

TECHNIQUE BY GUY CRIBB

INTUITION SPEED/SLALOM SERIES

PHOTOS BY: MARK KASPROWICZ

GOT LAID RECENTLY?

GYBING, THE LAY-DOWN GYBE AND WHAT I LEARNED ON HOLIDAY.

I spend most of my life analysing people's windsurfing to identify the individual changes they could make to improve their skills. I've seen a million different mistakes and have delivered an equal number of solutions for the easiest progression. Of course every individual case is unique but solutions are often generic, for example, I recently discovered that a tip I often use for total newcomers to carve gybing, I needed to apply to my own racing gybes!

Yes, in the quest to develop my coaching and windsurfing there is always room to improve, and a very close look was needed at my gybes. It was an evening in Dahab when my guests were enjoying a sunset beer and I had a rare moment of windsurfing on my own in an empty bay. The water was totally flat and the wind was honking. I was stacked on my slalom gear and cranking gybe after gybe. Everything was in place, the testing ground was perfect with zero variables (or excuses.) I was under my own microscope.

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"There is a small round coral reef in Dahab that by good fortune was the centre of my turn (it's that brown thing underwater.)

See how for the first 90 degrees of the carve gybe (basically until the board is pointing directly downwind) my hips, shoulders, board and boom / rig are always facing the centre of the turn, as though I was turning on a roundabout. So in the moment that my board points directly downwind, my sail is still in line with it."



The Lay-down Gybe or Racing Gybe

A racing carve gybe is basically a normal carve gybe, but has these slight differences-

- During a race you gybe when you have to, not when you want to, so regardless of the conditions, you have to go for it, and often have to change the shape of your turn to avoid traffic or find a faster line.
- Chances are you are significantly overpowered, far more overpowered than any normal windsurfer will ever experience, and going much faster than most.
- Whatever happens around your gybe, you've got to come out planing at all costs.
- A clear visual difference between the racing gybe and a normal gybe is that we lay our rigs right down, hence the nick-name of a 'lay-down gybe.' This is basically because we're so overpowered we have to suddenly drop the rig down to ditch all the power giving us some hope of control around the corner.

So that's four differences, however there are at least one hundred similarities I could list. A normal gybe for an intermediate windsurfer is virtually identical to an expert, regardless of appearances (as you'll find in INTuition's Gybing and Core Skills DVD.) So when I examined my own gybes I guess it should be no surprise that I discovered two of the three main areas I needed to develop, were two of the most common tips I give my intermediate guests during their first carve gybe attempts.

Favourite Tack

Everybody has a favourite tack, gybe, ride, handwriting, and I am no different, but working out what the difference was between my two gybes was interesting.

For the record I am goofy foot (I like to surf/ride with my right foot forwards) and I am right handed/ right footed. My spine is a twisted mess bent to the left.

I feel like I am 100 times better wave riding with my right foot forwards, but in reality I am probably only fractionally better. As I have done an equal number of gybes on

both tacks in my life frankly I have never had a preferred gybe for as far back as I can remember. But freestyling I could originally only Vulcan on starboard tack and had learnt to spock and grubby on this tack before I could even imagine, let alone do, a Vulcan on port tack. However after working it out, I am now better at some spock/ freestyle moves on port tack.... So persevere! We're all different and we all encounter mental hindrances to our physical progression, but ultimately we are able bodied enough to conquer them. Often the best thing to do is just go for it!

The Difference between my gybes

I noticed on starboard tack I would look through my sail (or even behind my sail) on the entry, whereas on port tack I would always be looking in front of my mast. This was just habit, not by design.

I realised that on port tack I was more prone to losing control of the rig by 'sheeting out' on the entry, than I was on starboard tack.

Given a controlled entry though on port tack, my exits were slightly faster than on starboard.

So what was going on?

The mistake so many freeride windsurfers make going into their gybes is the fact they 'sheet out' / extend the back arm, which loses mast foot pressure and control of the board, which is like losing the front wheel of your bike going round a corner. It's basically game over. There are a number of reasons for this-

- Pulling in with the front hand/ bending front arm too much.
- Not having back hand far enough back to have the leverage to 'sheet in'
- Not enough downhaul making the leech too tight/ sail too powerful to 'sheet in'

Or, the mistake I was making

- Twisting your body to face forwards, rather than twisting it to face the centre of the turn/gybe.

If you are looking forwards, as I was around the front of my mast on my worse gybes, the chances are your body is facing forwards. Therefore the sail will naturally be more sheeted out. Whereas if you look behind you, or as a minimum look into the centre of the turn, then

the sail will naturally be sheeted in more.

If you concentrate on twisting your hips to face into the turn, rather than forwards, this also helps you sheet in.

The tip I often give my guests who are in most dire need of sheeting in more on the entry to the gybe, is to look behind at your wake. Yes, directly behind you over your back shoulder. This extreme position ensures you will sheet in more. I only advise my guests to apply this tip for two or three gybe attempts just so they feel the benefits of sheeting in more, once they realise its effect they can start looking in safer directions but still sheet in more using their upper body, arms and hips.

How I Improved

I started concentrating on using my hips more to face into the turn on my port tack gybes, rather than allowing them to face forwards. This all comes from sailing a bit more Hip To Be Square (see previous Guy Cribb INTuition stance feature) which is basically having your hips parallel with the centre line of the board rather than twisted to face forwards.

I also tried making sure I let my front arm extend and drop the rig into the turn more, by rolling my shoulders round to face into the turn.

The improvement was immediately apparent and after some practise became more INTuitive even for a very old dog like me. Nik Baker commented how good my gybes were at the British Slalom Champs that I won shortly after tweaking these turns. Plug plug!

How you can improve your gybes

Intermediates, advanced and even 'expert' windsurfers could try all three of these following skills, one at a time-

- Looking at your wake as you enter the gybe (only try this a few times)
- Rolling your shoulders round trying to point your front shoulder into the centre of turn
- Turn your hips to face the centre of the gybe (if you have a harness hook or other protrusion, point this at the centre of the gybe.)

Try these tips one at a time next time you go sailing. Look, roll, turn. I hope you find some wind soon! I will be in Greece running two back-to-back INTuition coaching camps for guests from all over the world in early July (both fully booked with waiting lists) but will be back in the UK running some specialist gybing and slalom/ stance/ speed courses in August. Please email me if you'd like to quickly improve this summer- guycribb.com



Guy Cribb INTuition

Here's Guy losing control of his rig on a port tack gybe, before he took some of his own medicine and improved his controlled entry.

Guy Cribb INTuition's highly analytical approach has developed from Cribby's extensive work in windsurfing R&D, his professional windsurfing background, and by analysing his own windsurfing, smashing it to pieces to sift through all the rubble to find common genetic make ups of different moves. This is how INTuition's legendary Core Skills were developed, the very blue-print of our sport featured in the highest acclaimed INTuition's Gybing and Core Skills DVD. More on what Guy learnt on holiday next month. www.guycribb.com Copyright Guy Cribb 2010