



Wakeboarding

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About the Tutorial

Wakeboarding is a surface water sport where the players ride a specially designed wakeboard over the water surface. The rider is usually towed behind a motorboat which moves with a speed of 30-40km per hour depending on the rider's weight, comfort as well as the tricks performed.

This tutorial will help you to understand how to wakeboard, the required equipment for the game, and the rules of wakeboarding.

Audience

For the people who are looking for high-energy extreme sports with thrilling stunts and huge adrenaline rush, this is the perfect game. For those who know surfing and snowboarding, wakeboarding can be easier to learn.

This tutorial can be helpful in providing fundamental details of this game to all those extreme sports enthusiasts who want to learn the basics of wakeboarding.

Prerequisites

We assume that as an adventurous enthusiast learner of this sport, you have strong muscles and joints, and a very-well balanced body. We also assume you can swim and you are extremely fit on the marks of stamina and endurance.

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1. Wakeboarding – Overview

All extreme sports require high degree of preparedness, physical as well as emotional strength, and stamina. Wakeboarding is one of such sports. In this sport, the player rides over the surface of water using a flat and long wakeboard that is towed behind a motorboat moving at a speed of 30 to 40km/hr.

Wakeboarding was invented around the 1980s. Initially, it used to be known as **Skurfing**. The sport was originated in Australia and New Zealand. Initially they used binding- less, hand shaped boards for towing.

The first wakeboard was called **Skurfer** and it used to look like a surfboard with pointed nose, rounded pin surfboard like fins. In 1983, Howard Jacobs created several wakeboards by mounting wind-surfing foot straps and partial hydro slide-pads on smaller surfboards. He shaped such surfboard first with added sophistication.

Paul Frase, his brother Murray, and a pro-snowboarder sponsored by them re-named this sport as **Wakeboarding**. Paul approached Herb O'Brien, the icon of wakeboarding, who later manufactured the world's first hyper lite wakeboard in 1991. It was world's first compression-molded boards. The hyper lite boards helped a much easier start of the game and played a vital role in increasing the popularity of the sport.

Wakeboarding – Objective

In this sport, the players need to perform different tricks and stunts while maintaining proper control and balance on the wakeboard being towed in the water.

Based on the player's control and skills, and the selection as well as execution of the skills, a panel of three judges records the performance of the players. The player with highest score is declared as a winner.

Wakeboarding – Regulating Bodies

The World Skiboard Association (WSA) founded in 1989 under whose command the first World Skiboarding Championship was held and this game was added in X games.

The regulating body WSA was renamed as World Wakeboard Association (WWA) in 1993 by the riders for the riders governs, promotes, and persuades to grow the wakeboard sports around the world. The association has given a number of amateur and professional wakeboard players, rules, regulations, and competitions since the last 27 years.

Yet another regulating body named The International Water ski and Wakeboard Federation (IWWF) organizes wakeboarding game competitions worldwide. It is also recognized as the official partner in wakeboarding by the Olympic committee.

Wakeboarding – Participating Countries

As an extreme sport, Wakeboarding is presently the world's fastest-growing as well as one of the most accessible sports. The rapid growth of this game has made it one of the most famous global past time around the world. The unique style of the game as well as the free style creativity involved in the game has made it one of the biggest sport phenomenon in the present time

Some of the countries where wakeboarding is very much popular both as a sports as well as an recreational activity are: Netherlands, Germany, Russia, Great Britain, USA, Austria, Mexico, Poland, Belgium, and Norway.

2. Wakeboarding – Equipment

The equipment required for an extreme sport are equally important in contribution to the player's performance. Since wakeboarding is an extreme game with involvement of adventure and energy of the rider, the comfort level of the rider with equipment also matters primarily.

Let us see, what all equipment are mandatory in this game:

The Wakeboard

This is the most basic equipment of this sport. The present boards are of foam, honeycomb or wood mixed with resin and are coated with fiberglass. Metal screws are inserted in to it in order to attach bindings and fins.

The size of the wakeboards recommended is directly proportional to the rider's weight. The width of the board affects the way it sits on the water.

Mostly the areas where the width of the board matters are: tip area, middle area, and the tail area. Narrower tips and tails make the board turn more aggressively whereas wider tails and tips allow the player to perform different tricks. The wider the middle area, the harder it bounces off and sits higher in the water.

The length of the board plays a vital role in deciding the riding style of the rider. While a smaller board feels lighter and spins faster but faces difficulty while landing whereas a larger board moves slowly and smoothly.

The present wakeboards that are mostly used by the riders are 5 feet long with 2 feet width at the center with a blunt nose and tail.

Types of Wakeboards

A specific bending on the board from head to tail is called **Rocker**. Broadly there are five types of wakeboards depending on the rocker design:

- **Continuous** rocker
- **Hybrid** rocker
- **Three-Stage** rocker
- **Five Stage** rocker

A continuous rocker is a smooth curve whereas in case of a three-stage rocker, there are 2 prominent bends on the board.

The wakeboards with continuous rocker move fast as water flows without any disruption at the bottom of the board. In case of three-stage rocker, the board pushes more water at the front side which makes the ride slower.

The boards with three stage or five stage rockers help the riders to jump higher while performing tricks. The rocker and board profile determine the performance.

Wakeboard Bottom Design

There are different bottom designs in case of a wakeboard which may be concaves, channels or nothing. These designs define the functionality of the boards and how it rides through the water. The concaves at the bottoms create lift and make the board sit high on water.

Double concave at the middle of the bottom helps the board sit higher than that of single concaves. Channels at the bottom act like long fins and help the wakeboard edge harder. In case of channels at the middle of the bottom of the board, the board edges harder while sitting perfectly in the water.

In case of a featureless board at the bottom, the board moves smoothly with the length, width, and rocker of the board; deciding its speed. The attached fins decide the nature of the board.

Wakeboard Fins

Fins are a type of wakeboard components which are fixed below the board and act as a pair of grips which inhibits the flow of water during the travel. Fins are responsible for the controlled forward movement of the board during the travel.

The configurations as well as the placement of these fins are done according to the rider's preferences.

Based on the type of tricks the player performs, different types of fins are changed. The usage of the fins make it easily maneuvered. The closer the fins are to the center of the board, the quicker and better the board sits and moves on the water.

In case the fins are placed nearer to the tail and tip area, the board hooks more in the water and doesn't sit well.

Different types of fins are used by the players based on their desired effects and performance of the player.

Types of Wakeboard Fins

Some of the wakeboard fins are described below:

- **Long based fins:** These kinds of fins release better and give the board a smooth feel while riding flat on water. These fins hold up well on ramps and rails.
- **Moulded fins:** These fins look like big channels and hold up against rails and ramps. These are more slippery as compared to other types.
- **Multi-finned set-ups:** these kind of fins capture the maximum aggressiveness trough and in to the wake.
- **Canted side fins:** These kinds of fins are leaned at an angle. They stay inactive while the board travels flat. But when the rider starts leaning on the edges, these fins help the board holding up more. These kinds of fins provide hard edges.
- **No fins:** Some riders prefer to go with finless boards in case of a board specially designed for the cable parks and other uses.

Wakeboard Binding

The binding is used to hold the rider's feet in position during the travel. Those are connected to the board and the players need to put their foot in it. While the rider rides up the wake, the energy of the wake makes the rider airborne where the rider performs different tricks. These tricks vary from basic to advance.

Mostly two types of binding are used by the players which are: **Open Toe** binding and **Closed Toe** binding. The open toe bindings look mostly like shoes with broad size and better toe movement whereas in case of closed toe binding, it brings more responsiveness to the board while moving the toes.

Wakeboarding Boats

The wakeboarding boats are different than regular boats. In case of wakeboarding boats, a **Wakeboard Tower** made of stainless steel or aluminum tubing is available with the pull point 2 meters off the water surface. These boats are made to keep water inside which makes them heavier.

By keeping the water inside, these boats try to pump out water which creates big wakes behind the boat. Also these boats have a massive engine which enables them to get fast acceleration enough to keep the player off the water.

Supplementary Equipment for Wakeboarding

The following supplementary equipment is used for wakeboarding:

Wet Suit

The wet suits used by the players keep their body warm in case of cold water. These suits are tightly fit and don't let water come inside.

These suits absorb very less amount of water. Some players don't use wet suits as they restrict the legs as well as arm movements. This suit is mandatory in certain tournaments; otherwise it is not a must.

Life vest

Mostly used as a protective guard, these life vests also help the player stay on top of water.

In case the player falls down in the water while losing balance, these vests help him/her staying up the water.

Wakeboard Line

This is a connecting line between the boat and the player. One end of it is attached with the boat while at the other end there is a handlebar for the player to hold on.

The length of the wakeboard rope varies between 55 to 75 feet and players use it depending on their experience level. The most common rope length i.e. used by riders is 24-26 meters.

Helmet

Helmet is used as a protective measure as loosing balance and falling down in case of great speed can be dangerous.

3. Wakeboarding – Playing Environment

Wakeboarding can be played in lakes, rivers, and lake parks. There are more than 250 wake parks all over the world located in more than 30 countries including Germany, France, UK, USA, and Turkey.

Wake Parks

They are the water bodies with ample reservoir of water. In wakeboarding, the riders usually get pulled by a motorboat.

In the surface of these wakeboard lakes, different obstacles such as sliders and kickers are there for performing aerial tricks.

Cable Wakeboarding

It is just same as regular wakeboarding with one difference: In cable wakeboarding, the rider is not pulled by a motorboat. Instead, a system of overhead cables is used to pull the rider.

A wake park includes a lake being surrounded by masts which hold an overhead cable. The cable rotates in the designed direction around the lake and has number of carriers. The riders get pulled by ropes attached to these carriers.

4. Wakeboarding – Tricks

Similar to snowboarding and surfing, in this sport also, there are different tricks and techniques that can be performed by the player for extra points.

While the board has popped up on the surface of water, the rider usually performs different tricks on the wakeboard which provides extra scores based on the style and smooth execution.

To perform a trick, the main requirement of the rider is to jump the board to maximum height. Heading towards the wake while facing the boat is known as heel side edge whereas facing the boat from the other direction with chest facing away from the boat is known as toe side edge. The rider's edge plays an important role in deciding the height of the jump.

Some of these wakeboarding tricks are explained below:

- **Fashion Air:** In this technique, the rider initially curls the board behind towards own butt while keeping knees pointing down, then pops up the board. While being airborne, the rider throws own hand behind the head for a stylish pose for some time before landing.
- **Air Raley:** Here while being airborne, the rider swings his own body backwards parallel to the water surface and then swings the board and the body down. The rider then lands on the other side of the wake.
- **911:** It is very similar to that of air raley. Here, the rider has to tweak own body after swinging backwards parallel to the water surface in airborne condition. The rider then lands on the other side of the wake.
- **Blind Judge:** In this technique, the rider needs to perform an air raley first while being airborne and while swinging back needs to take a 180° backside rotation. The rider then lands facing the opposite direction.
- **Krypt:** In this technique, after being airborne and performing an air raley, the rider takes a 180° front rotation before landing.
- **Batwing:** Here, the rider swings the board vertically in backward direction till the board becomes perpendicular to the water surface. While being airborne, the rider performs an Indy grab by holding the toe edge between the feet using back hand.
- **Surface 360°:** In this technique, while riding on the surface of water, the player needs to spin the board 360° while alternating the hands to grab the handlebars.
- **Tantrum:** Here, the rider first approaches the wake on own hill-side and then performs a backflip over the wake on an axis which is perpendicular to the direction of the board.
- **Mobius:** Here, the rider performs a Heelside Roll first, then takes a front-side 360° spin while flipping. It is more of an extension to Heelside Roll to Revert.
- **Whirlybird:** In this trick, the rider needs to perform a tantrum and while performing the backflip takes a 360° back-side spin without altering the hand on the handlebar. So basically it is a tantrum with a 360° back-side spin.

- **Moby Dick:** Here in this trick, the player needs to perform a tantrum and during the Backflip he/she needs to take a 360° back-side spin while altering the hand on the handlebar.
- **Tweety Bird:** Here the rider performs a whirlybird without taking the help of a wake and jump. The rider needs to use the boat speed as well as lower body energy for the jump.
- **Heelside Backroll:** In this technique, the rider needs to approach the wake on own heel-side and then flips over the wake on an axis that is parallel to the direction of the board.
- **Heelside Roll to Revert:** Here the player performs a Heelside Roll first, then takes a front-side 180° spin while flipping and then lands facing the opposite direction.
- **Heelside Roll to Blind:** Here the rider performs a Heelside Roll first, then takes a backside 180° spin while flipping, and lands facing the opposite direction.
- **KGB:** It is just the opposite trick to Mobius. Here the rider performs a Heelside Roll first, then takes a backside 360° degree spin and while flipping.
- **Toeside Backroll:** Here, the rider approaches the wake from toe-side and then flips over the wake on an axis parallel to the direction of the board.
- **Toeside Roll to Revert:** It is an extension of Toeside Backroll. Here also the rider first performs a Toeside Backroll, then and take a front-side 180° spin while landing on the opposite direction.
- **Pete Rose:** Here the rider first performs a Toeside Backroll, then takes a front-side 360° spin and while landing on the same direction.
- **Toeside Frontroll:** Here, the rider approaches the wake on toe-side and takes a flip over the wake in an axis parallel to the direction of the board.
- **Tootsie Roll:** It is an extension of Toeside Frontroll. Here also the rider first performs a Toeside Frontroll and takes a backside 180° spin while landing on the opposite direction.
- **Dum-Dum:** Here, the rider first performs a Toeside Frontroll and takes a back-side 360° spin while landing on the same direction.
- **Toeside Front Flip:** Here the rider first approaches the wake on toe-side and then takes a flip over the wake in an axis perpendicular to the direction of the boat.
- **FruitLoop:** Here the rider first performs a Toeside Front Flip, then takes a back-side 180° spin, and lands facing the opposite direction.
- **Bel Air:** In this technique, the rider performs a Tantrum without the help of a wake.
- **Air Krypt:** Here the rider approaches the wake in toe-side, then performs an air raley in the direction that is perpendicular to the direction of the boat, takes a 180° turn, and finally lands facing the opposite direction.

- **Board Slide:** In case of facing an obstacle, the rider approaches the obstacle and slides the board over it in a direction perpendicular to the obstacle with the obstacle in between the rider's feet.

5. Wakeboarding – Grabs

The rider often grabs different parts of the board using hands. Except the board skills, there are different grabs a rider can perform:

- **Indy Grab:** The most famous grab technique where the rider holds the toe edge between own feet using back hand.
- **Nose grab:** Here, the rider uses the forward hand to grab the nose part of the board.
- **Nuclear grab:** Here, the rider grabs the nose of the board using back hand.
- **Tail grab:** Here, the rider grabs the tail part of the board using back hand.
- **Melon:** Here, the rider grabs the heel edge between own feet.
- **Stale Fish:** Here, the rider grabs the heel edge between own feet using back hand.
- **Taipan Air:** Here, the front hand of the rider reaches behind the front foot and grabs the toe edge between the bindings.
- **Roasted Beef:** Here the back hand of the rider reaches the front of the legs and grabs the heel edge of the board.

6. Wakeboarding – How to Play?

As you know by now, wakeboarding water sport is the game of strength, endurance, speed, and tricks. While exercising and maintaining one's physical strength well, the rider can actually start practicing the game in water with full preparation.

Here are the basic steps at the beginning of the game:

1. Enter into water with the board lying perpendicular to your body.
2. Keep your heels resting on the board's heel side edge.
3. Hold the handle of the wakeboard that is connected to the boat.
4. Once you are ready, indicate the boat driver to start the boat. Slowly, the boat is pushed against his/her feet.
5. Initially the boat moves with a slow and steady acceleration of 10-12 mph. As the boat takes speed gradually, it is popped on the water surface.
6. Once up on the water surface, push the board using your forward leg which will work as an accelerator to make the player move closer to the board. Pushing the board on your back foot slows the board and creates more distance between the board and the boat.
7. After a while, will find the place where you need not have to use the rope tension but you are simply pushed by the wakes produced by the boats.
8. Based on your comfort, you can lock the speed and acceleration of the boat.
9. Start riding the board sideways with the knees bent towards the chest and the arms holding the handlebar of the wakeboard rope. Point your toes towards the boat to reduce the drag of the boat against the water and make it pop up more easily on the water surface.
10. Once the board starts moving smoothly on the top of water, you can perform different tricks against the wakes created by the boat.

7. Wakeboarding – The Rules

There is a panel of judges for providing scores to the rider. After the rider's performance is over, the judges write down all skills performed by the rider. While marking the scores, they also consider the following factors:

- Degree of difficulty of each trick
- Style of the rider
- Smoothness of execution
- Overall performance of the rider

The basic rules given below are followed:

- In case of a trick is performed smoothly, the judges add to the scores and in case of falls, they charge for penalties.
- Judges record points for each rider out of total 100 points.
- In case of unfortunate events during a race which affects the rider's performance, a rider can appeal for a re-ride.
- The rider has to take the first re-ride immediately.
- For second re-ride, the rider is given 5 minutes break.
- A rider gets two passes to perform the routine. During routine, a rider receives one obstacle as well as one fall. In some cases, two falls are allowed.
- The rider is picked up by the boat after the first fall.
- If the rider falls twice in his second matches, the routine ends there.
- Towing is prohibited between sunset and sunrise.
- A rider must register oneself before an event.
- During the game, wearing lifejacket is compulsory for the riders.
- During the ride of wakeboard, the boat driver and the rider must communicate between themselves using only the approved signals.

8. Wakeboarding – Champions

As you know, wakeboarding is governed worldwide by two large organizations, WWA and IWWF. IWWF has 90 national federations as its members. It organizes different wakeboard events worldwide.

Some of the world wide wakeboarding events organized by WWA and IWWF are:

- IWWF World Wakeboard Championships
- IWWF World Cup
- Nautique WWA Wakeboard World Championships
- WWA Wakepark World Championships

Wakeboarding water sport has shaped a number of men and women into adventurous players and champions. Let us get introduced to some champions in this sport.

Wakeboarding – Hall of Fame

Many wakeboarding sportspersons gain name and fame in this extreme sport. Some popular ones are:

Shaun Murray

This American wakeboarder from California is considered as one of the greatest wakeboarders of all time. Murray's wakeboarding career is filled with several accomplishments including four world Wakeboarding champion titles.

He is the only rider ever to hold World, Pro Tour, and National Champion titles at once. He also worked as wakeboarding coach and is popular as a finest known coach in the said sport. Presently, Murray is running a wake camp with his friend Travis Moe.

Darin Shapiro

He is one of the most successful wakeboarders of all time. Darin Shapiro is from Orlando, Florida. In his long career spanning more than 20 years, Shapiro won numerous awards including 12 world titles and three X Games titles.

He won more than 70 Pro Tour wins and he is the most successful player in this game. He was the first pro wakeboarder ever inducted into the Water Ski Hall of Fame in the year 2010.

Harley Clifford

He is a young Australian wakeboarder who was born at Redland Bay and took wakeboarding by storm. He has won 2009 Pro Tour, 3X King of Wake Championship, 3X Pro Wakeboard Tour Championship, 3X World Champion, Double or Nothing Championship, and BROstock Championship.

His best style is Zoolander and he also likes bicycling apart from wakeboarding. He started wakeboarding at very tender age and he is fond of learning new tricks always.

Dallas Friday

Dallas is an American wakeboarder from Florida. She won the ESPN ESPY Award for Best Female Action Sports Athlete, 4 X Games gold medals, and other numerous World Titles.

Dallas began wakeboarding when she was thirteen. She began riding at a professional level within a year. She is the youngest receiver of silver at the X Games. She stands at first place in Masters Champion, IWSF World Cup Champion, and World Cup Singapore in 2013. She is active till date since year 2000.

Meagan Ethell

Meagan is 1997 born American wakeboarder from Illinois. She is a proud winner of Wake Games, Masters, Worlds as well as Queen of Wake titles in year 2012.

She also won Wake Games, Wake Open, and Cable Nationals in year 2014. She was ranked as Women's Wakeboarder of the Year of Wakeboarding Magazine in year 2014. She is ranked second in WWA Wakeboard World Series. She is the most promising woman wakeboarder today after Dallas Friday.

Raimi Merritt

Raimi is an American wakeboarder from Florida. She fell in love with this extreme water sport at very young age of nine years and then started playing as an amateur. She started winning amateur tournaments.

She was titled as Female Rider of the Year in the period 2009 to 2013. From year 2012 to 2014, she held first place in pro women's division. She has won 10 total World Championships. She is a very famous professional wakeboarder with the extreme daring instinct.