailing, Jim is moving on this month to the next two feasible freestyle moves: switch stance sailing and piroquettes.

A LITTLE RECAP

"Freestyle for everyone"

This concept is not about learning the latest 'hoochy-ka-poochy' manoeuvre where we're upside down and inside out whilst travelling backwards at speed, it's about getting on the water, whatever the conditions and whatever our ability level, getting better at handling a rig and moving around on a board in a fun and entertaining way... what freestyle is really all about! The end result is that, as well as having a good laugh every time we go on the water, we'll be learning and consolidating core skills so that we improve our general sailing without even realising it, and we will also be gaining key foundations in freestyle so that if we want to take it further then we will be set up to do so.

10 simple skills

Rather than heading out on the water and randomly trying 'twirly things' on a board that a mate has showed us but we have no idea what to do or what benefit it has to our sailing, we are going to work our way through a simple progression of 10 easy to achieve freestyle skills that get progressively harder and can be done in non-planing or planing conditions. These 10 skills, running from lifting/dragging a foot as the first through to a helicopter tack as the tenth, underpin the essential

movements in windsurfing that help us as sailors to get better at all skills in windsurfing. We will find that certain skills work as great exercises for certain moves we are trying in our general sailing, and that as we get more confident we can start to link them together to create new skills and gain new and far-improved confidence with our rig and on our board without even realising it!

Kit and conditions

We should help ourselves from the start by jumping on a bigger board than perhaps we would usually go on and a smallish rig rather than some monster. Ideally, good kit would be a board between 130-200 litres (depending on your weight) and a sail of between 4.5m-6.5m (depending on what you feel comfortable with). We should also start by going out in light to marginal winds (Force 1-3) rather than throwing ourselves into it during a typhoon and wondering why nothing seems to be working!

As we become more confident at throwing a smallish rig and ourselves around in marginal conditions and on a more stable platform, so we might then 'up the ante' a bit to improve our skill level by going down in board size a bit, going out in slightly stronger winds and maybe increasing the rig size a fraction (although we should always keep the rig at a manageable size for the sake of manoeuvrability).

For those really light wind days, or perhaps when getting onto the water is just not feasible, there is always the option of taking your fin off and doing some of the skills on land. Remember...all time spent on your kit is time well spent!

SKILL 4: PIROUETTES

Having already looked at switch stance sailing, pirouettes follow on very smoothly and are, as with all these freestyle skills, very achievable and fun. However, before launching into multiple pirouettes, it is a good idea to do some one-handed and even no-handed sailing beforehand so as to gain confidence and warm ourselves up to the idea.

The result of doing all this is fantastic for our sailing at any level:

- It teaches us the nature of good rig balance which helps hugely with rig handling in turns and whilst sailing in a straight line, both in and out of the harness
- It emphasizes the use of our head whilst sailing: practicing and encouraging good foot movements around the board, which pays massive dividends for skills such as tacks and gybes
- It can be applied to the end of any manoeuvre for advanced sailors looking for more 'stylish' exits (e.g. pirouette gybes, helicopter tacks with a pirouette)

Here is the sequence for doing some one-handed and no-handed sailing:

1. Get yourself comfortable sailing across the wind on a beam reach
 2. Keeping your head looking where you are going, move your hands closer and closer together on the boom until they are touching and the rig feels feather-light and balanced, remembering to keep your arms straight/rig away for good counterbalance
 3. Let go of the boom with your back hand for 1-2 seconds and then replace it
 4. Let go of the boom with your front hand for 1-2 seconds and then replace it
 5. Let go of the boom with both hands and clap before catching hold of the boom again
 6. Try sailing one-handed for longer and even holding the harness line instead of the boom (if you have them fitted on your boom)
- Try doing more than one clap when sailing no-handed: how many claps can you do? 🌀



1. On a beam reach



2. Move your hands closer together on the boom



3. Back hand off



4. Front hand off



5. Clap whilst sailing



6. Try holding the harness lines while sailing

