



# get yourself connected

BY GUY CRIBB



Pics by Anna Edwards, Thorsten Indra and Whitey

**None of my guests can ever believe just how big my footstraps are, but it's not that surprising with size 12-13 feet. However, big straps aren't just for big feet.**

**When I use Ricardo's, Swifty's or Nik's boards, who all have size 9-10 feet, their straps are just as big.** Don't worry, I'm not about to say we should all have the same footstrap sizes! But I am going to explain how big they should be and where to put them, whether you're a complete beginner or an aspiring wave or freestyle sailor, once again using a bit of help from the world's best windsurfers in this **INTuition Pro Technique** series.

## SIZE MATTERS

It is far more common to make the mistake of having your footstraps too tight rather than too loose, often assuming that a tighter strap will secure you to your board better, (which is rarely the case.)

As a rule, the people making this mistake most often are those learning how to use the footstraps, and the more experienced windsurfers going for their first jumps, but it can happen to anyone.

Bigger footstraps are easier to get in and out of, and they naturally get you more over the middle of the board. These characteristics help footstrapping, gybing, jumping, freestyling and wave sailing ... so whoever you are, start thinking big.

As a general tip for the intermediate windsurfer, you should wear your footstraps like your flip flops – so that you can see all of your toes clearly. They are 'foot-straps' after all, not 'toe-straps.'

## A TIGHT FIT?

Racers have the tightest footstraps due to the immense pressure through their legs, which slowly slides their feet deeper and deeper into their straps during the length of a reach. With so much at stake, they don't want to lose that split second advantage, or slow down, or lose control to re-adjust their feet, so they start with them wedged right in there. This doesn't help gybing at all, but neither does using a 10.0m fully camber induced sail, and that doesn't bother them either! Their footstraps often don't even allow the little toe out into daylight!

At the other end of the scale are wave sailors, whose footstraps are so baggy they literally come up to their ankles! This is mostly so they can get their weight right over the centre of the board for better wave riding and improved in-flight control. Next time you're watching a professional wave sailor in action on video, see if you can spot how deep they wedge their feet into the straps before a bottom turn, ensuring ultimate power into their carve.

This powerful turn comes from being able to bank the board over more, partly by being so deep in the straps (positioned on the centre line of the board) so half their feet are literally on the opposite side of the board, but also because if your feet are this deep, when you point your knees into the turn naturally bending your ankles, the top of your feet lifts against the straps and helps bank the board over.

If you only have your toes in the front strap however, when your ankles bend, your heel rises but your foot doesn't help to bank the board over.

Back on earth, all this waffle means bigger footstraps might help your carve gybing.

Just like riding a wave, turning a snowboard, skateboard, or carving a surf board, in an ideal world your front heel would remain in contact with the board, even when 100% of your weight was on your toes / ball of your foot (you don't see surfers on tip-toes).

When you're carve gybing your front heel tends to lift off the board a bit and there's two reasons for this, one good, and one bad...



# good gybe

The good one is because you are pulling down so hard into the boom, maximising the Downforce / mast foot pressure, to keep the board under control, that your front heel naturally rises because you're almost doing a kind of pull up, see pic.

More Info at:  
[guycribb.com/  
technique/downforce](http://guycribb.com/technique/downforce)



# bad gybe

The bad reason is because your footstrap is too tight. In this situation, as you bend your knees into the turn your heel naturally rises and rather than lifting against the footstrap banking the board over, all that happens is your heel lifts up, nothing else.



## LETS TWIST AGAIN!

Halfway round your gybe you need to 'twist' from one side of the board to the other, slipping your front foot out of the strap and across the other side of the board.

This is also easier with a bigger front footstrap. Much more reading on this at:  
[guycribb.com/technique /The Twist](http://guycribb.com/technique/TheTwist)





## IN OR OUT?

### OUT – FOOTSTRAPS CLOSEST TO THE RAIL

Outboard footstraps are harder to get into, because by putting too much weight on your front foot so close to the edge of the board, you run a high risk of tipping the board over and swerving into the wind. For this reason, the outboard straps are only for the experienced footstrap user.

The outboard straps give you more leverage over the board – especially important if you're using a big fin, which creates so much lift it gives the board a mind of its own. If your fin is over 37cm, I would class it as a big fin, suitable for rigs over 7.0m and/or the experienced windsurfer. Large freeride boards are usually supplied with large fins suitable for sails >7.5m; however if you're an intermediate windsurfer, developing your stance or footstrapping skills, the last thing you need is a fin over 37cm – it will make the board swerve off course and become uncontrollable more easily. (I quickly digress, but if this is your kit set-up, this is what I recommend: ditch the massive fin supplied with your board and buy a 34-37cm ish fin instead – much more suitable for the 5.5-7.0m sail you will be using whilst learning to use straps.)

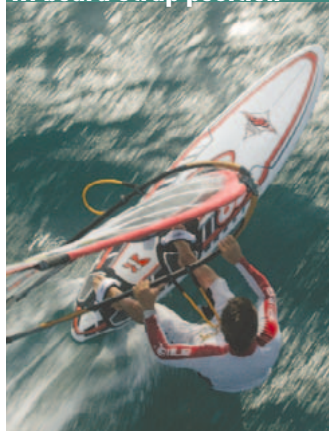
Back to the strap position. If you're an experienced windsurfer with a big fin or big sail, travelling at speed, the outboard straps give you improved control in a straight line.

The outboard position isn't as good for gybing, but if you're good enough to use them in a straight line, then there are other factors that will improve your gybing way more than moving your footstraps inboard. So with big rigs and fins, use the outboard straps.

### OUT board strap position



### IN board strap position



### IN – FOOTSTRAPS CLOSEST TO THE CENTRE LINE

The inboard footstrap positions naturally put your body more over the centre line of the board, and thus often adopting a more upright posture suitable for sailing with less power in your rig, like wave sailing, freestyling or improving.

Being more over the centre of the board with inboard straps is better for control in mid-air or cornering, be it gybing or wave riding.

It's also much better for heavy footed improvers developing their footstrapping skills, where a few stomps here and there won't have as much effect on tipping the board over and swerving into the wind as the outboard position would have. If you're learning to use the footstraps, it's vital you use the inboard footstrap settings, and ideally a single back footstrap.

In these shots I'm on a very small (86L) Super-X board, in a racing discipline that combines speed, control, acceleration, gybing, jumping, looping and freestyling – the majority of which necessitate inboard footstraps, despite the slight loss of control at speed.

Note: You should never combine inboard front straps and outboard back straps. Also, I wouldn't recommend outboard front straps and inboard back straps, although this isn't as critical.

### GENERAL

As a general rule in windsurfing stance when you're fully planing, wherever your footstraps are, your front toes should be curled up lifting against the front strap, and your back toes pushing down into the tail of the board to trim it flat.

(Although when you're accelerating you push down on your front toes as you move the rig and your weight forwards.)

## WHICH HOLE?

### FRONT FOOTSTRAPS

Pro sailors around the world for wave and freestyle use the front hole for the front footstraps, getting them slightly further forwards on the board for acceleration and control in their moves. I would recommend the same for learners.

For everyone else, generally speaking, the second hole back from the front is the position most of the boards are tested on, and therefore this is generally the optimum position.

### BACK FOOTSTRAP(S)

As a general rule, the better you are, the further back your back footstrap should be (only expert freestylers don't obey this theory as they spend so much time sliding in reverse and 'popping' and thus often use the back strap quite far forwards). Most boards are tested with the strap position one hole from the back.

All this info can be found on Cribb Sheets at: [www.guycrabb.com/shop/Cribb\\_Sheets](http://www.guycrabb.com/shop/Cribb_Sheets)

If you're over 6'2", try a slightly wider spread. If you're under 5'6" try a slightly narrower spread, in both cases adjusting both footstraps.



## [ JUMPING ]



Correct jumping technique and correct back strap size



At first glance this might look like a controlled jump, but it's not. My back foot is clinging on by a patch of dead skin and a few wonky shaped toes, far from ideal for developing your jumping technique, let alone going for bigger moves, because I'm in the outboard footstraps.

## JUMPING

If you're learning to jump you need to keep your feet firmly in the footstraps. Unfortunately this often makes people tighten them up, which actually gives you less contact with your board than you think, and a lot less in-flight control!

If you are already jumping and sometimes find in mid-air the board suddenly smashes down to earth (water) this is likely to be because the wind blew onto the deck, blowing the board downwards, rather than blowing underneath, allowing the board to soar.

There are a number of reasons for the wind to suddenly hit the deck, but one of the most likely ones is your straps are too tight. If they're too tight, you can't push down into your toes and tilt the bottom of the board to the wind. This is also a natural hazard of jumping with outboard straps.

A larger back footstrap allows your toes to press down, keeping the underside of the board facing the wind, and therefore soaring.

Try shoving your foot deep into a seemingly oversized strap and lift the board as I'm doing in the top left pic on this page, lifting the board underneath your ass, but also pressing down / pointing your toes to turn the board on its side.



Even on the smallest jumps, try practising pulling the tail of the board underneath your ass, pointing your back toes downwards to turn the board completely on its side. Try this now sat on your chair, pointing your back toes straight down and dragging your foot under your arse



For any advanced jumps whatsoever, from freestyling to looping, big straps are crucial!





Ricardo's size 10 foot in his massive footstrap



When Ricardo's laying down the law like this, his feet are often almost completely on their sides, necessitating giant footstraps. If you're worried about losing your board jumping, take a leaf out of Ricardo's book and make your straps bigger, not tighter!



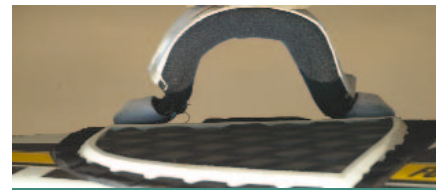
Bigger straps are also vital for ditching your kit when you realise you're about to land on someone, the very thought going through Jason's head right now.

### INTUITION PRO TECHNIQUE

Ricardo Campello, three times and current World Freestyle Champion uses massive footstraps – the same size as my size 13 plates demand, even though he's only a size 10.

He might be quite a different level to you, and you might not have size 13 feet like me, but he'd recommend you try some bigger footstraps next time you go sailing.

Jason Polakow, many times World Wave Champion uses massive footstraps. This is not just because his feet are a huge mangled bony medical feat (pun intended), but because he likes them massive, giving him way more control over his board, whether he's bottom turning under a mast high wave, or if he's in mid-loop a mast length above the wave.



Jason's footstrap, later

## Get yourself connected; use your INTuition

### Guy Cribb

- 12 x British Windsurfing Champion
- 15 years of coaching from beginners to British teams
- Windsurf Magazine technique guru

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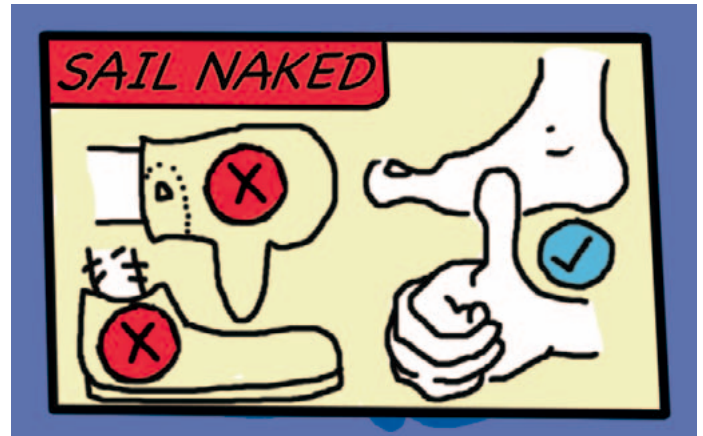


## BAREFOOT VS BOOTIES?

Simple answer here – none of the world's top windsurfers ever wear boots (unless it's absolutely freezing or horrifically sharp rocks (and even then 99% of them wouldn't)) for four main reasons:

Just like your hands, there are loads of senses in your feet, giving them essential feedback from the board and footstraps. Whether beginner or expert, this feedback is crucial. When I'm coaching my guests into footstraps, or around gybes, even if they have the world's softest feet, there is a stage where they've got to sail barefoot, even if it's only for ten minutes. Whoever they are, they much prefer it and make a huge leap up their learning curve at this carefully timed stage, even if they then go back to boots.

In the heat of the moment midway around a dangerous trick or jump, top sailors need to be able to quickly ditch their board in case it's all going wrong. The grip of rubber straps on rubber boots is too risky in this split second timing, and I for one have only hurt my ankles wearing boots in



Sail naked for extra sensitivity



Sail naked for a smoother ride

the darkest days of an Atlantic winter when my foot got stuck in a strap trying to ditch my board. Admittedly, pro windsurfers feet are up to the task of stumbling over reefs, rocks, shingle and deck grip – but at sandy venues yours should be too. Plus, booties are a bad look, especially with shorts!

That said, if your board is covered in sun cream then boots might be the only option to evade the ice rink, in which case split toe boots are the most sensitive and therefore the best. Also, the thinner the sole the better!

## SUMMARY

Wear your footstraps like your flip flops, so you can see all your toes clearly, unless you're learning, or an expert jumping, wave sailing or freestyling, in which case wear them baggy!



Keith Atkinson, British Formula Racing Champion's front footstrap yesterday



Nik Baker, PWA superstar's Super X footstrap yesterday

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INTuition: hope is not a strategy!

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