

INTUITION: GYBING

Photos: Thorsten Indra, Mark Kasprowicz, Anna Edwards

THE ENTRY



Entering the gybe is all about maintaining control, keeping the board steadily turning around the corner with no sharp movements or bouncing. Just like riding a bike where the only way to corner is with the front wheel on the ground, to turn your board the nose has to be down. If you do a wheelie (nose lifts), it's game over.

Keep control and the nose down by leaning as much weight as possible onto the mastfoot, known as Downforce, or mast foot pressure. Ⓞ





Front hand over mast foot

Back hand back, sheeting in

Overhand grip

Front elbow pulling down

Rig tipping forwards, and into the turn

Front arm extending

Body leaning forwards

DOWNFORCE

Increase Downforce (control) on the gybe entry by-

Sheeting in which forces power down onto the board and lifts your body weight onto the boom.

Tipping the rig forwards, which gets your weight forwards.

Bending your front leg, which puts more weight onto your front foot, and helps get the rig forwards.

Pulling down with your front hand, by always keeping your front elbow pointing downwards, even when your arms are almost straight.

All of these are equally important to increase downforce and therefore your control.

Ultimately they'll all happen as one movement as you enter the turn.

Front knee bent

Weight on front toes

Nose down

Board banked minimum 20 degrees

MAKING THE RIG GO LIGHT

The expression 'make the rig go light' is often used in gybing coaching/ instruction. It refers to a sensation when the rig feels like it no longer has any power in it, and as such doesn't pull anymore, so feels light. This is a very handy skill to master since it eliminates the chance of the rig pulling you off balance when you're on the verge of control anyway.

There are two basic ways of making the rig go light. They can be successfully used individually (conditions depending) or combined.



1. Make the rig go light by sailing faster than the wind, straight downwind. Example- it's a force four to five, about 16 knots, and you're board speed is regularly over 20 knots. You turn downwind and very soon after, you are travelling straight downwind faster than the wind. This literally takes the wind out of your sail and your rig will go light.



2. Make the rig go light by positioning the rig so that the wind is blowing passed either side of it, by radically over sheeting and extending your front arm

As you become more experienced you'll regularly be able to use a combination of these as I do, entering my gybe I quickly extend my rig downwind, instantly taking much of the pull out of it, then combined with over-sheeting keeps the wind out of it and I can glide effortlessly round any turn.

To help keep control in the entry, make the rig go light. This will also enable you to happily step through the footwork stage without being pulled off balance (next month's article).

As the rig goes light, since there is suddenly no more power in it, you no longer have any counterbalance so if you were leaning over in any direction, other than into the turn (centrifugal force and all that) then with nought to hold onto you'll probably fall over, usually backwards.

Anticipate the rig going light and lean further forwards over the board by bending your front leg more, that way when it does go light, you're stood above the board, using the boom as a Zimmer frame rather than a electric cow prodder.



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TIGHTENING THE TURN

The most important feature of tightening your turn is getting your back hand miles back, the further back it is, the tighter you can turn. See INTuition Gybing- the approach (last month's feature) online at guycribb.com

Another vital trick is using the Moon Walk (INTuition Core Skill- used to pull the tail of the board underneath you, using the muscles in the back of your leg. This is vital in all sorts of moves from beach starting to jumping. Check out the INTuition Gybing and Core Skills DVD)

Pulling the tail underneath you with the toes of your back foot spins the board around a tighter arc. Try it on the ground now, wherever you're sat, dragging your toes across the floor underneath your butt.

For the Moon Walk to work, you'll need extremely bent knees to give you more leverage over the board.



CARVING

Just like spinning on a roundabout, leaning into the inside of the turn speeds up the gybe. This is not just because of a mild centrifugal force, it's because in the world of surfing, if you lean into a turn with knees bent, you can push against your board to power it around the corner. Boards love this and perform best when being pushed into, rather than simply banked over.

That said, the minimum action required to turn a windsurfer is to bank it over by about 20 degrees, by pressing through the balls of your feet.

The maximum would be like a full on bottom turn with the board over at about 60 degrees and your legs pushing hard.

A good visual guide to help you lean into the turn is to lean the mast into the centre of the turn.



COMMON MISTAKES

The most common mistake with the entry is blowing it on the approach, sheeting out, slowing down or standing too upright, but for the sake of this feature, assuming that's all gone to plan, the most common mistake during the entry is progressively falling or leaning back, resulting in a wheelie and loss of control. This is most likely to happen by pulling in on your front arm, rather than letting it extend and pull you forwards over your board.



Full on, full tilt laydown style gybe (actually a high speed bottom turn in this pic, but essentially the same thing). Rig going light by leaning it right into the turn and overshooting, the nose of the board is held down by leaning well forwards over the board. Board banked at about 50 degrees for tight turn. A good visual guide to help you lean into the turn is to lean the mast into the centre of the turn.



What intermediates should aim for, rig forwards by extending front arm, body well forwards over the board, board banked at about 30 degrees, nicely sheeted in.



This is what most intermediates currently look like, pulling in on the front arm, raking the rig back and counteracting the force of the sail by leaning back. This results in loss of Downforce and therefore doing a wheelie. With only the last few feet of the board in the water even though it's banked over, it won't turn properly, it'll bounce and feel unstable, and the rig will pull in surges.



CONFIDENCE

A key point in the entry is having the confidence to let the power of the rig pull you into the turn and onto your toes, rather than pulling back against it. If it's done correctly- by pulling hard on your back hand and suddenly easing off with your front hand, so the rig literally pulls you forwards over your front knee, then despite what you might fear, you won't be

catapulted, quite the opposite- you'll find the rig goes completely light and easier to manage.

Extending the front arm suddenly rather than progressively helps get through this fearsome stage and gets your rig forwards where it should be.

ENTRY SUMMARY

To increase Downforce/control -

Sheet in and bend front knee.

Tip rig forwards until your front hand is over the mast foot. Pull down into the boom.



Before your first real gybe attempts it's great practise to just do some radical foot steering to get used to the approach and entry. You're much less likely to wipe out, so you'll have more chances to get it right.

Concentrate on letting the rig pull you forwards over your board into the turn.

Another great tip that works wonders for people who aren't sheeting in enough, is to look behind you at your wake during the approach and entry (over your arms not over your back), as this twists your body round leaning the mast into the turn and sheeting in.

Once you've felt the benefits of this tip though, stop doing it- it's really only useful to demonstrate the importance of sheeting in by twisting the upper body. Once you've felt it, you should be able to achieve the same effect without having to look behind you.

Guy Cribb INTUITION

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