

INTUITION: GYBING THE APPROACH

Words & Photos: Guy Cribb INTuition

When I'm coaching, I can tell in the first few milliseconds of my guests' gybes whether they're going to make it or not. A combination of coaching experience and knowing the guest's level is vital, but what I'm basically looking at is their commitment and control. If they're looking fast and aggressive, low down and well sheeted in, then they're in business. But like so many, if they're standing too upright, slowing down or sheeting out, it's going to be game over within the next few seconds- not necessarily on their approach, but certainly soon after.

On your approach you need to get everything completely under control with good stance and tuning, so you can comfortably deal with the potentially unsettling actions of unhooking and moving your back foot as you enter the gybe.

This feature covers the very basics of getting control, and a routine for the approach, so you can enter the gybe confidently and safely, rather than thinking the words 'carve gybe' and instantly wiping out. For much more info, check out the accompanying INTuition Gybing DVD at www.guycribb.com.



THE INTUITION APPROACH

Improve your comfort and control on the approach by crouching down into your harness, and pushing your ass out-increasing pressure in the harness lines and reducing the strain in your arms. Check out the INTuition Pro Technique series for much more info on stance and tuning which will help your approach to gybing tremendously-
www.guycribb.com/technique/magazine articles.

Yes, pushing your ass out, and bringing your shoulders in puts more weight into your harness. Do not try to lean your shoulders back on the approach as that increases weight into your arms. (Long story, but the old school teaching says shoulders back, INTuition says ass out.)

Using a Cribb Sheet to set your kit up greatly improves your control too. Setting up your harness lines using the Cribb Sheet makes a huge difference to the approach to the gybe, because with the lines in the correct position, it is easy to move your back hand back (a vital action) without automatically sheeting out, which is so often the case if your lines are too far forwards.

Assuming your stance and tuning is pretty cool, here's how to approach the gybe. There are (unfortunately) seven basic actions to complete on the approach to your gybe.

Looking behind you to make sure you're not about to turn into someone.

Ass- increasing weight into your harness.

Turn downwind.

Back hand back.

Unhook.

Tip the rig forwards.

Move your back foot onto the downwind rail.

You might remember this lot by using the extremely unfortunate acronym-

LAD BUT F

Look

Ass

Downwind

Back hand back

Unhook

Tip rig forwards

Foot

But then again you'll probably forget all this with spray in your face at 30 mph hurtling towards the beach. Those of you who have the Gybing DVD, or have joined me on my INTuition courses, will note I've not used this acronym before. However, these mental reminders may just be the detail you need for your gybes. LAD BUT F. Hmmm.

The next section of this article will explain each of these actions, before reciting to a more experienced audience on the final page, on how to blend this lot together into one flowing movement, in a split second, rather than the more drawn out approach intermediates need to realistically remember and accomplish these actions.



L- LOOK BEHIND YOU

I was recently running a wave sailing course in Cornwall when a certain 'pro' UK windsurfer gybed right into one of my guests, damaging some of his kit and nearly causing injury. Even at his level, always look behind you before you gybe, not just to avoid collision, but also because this sets your body up for a good turn. From dancers to formula one drivers, looking ahead of a turn is good advice, and in a gybing situation, looking behind you on the approach (over your back shoulder) is basically looking ahead of the turn, since you're aiming for a 180 degree corner. This action also helps you sheet the sail in better.



A- ASS

Push your ass out by crouching down into your harness, moving your shoulders inboard and straightening your legs outwards, increasing weight into your harness and taking it off your arms, enabling you to move your back hand back in a moment.



D- DOWNWIND

Bear off downwind by tipping the mast forwards and into the turn, pulling you forwards onto your front foot, and pressing hard through your toes, banking the board slightly to turn downwind.



B- BACK HAND BACK

With your weight totally in your harness, not in your arms, you can freely move your back hand right back on the approach. Having your back hand right back is vital to gybe for the following reasons-

-Increases leverage over the boom, the only way to physically be strong enough to handle the surge of power entering the gybe.

-Helps tip the rig forwards and into the turn.

-Encourages you to turn around your back hand, which is now basically in the centre of the turn (a bit like a downhill skier might turn around his inside arm)

You may well have heard this 'move your back hand back' tip before- it's standard gybing practise, and it's imperative, but check out the Advanced Gybing tips on the last page for more ways of making this work for you.



U- UNHOOK

Unhooking should be subtle avoiding standing up or sheeting out which would unsettle your board and loose control, so immediately before and after unhooking, concentrate on getting low.

Point your elbows down

Sink down into your harness

Use the tiniest pelvic thrust to unhook

And get low again.

Silly things like your harness hook flapping around, or your boom front end not tight enough will upset this action, and since it should be such a minimal movement of body and rig, sort out these fine tuning tips for better results.



T- TIP RIG FORWARDS

As you unhook, tip the rig forwards by extending your front arm. This action is for three seriously major reasons.

1- Tipping the rig forwards gets it more upright above the board, which naturally increases Downforce on to the mast foot, significantly increasing board control. (www.guycribb.com/technique/downforce)

2- As the rig goes forwards your body weight will increase onto your front foot, enabling you to move your back foot more freely in a moment.

3- Extending your front arm into the turn has the same effect on the angle of the rig as sheeting in with your back hand, but it's physically much easier to extend a front arm, than it is to pull in with the back arm. Thus making this area of the gybe easier. (That said, you still need to keep sheeted in with your back hand too.)



F- MOVE BACK FOOT

Take your back foot from the back strap and place it on the downwind rail, right by the back strap, right over on the far rail. Any other back foot position is very likely to mess up your gybe for a whole host of reasons.

MOST COMMON MISTAKES

POOR STANCE

Standing too upright on the approach is a massive problem with gybing, mostly because it leaves you too upright to gybe, but also because it's slower. I have met people battling away with gybes for years, and improving their gybe was largely just about sorting out their stance on the approach. Get lower, and push your ASS out!

SHORT LINES/ SEAT HARNESS

Short lines and seat harnesses pull your hips inboard, forcing you to have straight legs as you enter the gybe. Longer lines allow you to sail in a more crouched position, so even before you unhook, you're already low down ready for action. All the world's best windsurfers currently use lines between 26 and 30 inches, and to help you learn to gybe, you should too.

SLOWING DOWN

If you slow down the sail is much harder to sheet in, than if you're going at full speed. Sail faster, to make the rig feel lighter.

NO DOWNHAUL

If your sail doesn't have enough downhaul they'll be too much power to control. More downhaul lets the leech of your sail to twist off and ditch the power, making it easier to sheet in.

HARNESS LINES TOO FAR FORWARDS

If your lines are too far forwards there'll be too much power pulling on your back hand to move it back, so you won't be able to sheet in properly.

Rig raking back due to a bent front arm and straightening front leg, bad back foot position and sheeting out all make this gybe about to go very wrong.



Here's four sailors all about to stack it. All are very experienced in footstraps and can get round the occasional gybe in easier conditions. However this is a force 6-7 in Dahab last June, and they're maxed on 4.7m ish sails, so it's all getting a bit hairy.



Each of them have their more subtle individual reasons why it's going wrong, but all of them are leaning back, rather than forwards over their front leg, and are bending their front arm, rather than extending it. A bent front arm will naturally cause the sail to sheet out, which in turn loses downforce so the board starts having a mind of it's own, bouncing out of control. With their weight leaning back, it's game over in a split second.



Although this shot is from another day, in smoother water and less powered up, it helps to show the difference leaning forwards into the turn makes, increasing the waterline of the board and holding it into the water, rather than letting it rear up and doing a wheely.

ADVANCED GYBING



Elbows pointing down to unhook



Sheeting in to power up rig, to pull you forwards over the board.



Bending front knees to get over the board



Perfect back foot placement



Extending front arm forwards and into the turn



To get back hand as far back as possible

Advanced windsurfers can unhook earlier and go straight into the gybe, maintaining the control intermediates could only get with a drawn out approach.

Unhook, radically extend your front arm (Tipping the rig into the turn) and as the rig goes forwards / into the turn, slide your back hand right back down the boom, as far as you can reach. If you think about it, extending the rig forwards with your front hand will let you reach much further back with your back hand.

Whilst this is going on with the rig, bending your front knee will bring your weight in over the board, and best of all, take all the weight off your back foot so you can move it immediately. This is how the pro's gybe- all in one movement with the key point being radically extending your front arm into the turn.

Nik Baker (king of gybing- multi times World Indoor Champion) and Guy Cribb (12 x British Champion /

knows a thing or two about gybing) swap kit for this shoot but clearly have identical gybing technique. They are not alone, all the world's best windsurfer's gybe like this. Try doing it differently and although it might work some of the time, you're asking for trouble when the going gets tough.

SUMMARY-

Whether it's your first ever gybe attempt, or you're trying to improve your already good gybes, the routine and key points are much the same for the approach, only they happen a lot faster, and at the same time if you're more experienced.

Get your approach more under control, and go for a very wide arc (see last month's feature or the DVD) and you'll have much more time to deal with the rest of the gybe.

Ass. Full speed. Weight forwards. Wide arc. Extend front arm. And something about LAD BUT F.

GUY CRIBB INTUITION

Windsurfing coaching exclusively designed and delivered by Guy Cribb, professional windsurfer and 12 x British Champion.

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