

Teaching Surf Instructors to Teach



National Surf Schools and Instructors Association Instructors and Coaches Training Manual



Beach Instructional Techniques - Surfing Part 5A

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Effectiveness as a Surf Instructor

To develop an understanding of learning principles and to be able to facilitate such learning in a surf student is a formidable task that requires not only a well-experienced facilitator/instructor, but the delivery of sophisticated training and an appropriately guided experience. This is the primary instructor training responsibility of the NSSIA. However, this is also a difficult task in the current environment where other certification organizations seem to be moving towards official qualification of hard-skill competencies for their certified instructors.

The NSSIA is committed to training instructors so that they develop insight into themselves; they can recognize and avoid the challenges of instructing; and once their technical and safety skills are developed, they will continue the training focused on improving the surf instructors' educational effectiveness.

Basic Guide for Surf Instruction

This section provides a basic guide for instructors to follow during their lesson and/or camp program. It is sequenced to address each focus area of instruction as it would proceed on the beach. However, you don't need to follow the suggestions herein in the same order but you must keep focused. In addition to trying to keep the student to instructor ration at 4-1 or less (smaller ratios for more difficult conditions), try to match student size to their best board fit. A good rule of thumb is 8' fun shape boards for students 125 pounds or less, and 9'+ longboards for larger and older surfers. Note also that for students 7 years and younger, you need to stay very close and a larger board might be best for both of you to use together.



Remember, surfing is fun if you have fun goals. When final outcome goals are mainly "fun" it is often OK to just present the basic surfing instruction and "see how it goes", making changes during the instruction as you see fit. However, surfing is not easy to learn and during the learning process it might not be so much fun. When you have learning goals: if the goals are mainly "learning and development", then you have an entirely different problem. In the early learning environment, a successful teaching approach requires a deeper understanding of experiential learning principles and facilitation skills.

Checking In

Checking in is easy but also is the time to protect yourself and your school. A significant item to complete before your lesson actually starts is to have each student sign a liability waiver. This document provides some legal protection for both the instructor and school if a student happens to injure himself or herself through no fault of the instructor. If the student is under 21 years old, have their parents sign for them. A sample liability waiver release is provided below. Additional details on waivers are included in the business section of this course.

I the undersigned, recognize that surfing is an extreme sport and that participants can and do get injured on occasion. Additionally, I specifically, fully and forever waive and release the _____ Surf School, its officers, instructors, and staff from any and all liability and claims for damages I may sustain, or I may cause others to sustain, as a result of my participation in lessons. I further agree to accept all responsibility for my personal actions and my behavior that may cause injury to other students or surfers in the water, and I agree to obey safety and surf etiquette as described to me by my instructor.

Getting Acquainted with Students

In their teaching role, be it private or group lessons, surf instructors must be friends, educators and facilitators. Create a non-threatening environment: encourage a non-threatening social environment in which everyone feels welcome to participate. Consider using warm-ups, icebreakers, and get-to-know-each-other activities (each person states their name and where they are from for the group) before the actual lesson starts. It has been shown that students who experience social support during a program learn quicker.

Warm-Ups

The need for formal warm-ups prior to a lesson is extremely important. Most states have laws requiring an instructor to warm-up anyone they are coaching or training prior to their physical participation in a strenuous exercise or competition. Luckily, not many folks know the law exists, but as an instructor, you absolutely must be aware of it and ensure you are protected. When the student signs in, while you are getting acquainted, ask them to stretch out and say to them that they need to be loose before the training starts. A sample of suggested warm-up exercises for all age groups is provided in another chapter of this manual.

The NSSIA requires incorporating back stretching and trunk rotations as part of the warm-up. Also during that time, instructors are required to inform their adult students of the symptoms of Surfers Myelopathy. **You are required to inform students to let you know immediately if: they experience any of these symptoms.**

- Low back pain or numbness Feel legs are weak
- Can't urinate well
- Over the next hour or so, they have varying degrees of weakness Finally, they can't walk



Learning Your Students' Names

Learning names is one of the hardest skills a surf instructor needs to master. Being able to call out to your students by name in the noisy surf will greatly help to improve your ability to teach. If your class has more than four students, this problem may seem at best challenging and at worst, impossible.

There are numerous techniques available to help in memorizing names and associated faces. Some methods work better for smaller groups, while others may be used with large classes. Finding the

method that works best for you is a matter of individual preference. Here are some suggestions for surf instructors modeled after published University Nebraska teaching guidelines.

1. Have students give their name each time before they speak during warm-ups and while on the beach prior to paddling out. This technique should be continued until everyone (instructor and the students) feels they know the group in the water by name.
2. Use students' names as often as possible, but as a minimum, four times before class starts.
3. Have a short quiz at the beginning of class over students' names.
4. For camps, spend some time during the first day of a lesson taking snapshots of all of your students plus a group picture. Take the time to write the student's name with each picture on a list and also the order on the group pictures.
5. Have each student introduce him or herself by name and tell a little about themselves. The instructor should pick out a specific point about each student and then associate name, face and point. Information about the students' likes and dislikes, background, and goals in learning to surf are especially helpful memory hints.
6. While on the beach, have a list of each student's name and have the student's line up according to the order of the list. In the lineup, work your way around to each student in the same order as you had them line up on the beach.
7. Students with the same name as another person that the instructor knows can be associated with that person in the instructor's memory. This association is a good memory-jogging tool.
8. Some students "look" the way instructors picture a person with that name to look. (For example: "Jim" looks athletic, "Frank" seems very honest and forthright, etc.) Be careful of stereotyping, though.
9. If you hold a surf camp or have non-surf activities, have students sit in a circle. Each student must say his/her name and give one identifiable characteristic. The next person has to give his/her name and characteristic and repeat what the person before him/her said. And so on around the circle until the person "unfortunate" enough to be last (perhaps the instructor) must recall all of those before him/her.
10. Every so often give yourself a memory test by looking at each student and saying their name.
11. A tip for large classes: dividing the entire group into smaller "working groups" will help facilitate name recall. Classroom time can be used to give small projects for each group to work on. Only having to remember 6-8 people in a small group is much easier than looking at 25 faces at the same time.

If you forget a name, try some of these suggestions. It's also a good way to break the ice on the first day. Also, it's OK to not know everything! Instructors are human too, and they can make mistakes just like anyone else. Think positively! A good attitude will help anyone. Most instructors can remember 5-6 names at a time with practice. However, it starts to get hard after four. Keep reminding yourself that you CAN learn a few names at a time, and work to build on this skill.



Be honest with your students! Let them know that you may have trouble remembering who they are. Ask them to be patient. Most students will be happy to help you learn if you are up front with them from the beginning. The "personal" interaction with using the student's name and addressing their individual needs is a proven technique for

interpersonal relationships and is the strategy most effective in learning environments like those in surf lessons.

Physical Indications/Limitations

Once the instructor can address their students by name, it's time to address their safety needs. Safety is much more than just being able to identify when they become tired or frustrated; it's about a whole range of issues that can impact a lesson.

The instructor must first understand the physical limitations of their students, as well as knowing "instinctively" when the student doesn't have the potential to fully learn the sport. If the student is seriously out of shape, don't push them beyond their limits, such as put them in the lineup where they get hammered continuously by the wave movement. This is the quickest way for a student to give up and quit. If the student doesn't have balance, suggest that they go roller-skating before their next lesson. The balance they develop will impact their ability to stand on a board.

One word of caution: don't ever give up on a student, even if you determine they will never learn to surf. There is a philosophy at play here. If the person has a positive experience with surfing, they will remember it as fun and also that learning to do it is a worthwhile goal to achieve. This increases the respect for our sport among the general public as well as helps in recommendations to take lessons among the student's friends.

Clothing and Jewelry

A couple other things to check before the lesson starts are clothing and jewelry. Gold chains or bracelets look like lures to a large fish. Do not let any students in the water while they are wearing any jewelry. Also, wedding rings should be worn at the student's risk.

Shoes are another item. Unless you have sharp objects or reefs to deal with, don't let your students wear tennis shoes or reef shoes. Finally, don't let your students wear cotton T-shirts. Rashguards should be provided if the student doesn't have one.

Wetsuits

When the water or air is cold, wetsuits are a must for lessons. Wetsuits are available for all types of conditions.

- Reinforced Rash Vest – These are normally rubber reinforced nylon vests that provide primarily wind protection or a base layer of protection when the water or wind is cooler.
- Shorty – Primarily used in warmer climates or during the summer months, they are normally 3 mm thick and allow maximum flexibility while still providing warmth as the wind or water cools.
- Full Suit – Used for autumn or mild winter surfing. These wetsuits range from the 3 or 3/2 mm versions that are tight fitting and flexible plus easier to get on and off. When you get to the 5, 5/4/3 or 5/3 mm suits, you are wearing a suit designed for colder water. These suits are much stiffer and harder to put on and takeoff. You also usually need gloves, boots, and a hood to surf under these conditions. Some suits are offered with an attached hood.

What is the correct thickness and type of a wetsuit for comfortable wear? This is a difficult question with a great many variables. Some people stay warmer than others at the same temperature. The same is true of those wearing thin vest wet suits to stay warm while others want to be clad from head to toe in full suits.



The three major heat loss areas for a person are the inner thighs (near the femoral artery), under the arms (near brachial artery) and the head and neck. The latter two together account for less than 40% of heat loss as the head is proportionately higher because of the myriad of blood vessels it contains to keep the brain cool.

Suits that fit poorly under the arms and around the thighs may allow too much water to collect there, robbing you of your body heat. These are areas where plenty of insulation is called for in cold water and where proper fit is essential.

Water Temperature

Obviously, the colder the water is the greater the rate of heat loss will be by your student. Wetsuits work by using the bubbles in the neoprene as insulation, to varying degrees, against the colder water outside the suit, plus by trapping a thin layer of water in the suit. The water is warmed by your body and the suite creates a reduced flow around your body. That flow, along with heat lost through the neoprene, slowly dissipates your body's heat into the body of water you are surfing in. Since your body cannot heat the surrounding water, eventually you will chill. The colder it is, the faster you will chill.

Super cold water exposure will cause hypothermia.

Thickness and Fit of Suit

The colder the water, the thicker the suit needs to be for comfort. Increasing the thickness of your suit, either with a single suit or layers of neoprene, reduces your body's rate of heat loss. If an individual's metabolism is such that they chill faster than others similarly geared, consider providing a thicker suit and the additional thermal protection it offers.

Wetsuits are specified in terms of millimeters. The chart below provides an approximate equivalency.

1/16 inch	1.5 mm
5/64 inch	2 mm
3/32 inch	2.5 mm
1/8 inch	3 mm
3/16 inch	5 mm

In a warmer surf school environment, students usually only wear rashguards or vests. However, in cooler climates, shorty or full length wetsuits are commonly prescribed. Even in these climates, thinner wetsuits are normal for group lessons and slightly thicker wetsuits are normal for private lessons in fall or spring conditions. Very few schools, except in far northern or southern climates, provide boots and/or gloves.

A thicker wetsuit prevents chill and hypothermia. The chart below gives average recommendations for wetsuit thickness for water temperatures. The ranges overlap depending on individual body heat and comfort.

Temperature	Suit Thickness*
70°F - 80°F	1/16" (1.6mm) neoprene or lycra – protects from wind, plus sun block and rash protection
55°F - 69°F	1/8" (3mm) neoprene

Wetsuit Size Selection

Another common item instructors need to understand is the correct size to select for a student. Not every school can afford to bring a large selection of suits to the beach every time a small group of students are being taught. The chart below provides an approximate guide for suit selection. The best approach when unsure is to have available a small selection covering above and below for an individual that you are unsure of.

W	3'10"-4'4"	4'4"-4'10"	4'10"-5'4"	5'4"-5'8"	5'8"-5'10"	5'10"-6'	6'-6'2"	6'2"-6'4"
55-70 lbs.	MK							
70 – 85		LK						
84 – 100			XLK					
100-120				S				
120-140				MS				
140-160				LS	L	MT		
160-180				L	LT	XL	LT	
180-200				XL	XL	XXLS	XL	XLT
200-220				Custom	XXL	XXLT	XXLS	XXL
220+				Custom	Custom	Custom	Custom	Custom

First letter indicates size, second/last letter indicates short or tall.

W	5'-5'2"	5'2"-5'4"	5'4"-5'6"	5'6"-5'8"	5'8"-5'10"	5'10"-6'
85-100 lbs.	XS-S					
100-115		S-M				
115-130			M-L			
130-145				L-XL		
145-160					XL-XXL	
160-175						women's
175+	Custom	Custom	Custom	Custom	Custom	Custom

Wetsuit

Remember that many of those you teach might not have ever used a wetsuit before and have no idea on how to put one on. Often students put their suits on with the zipper to the front, only to struggle to take the suit off and turn it around when they realize their mistake.

Another problem comes up when a student gets a suit that is too small, or one that won't zip well due to a large chest or extended waistline. Still another problem is making sure the Velcro overlap at the top of the zipper is correctly latched so as not to cause a rash when the student is rubbed. The best way to avoid problems, particularly when you have larger classes is to have students use the buddy system. After the proper size wetsuits are distributed, have your students line up. Then, while standing in front of the group, show them how to put the suits on, zipper backwards. If you have full suits, have

them each put the suit completely on, but not zipped. Then have each turn one direction, with every other person lifting their arms in the air while their partner zips the suit up and correctly latches the top with the Velcro strap pointing downward. When suits are finished, have them turn and repeat the process for their partner. Its best if the instructor checks the latch of each student just to make sure there are no places where the Velcro will rub on the student’s neck.

Soft Top Boards

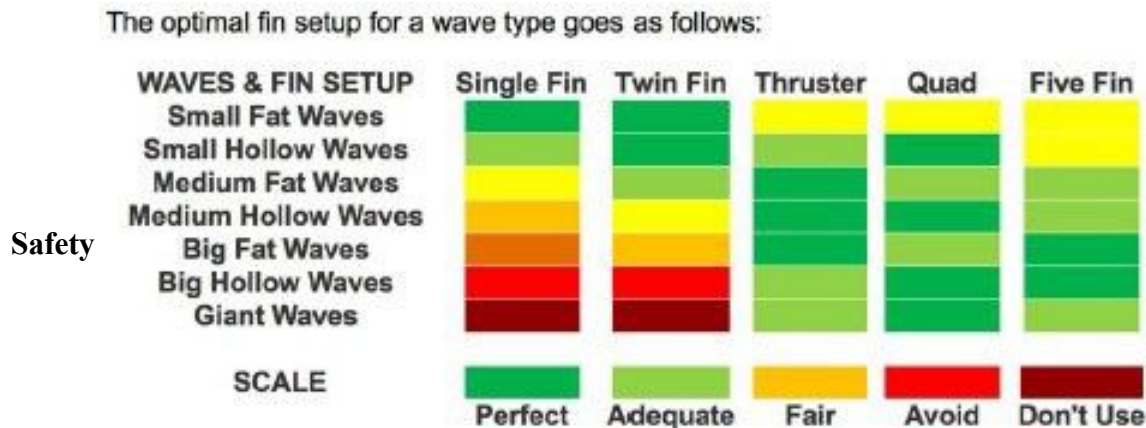
Soft top boards can cause a skin rash when used without a rashguard or wetsuit. However, using a soft top board has a number of advantages to a surf school.

They are rugged and don’t ding or shatter

- They are inexpensive and don’t need constant waxing
- Since they are less maneuverable, they are easier for a beginner to learn on
- While any lose board can hurt someone in the water, a lose soft top board will likely not injure someone else as badly
- Some students might have a harder time laying prone on a hard surface board

Fin Setup

Although you are dealing with beginners, you may get a question about fin setup on regular surfboards. Soft top boards usually come with three rubber fins. Advanced surfboards have one to 5 fins. The chart illustrates common setups.



Warm -Up Rules

Legal Issues During Lessons

- Liability Laws
 - Make students sign the waiver.
 - Tell students that surfing is an extreme sport and injuries are possible.
 - Provide safety training and have first-aid kit available.
- Sports Coaching Laws
 - Make surf you tell students to warm-up
- Sexual Harassment Laws
 - Tell students you may need to grab them on an ankle or leg to prevent injury (implied consent)
- Littering Laws
 - Bring a trash bag and tell students to leave only their footprints.

The actual lesson starts once the instructor has broken the ice, had all students sign a release waiver, and learned the student’s names. As a suggestion for the ice-breaker, the instructor might want to say a few words about the NSSIA and its goals and commitment to using proven training and instruction techniques during their lessons. Additionally, the instructor should mention about using sun screen and rash guards to protect the student’s skin. Remember also to repeat about letting the

instructor know if they experience back pain, numbness, or tingling in the feet. Many schools have sun block available for students in their first aid kits.

Next, it's time to carefully explain the surfing "rules and guidelines" clearly. Don't underestimate the importance of clear information in multiple formats to help the lesson run smoothly. The challenge is to present these rules in a nurturing, growth- promoting way, as opposed to the autocratic "Marm" style school. In other words, don't just state the rules; say why each is important to prevent injuries. Explaining the basic safety rules while still on the beach also addresses the liability issue. **The rules are touched on here and fully listed at the end of this section.**

On the Beach Training

The prime goal of an instructor is to teach the student to learn to surf on their own after one lesson. This means you are teaching them not only how to stand up on a wave, but also to pick a good wave, handle their board safely, and jump or paddle into a wave safely on their own.

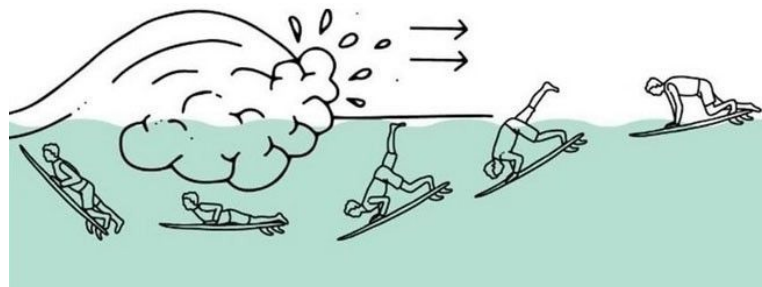


When beach training starts you need to get your students attention. Have the students look you in the eyes when talking to them, both on the beach and in the water. It seems to get their diverted attention and also help calm them if they're hyper. When possible, use appropriate humor during instruction for reinforcement.

The head instructor should always teach the on the beach portion of the class, including identifying any hazards in the water. After the initial instruction, assistant instructors should step in to help with such things as pop ups and specific questions.

There are a couple of other safety items that need to be explained before you go into the actual positions for surfing. One important item is how beginners can safely go through small waves. Provide examples to your students on the beach for turtle diving, turning turtle and pushing up through the "soup" or turning your back towards it. Also explain about:

- Shuffling their feet when walking in the water to avoid stepping on a sting ray, crab, other harmful critters, rocks or reef.
- Not getting their board sideways in front on an oncoming wave.
- Never falling off in front of their board but rather jumping backwards with their arms covering their head. This protects against having the board hit them. Explain about falling flat rather than stepping off or diving off. Falling flat on the surface avoids stepping directly on something sharp such as coral, a fish hook, or a sting ray; plus it prevents head injuries.
- When they do fall put their hands over their head and face. Keep them there when they come back up.
- Let the wave pass before they pull the board back using the leash.



When beginners have advanced to catching their own waves on shorter boards, they can learn Duck diving techniques.

Sand Drawings

A common instructor technique on the beach is the sand drawing. Sand drawings are simple and easily show how your students should position themselves away from each other and also their angles in relation to oncoming waves.



Sand Sculptures

Another important point to cover with a sand drawing is how you expect the students to arrange themselves for safety when they do enter the water. The



drawing helps explain how students should distribute themselves after each wave so as not to hit or get in the way of each other. You can also show what happens when one student crosses in front of another on a wave, or what happens when a student paddles out behind another when a wave hits. In both cases, make sure to emphasize the damage that can occur.

In this case, the instructor creates a wave from sand as shown below. Don't make a massive wave but rather something resembling what the student is actually looking at behind you. Using either small Popsicle sticks (one of the surfer's or instructors most important tools) or a small shell from the beach, describe positioning for the advancing peak and how to point the nose during various takeoffs.



The sand can also be used to show students the various angles that the waves come in so that they better understand that waves don't

come straight into the beach; each one has a little different direction and should always be paddled through perpendicular to the wave, not straight out to the ocean. You can do this by imitating a hurricane spiraling towards shore with the lines coming off of it to represent the swells approaching the coast. A straight line drawn in the sand separating the water and the land represents the coast. Next, form some sand bars right off the shore and form one of the hurricane lines into building swell. Show the student how when the swell hits something shallow on the bottom (approx. 1/3 the depth of the wave) it will make the swell jump up and form into a breaking wave. Watching the sand will help the student understand how waves form and break, and also help them note where the foam will reform (shallow) and recede (deep). This helps their understanding of how depth will affect the wave.



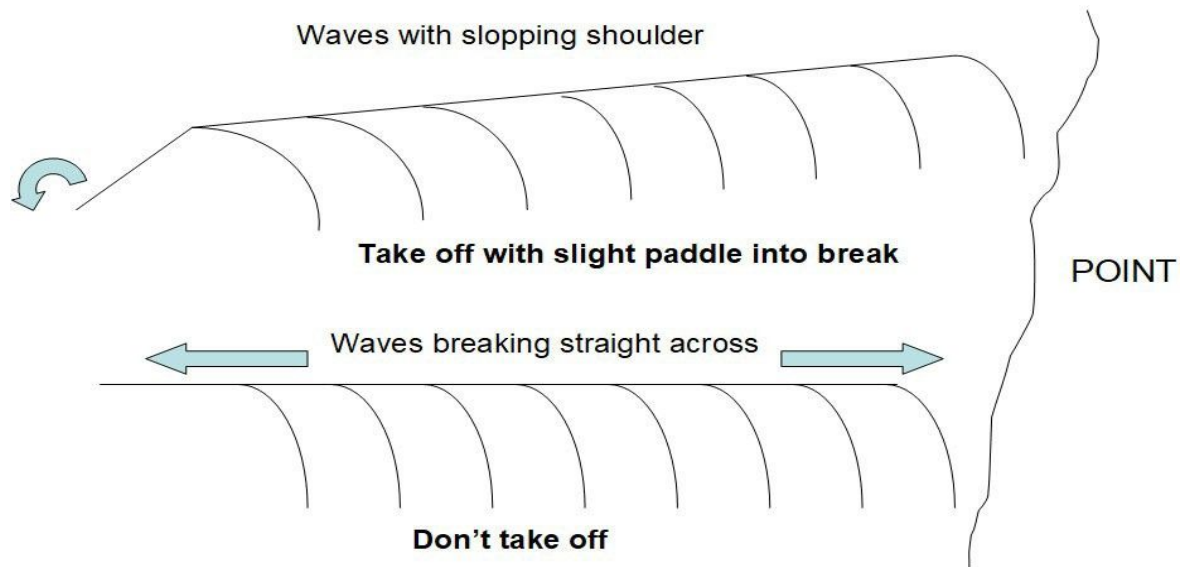
You can also have them look way out to sea where there are no waves breaking to prove your point. Keep in mind, however, mentioning that the slope of the sand causes the swell to drag and slow down. Just say the more drastic the change from deep to shallow, the bigger and more powerful the wave.

With a little practice, you can even roll the sand “wave” over with the Popsicle stick showing how the wave breaks and the board’s rocker pulls it out of a turn. This not only helps students learn when and when not to attempt a take off, but also keeps them from paddling over the falls when the first wave builds in the line-up.

The bottom line is that sand drawings and schulpters are the best way to visualize when teaching both young children and instructors.

If you are giving lessons at a point break, make sure you emphasize how to keep clear of point objects and also when a sloping wave rather than a non-sloping (straight) wave approaches.

NSSIA recommends not to give lessons at point breaks when other more advanced surfers are in the water.



Leashes

On some beaches it is mandatory to wear a leash and to use leashes when giving lessons. Both students and instructors should know the pros and cons of wearing one. Note that small children staying in shallow 1 ft or less water will not necessarily use a leash.

Wearing a Leash

- Board stays with you and doesn't hit someone else. On rocky beaches or reefs it protects your board from damage and keeps your board close so you don't need to walk and injure your feet (on the rocks/reef).
- You can feel the board tugging when you fall and have some idea where it is.
- If unconscious, others will see the board tomb stoning and know someone is under the water attached.
- If you get stuck in a rip tide your floating device will stay with you.

Not Wearing a Leash (**normally** not applicable for beginner lessons)



- Surfers learn to stay with their boards more readily, knowing they will have to swim in if they lose it.
- Surfers won't just throw their board aside or jump off.
- It encourages surfers to surf more precisely.
- Surfers will be more aware of their swimming ability.
- Surfers won't trip over their leash while getting up or surfing.
- It's may be easier to get away from the board when falling.

Cons of a Surf Leash (Not all applicable to beginners)

- False sense of security - it is not a life saving device. They can and do break.
- A leash can spring back and hit you.
- A leash might wrap around and seriously hurt you. Modern leashes are heavier so a smaller wrap is unlikely. Wrapping around your neck is also not likely when a beginner falls and is using an ankle attached normal size leash on a soft top 8 to 9 foot board. Boards move faster then the surfer when they fall so the board will quickly move off from the surfer.
- A leash can drag you under water for extended periods of time making it difficult to come up for air (this doesn't happen in smaller lesson waves)

Safe Leash Usage

Leashes are highly recommended by NSSIA for giving lessons. However, instructors must be very careful when using them as they can cause serious injury when used improperly. The biggest concern for instructors that use leashes is the potential for catching your elbow, back of your leg or neck, or wrist or thumb in the leash as you push the student into a wave. There isn't an instructor around that hasn't been hurt by catching a leash as it stretches out behind someone on a board.

Here is a recommended technique for teaching. First make sure the leash isn't behind your leg or head when you get to where you will push the student in. Then, when you have your student on their board and are facing the shore, wrap the excess leash in your left hand and use your right hand to push the board off (or vice versa). Make sure you lift the leash over your wrist on the side away from the hand as you push off with each and every time. Also make sure you've gathered up a portion of the excess leash and hold it in your hand on the rail. As you push the student forward, open and immediately drop your leash hand downward. If you do happen to have the leash behind your neck, look downward immediately. If it gets caught behind your leg, try to straighten your leg out.

Because of the importance of using a leash during a lesson, if the leash breaks, have another one available or take your student and others in the water, we recommend you do not continue the lesson without a leash.



Albright Surf Instructor Leash

An NSSIA instructor in Texas, Phil “Puddy” Albright (<http://professurf.com>), researched a leash specifically for instructors giving lessons. This patent pending leash, shown in the figure, eliminates the long loose cord by replacing it with a non-stretchable but just as long wound cord. Since the cord is non-stretchable, it doesn't immediately pull the board back to the surfer, so getting hit by the board is no different than with a traditional leash. Since that time, other similar leashes have emerged on the market.

The Koahi Grip Leash

Another leash invention that helps instructors is the Koahi Grip Leash. Basically, it has a handle strap at the base of the leash which allows easier maneuvering and controlling the board from the tail block. The instructor still uses the leash during the push into a wave the same way, but getting the board in position with a student on top is easier to accomplish.



The NSSIA strongly recommends a good working leash be used in all lessons to help prevent injuries. If you insist on not using a leash, make sure you remove the leash string as grabbing it can cause an injury.

Safety Signals/Hand Signals

Because it is hard to hear over the sound of the ocean, the NSSIA has endorsed a form of communication to be used for safety. It's a little tough to get used to at first but it will help significantly when you are in the water with a group lesson.

Before entering the water and after teaching water safety, go over a set of hand signals, particularly if you are in a larger group. A good time to teach your students this is right after covering how to fall from their board. If whistles are legal where you give lessons, tell the students that when you whistle, the student is to stop and look at the instructor for directions immediately.

Only Whistle in an Emergency or to Prevent a Potentially Dangerous Situation

When you are in a class or group situation, add that after you whistle, all the students should not just look, but also point to the student/students that you are communicating to. All the instructors can have lifeguard approved whistles, or if there is a head instructor overseeing the whole class this would work as well.

For hand signals, give the students instruction to go to the left by putting your left arm high over your head and dropping it straight down pointing them in the direction you want them to go. Use the opposite to go right. This technique is used when the instructor is in a situation where they need to move quickly away from where they are.

Use both arms up in the air and drop them to a point out to the ocean if they need to look behind them. This is to help students be aware of what is going on. Put your arms straight out palms up when you want them to come or move in. Let them know if you make a fist and tap the top of head you are asking: "Are you O.K.?" They must repeat this hand signal back to you stating that they are O.K. If they are not O.K., they are to answer by crossing their arms back and forth above their head.

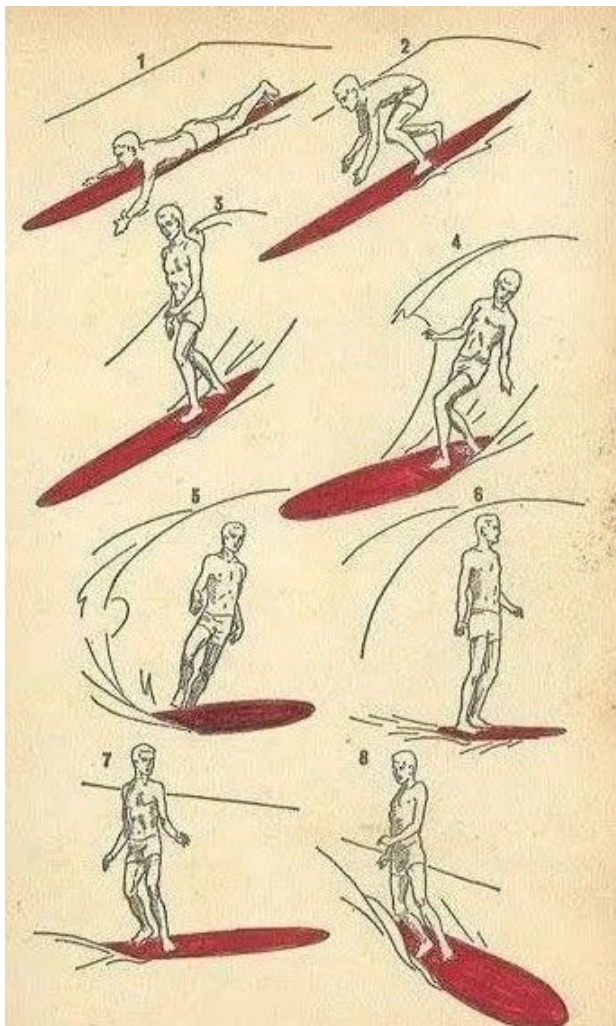
If they fall and forget to cover their head, once they have recovered their board, cross your arms and cover your head as a reminder. Let them know that sometimes that can be too late. Tell them to **"ALWAYS COVER YOUR HEAD"**. If you have to tell them more than three times, then go into

the beach and repeat the message. This is to stress the importance and safety of covering your head UNTIL you know where your board is and you are safe from harm.

If you tap your ELBOWS, HIPS or KNEES it means the student must get off their elbows, hips or knees. These can be for either paddling out over waves or when the students are getting up to their feet.

Waxing a Board

Probably the most overlooked subject in most lessons, particularly if non-waxed soft top boards are used, is how to wax a surfboard. Remember, beginners have no idea what waxing is all about. Since some of your students might go out and buy a board after their lesson, it's well worth spending a couple of minutes with a regular board (not a soft top) explaining the need for wax and the types of wax used in various temperature zones. You can also show them how to use a wax comb or add wax to both new boards and boards already waxed.



Positioning and the Pop-up

Now it's time to show the students how to stand-up on a wave. Without using a board, have them stand in a comfortable position one foot in front of the other. This will help establish if they are goofy or regular foot.



when you show wave positioning with the sand sculptor.

Once their foot positioning is established have them lay down and push up from the sand into a standing position. Next, using a board, show them how to paddle and then position their hands properly on the board for the pop-up. Make sure you explain what happens when the surfer is too far forward or too far backwards on the board. This is a common problem with beginners. You can also show this

One important point to remember when teaching the popup, do not tell student to significantly your arch their back when starting to popup. Arching may cause discomfort or a possible injury. Many instructors teach positioning the rear foot first on the board by first bending the rear knee with the toe towards the center and then pushing and stepping up to the feet with the other foot while looking to the side. Others use a complete push-up to both feet, all at once approach. The jury is still out as to which method works best. Regardless of which is most comfortable, make sure the student doesn't learn to push up with their hands near their waist or holding the rails (a shortboard push up) as it will hinder their ability to easily catch waves.

Shortboarders hold their rails when they push up so they can better control their board's direction as it accelerates. It is similar to doing a push up with your hands wide apart. However, longboarders typically put their hands under their chest to push for their pop-up. Unfortunately, many inexperienced instructors don't know this fact and fail to teach it to their students who are learning on longer boards.



The Magic Rectangle Technique

The Magic Rectangle Technique is one means of starting at the very beginning in the water. Have the students imagine how the board would most naturally float in the water if there was no weight on it and how the rocker will cause the nose and the tail to be slightly out of the water. (You can show them this once you get out in the water). The "magic rectangle" is where they place their body, from shoulders to knees, on the board in order to get the optimum speed with both paddling and trimming. This will help them understand the body positioning and weight adjustments when they start standing up.

Thumping Before Entering

If you give lessons in an area with

Stingrays, or sharks, this is a great way to repel them before entering the water. It repels by making 'percussive slapping' noises on top of the water.

Stingrays, also members of the shark family, respond exactly the same way as sharks, they scatter! The stingray or shark just needs to know that you're there. You need to thump and 'stake your claim' in an area where you'll be wading, fishing, or doing a surf lesson.

This is done not by slapping, but by cupping the hand and pulling air under with it. The result is a low pop or thump, like a small explosion. If you're doing it right, you can actually feel that solid thump/vibration underwater in your chest. And so can the rays and sharks.



In The Water Training (For Traditional Surfing)

Lessons with a large mix of both adults and kids require a significant amount of close instructor support. If you can keep your larger group lessons down to less than 5 per instructor, and then separate groups by age, you will do much better. Kids need close supervision to avoid getting hurt. Keep these groups apart but under control at all times.

Body Surfing

Although not used often, teaching the student to body surf a few waves before they have a board in their hands will help them feel more comfortable in the water. Additionally, they can feel the energy of the wave and how to tap into it, but most importantly let the instructor see how ocean or wave savvy the student may or may not be. You can use the method where you wait for the white water or small wave to approach and then glide right into it without swimming. Have them lock their thumbs together and put one middle finger on top of the other. Make sure they look over both shoulders and in front of them before taking off. (This also gets them in a good habit for surfing). Also, have them put their face down in the water with their ears between their shoulders. Let them know that if they have their heads up it is like having too much rocker in a board and it will push them out of the wave.



The First Test

The first test for the student is getting through the shore break. The first test for the instructor is getting the student pushed into a wave.

Instructor-in-the-water training differs greatly from student to student depending on natural ability and conditions. Pushing a student into their first wave will be covered in another section of this document. Here, the first “test” will be to determine what the student can handle by paddling the board through the shore break. By now the instructor has gone over “reading” oncoming waves, board positioning for the approaching wave, stroking into a wave, duck diving, and push-ups into oncoming whitewater while on the beach.

If the student needs significant help getting through the shore break, then consider making the close in shore break the primary location for the student’s initial lessons. Unless you are only dealing with a couple of students that know each other,



the students that have no problem getting out should be taught by a different instructor or be taught at different times. Divide beginner student lessons from intermediate student lessons.

Intermediate students are defined as those who find it easy to catch and ride whitewater waves and are then ready for the smaller unbroken outside waves. During the process of week-long camps, students should progress from whitewater to outside waves.



If conditions warrant taking the student outside past the lineup, have the student paddle a few strokes to help them learn how to paddle and find where their “magic” spot is on the board when the nose is just out of the water.

Board handling and turning the board quickly are the next order of business. Show the student how to turn their board around in a circle by getting his or her weight on the very tail of the surfboard, leaning back, and causing most of the board to be tilted up out of theater; encourage them to lean, stroke, and kick their feet as they turn. Once you are comfortable that the student can handle their board on their own, take the students back inside and let facilitation and group dynamics help the lesson progress as appropriate.

This means once you have pushed the students into waves until they can stand up on their own, let the more advanced ones try on their own while the instructor focuses more on providing direct training as needed to each student sequentially.



If necessary, the instructor might want to demonstrate the push-up in the water. It should look similar to the push-up demonstrated on the beach. Select a small approaching wave with a clean shoulder for the demonstration. Be sure to explain that they will first need to catch a broken/whitewater wave before trying to catch an approaching peak wave. For the regular wave, demonstrate paddling slightly into the peak before standing as

you did on the beach. Also, demonstrate the proper foot positioning as you did on the beach.

The demonstration should only last a minute or two at the beginning. Whatever you do, don't catch more than one wave for a demonstration as you don't want your students to think the lesson is more of a “surf along” rather than an instructional session.

Just like training wheels on a bicycle, the instructor acts like human training wheels on the surfboard. Do this a few times with first-timers, and then start pushing them into waves on their own.

Pushing Into Wave Techniques

There are two primary methods to help a student catch waves: the SCOOTERMETHOD and PADDLE METHOD, plus a third “worst case” method called the RIDE BEHIND METHOD.

The single most important factor in both primary Start the student further back on the board, so that the nose is sticking up a little. This is to prevent the student from pearling. The instructor should also push down on the tail prior to release to further help prevent pearling. Tell the student that you're starting them further back than they normally should be, and that after they feel themselves riding along with the wave on their stomach, scoot forward a few inches until the board is flat, and then go ahead and stand up. method takeoffs is that the board is 100% perpendicular to the oncoming whitewater wave. Note that this is different than trying to catch an unbroken wave.

The Paddle into the Wave Method

As the wave approaches, have the student lie on his or her board while holding it straight with both hands on the front rails. Tell the student to glance back by looking to the side at the wave, and when the wave gets to their feet, paddle one or two times at most. If they arch up and look straight back they will often slow down their momentum and pull them right out of the wave. Remind the student that if they stand up from their prone position with the nose (front of the board) up, it will cause them to back out of the wave. Also be sure to tell the student that when they are riding the wave, and the nose is up, they need to scoot forward incrementally to get the board flat. Tell them that riding too far back on the board with the nose up is like putting on the brakes, and that they will lose the wave by backing out of it.



The Jump into the Wave Method

This is the easiest way for a beginner to catch waves, and is easiest to help with in waist deep water. It is recommended to use after the student has stood up when pushed into a wave. Hold the board by the rails, toward the back, and as the wave gets even with you, push off the bottom and lie on the board as you push it into the wave, as if the surfboard were a boogie board, or flexi.

After the student sees and gets the idea of what you're doing, picking a wave and turning the board around to catch it – have the student start practicing this on his or her own. You have to show them the first couple of times. Make sure the student is getting on the right part of the board after a several attempts, and also that they aren't so far forward that they will just nose into the sand or pearl.



The Riding Behind Method For First Stand Up Waves

If the student is having trouble standing up on his or her own, one technique to try is riding together. Do this by taking a ride on the back of the board as you push the student into a whitewater wave. (only necessary to do for a short amount of time)

To do this, just rest your chest on the tail block of the board and hold onto the rails around the tail. This way, you can bodysurf behind the board, while holding onto the board and keeping it steady from side to side.

While you're holding it steady, coach the student into a standing position, and then coach the student to get his or her feet in the right position on the board.

Tell the student that you're going to be holding onto the board and riding behind, so feel confident in being able to stand up. Remind them that the board will be steady, and when he or she finally gets to their feet or the right position (down the center, and not too far forward or back), you will let go of the board. Note that this method is very effective with young students.

Paddle Alongside Method

In some locations, lessons are taught in the outside break rather than in shallow water or shore break waves. Under these conditions, have the student start paddling when you judge the wave is approaching at the proper distance. Paddle in behind your student, left side if you are right-handed and right side if you're left-handed. Tell the student to put their head down and raise their heels just prior to the wave reaching them. At the exact time that the wave (or shoulder) hits, reach out and give the student's board a good shove while at the same time telling them it's time to stand up.

Tandem

For teaching in bigger waves or even just to help people feel the thrill of surfing without actually standing on their board the first time, there is no substitution for Tandem surfing.

Remember that you will need a large enough board so that the student can easily lay on the board while the instructor paddles into the wave. Knee paddling into the wave usually is the preferred method.



Note on Treading Water

Normally only applicable to the paddling along side and tandem lesson format. If your student is not a capable swimmer, you might need to test them on treading water just in case the leash malfunctions. Leashes sometimes break at the strap or the swivel due to age. The sheet on the next page describes the treading water process.

Turning

You can have the student learn stand up board control (turning) using a leaning pushup technique or leaning to turn before they are even allowed to stand up. This is the same technique used to paddle out over small white water or the top of any wave.

Have them grip the rails tightly and push up while putting weight on the tail with their back foot only if they are starting to pearl. They can bend their knee and put more weight on the tail if it gets steeper or to practice small turns, thus controlling their board. They



do not need to ride the wave like this unless the wave requires they do so. The rest of the time they just glide in the "magic rectangle" zone learning how the board moves.

One safety issue: if the student is riding a wave and is approaching a swimmer or another surfer, they can lie down and guide the board away from the person or stop it by putting weight on the tail and leaning back. This is an excellent technique for a more advanced level beginner when they are first learning to ride open-faced waves. The student learns to set their angle and glide into the wave, riding across it, giving them an opportunity to stand once they are set up.

In the most extreme cases, the student will get only one standup ride in the whitewater, and even at that not a long ride – usually a few short seconds. The students that will have trouble standing are usually going to be those students who are overweight or obese.

Generally, anyone over 200 lbs. is going to have trouble standing up, unless their weight is not in their gut and the student is fairly athletic. For example, football players and U.S. Marines are generally heavy, but athletic enough to stand up after a while. Instructors should continually be helping students catch waves until they're catching most waves on their own and continue helping them with any more difficult waves that come through.

This goes for outside waves as well, with an instructor pushing the student into waves until the student can figure out how to do it on their own.

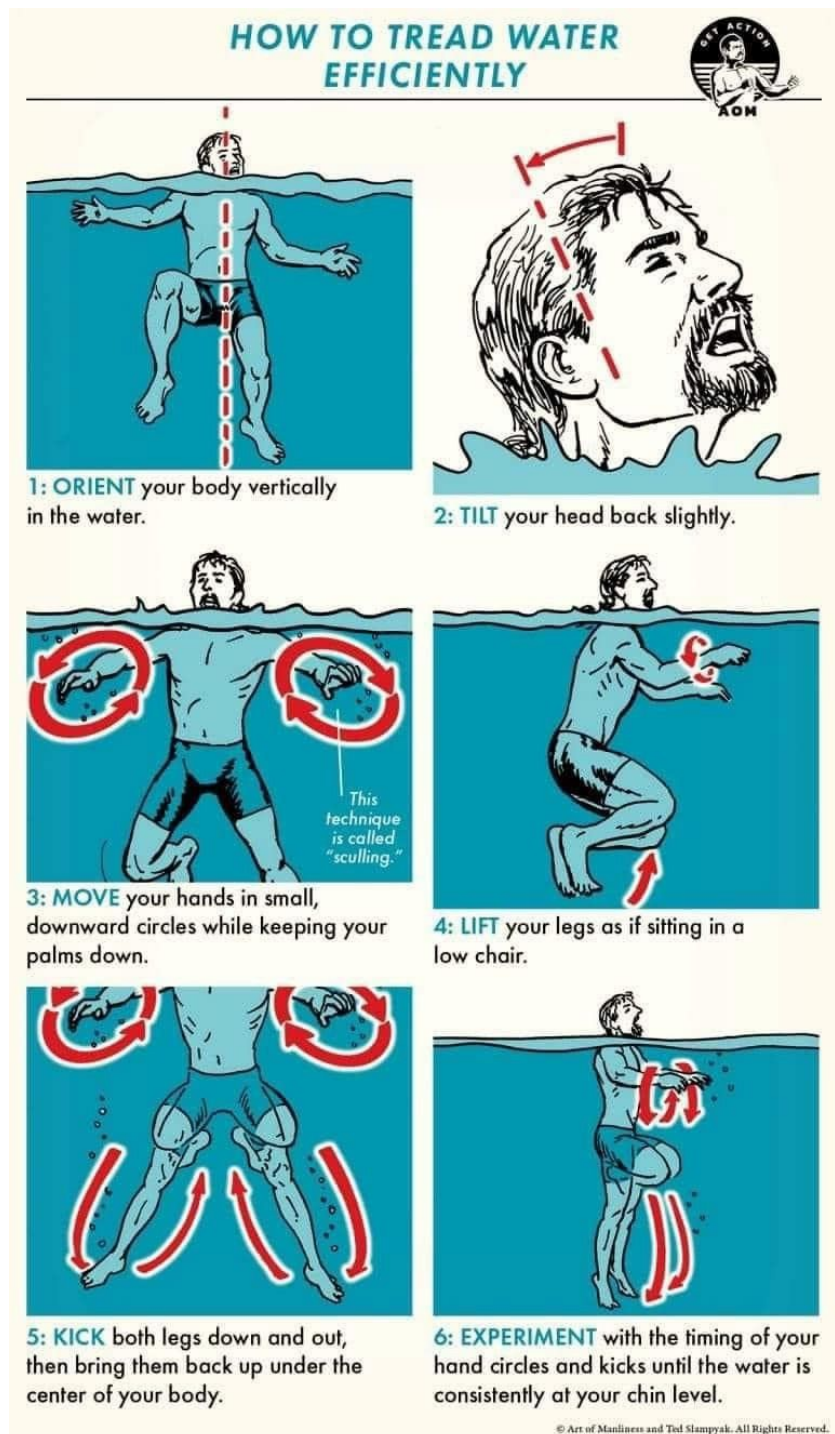
Completing a Ride

Many instructors have their students jump off at the end of their ride. This is very dangerous for a couple of reasons. First, they have a free-floating board. Second, they can easily twist an ankle, tweak knee, or step on something sharp in the water.

If your student can go up to their feet, they can go back down to their feet or on their knees and pull back. This approach will teach the student to stay with their board at all times (except in emergency situations like getting run over!)

Summary of Common Safety Rules for Beginners

- **#1 Don't panic**
- Don't paddle in front of someone when paddling out – paddle into the break behind the surfer
- Don't surf outside until you can handle it
- Paddle out with the rip
- Thump when rays are present
- Use a leash
- Cover your head when you surface
- Don't fall forward



- Hang On To Your Board - Don't let go except to avoid injury
- Take off on an angle

Summary of Instructor Safety issues

- **#1 - Protect yourself from a leash**
- Fold loose leash in one hand and open when you push with the other hand
- Pick a good wave.
- Don't push student into close out wave
- Don't let student stay in impact zone
- Have student paddle out between sets
- Have student stay forward and turtle when harder wave hits
- Ask student about leg numbness
- Watch for student fatigue

Body Dynamics

The following points address body dynamics, and the specifics of how each part of the body affects the way a person surfs. These points will help students understand the basics of body/wave interactions.

HEAD/EYES -look where you are going

NECK - look over your shoulders.

1. Make sure no one is on the wave.
2. Watch the wave for any changes to help judge timing on take-off.

SHOULDERS - used to guide the direction to go in

1. Can represent using like eyes.
2. If too open may cause student to fall backwards.

ELBOWS- tuck elbows in to prevent board from hitting student

1. When going through a wave, duck-diving or turtle turning.
2. Not used to push-up over a wave or to get up to feet.
3. Work like shock absorbers when in the push up stance going over waves or gliding before getting up on feet.

WRIST - Strong and firm for paddling (if loose it is like having a broken oar that won't pull through the water)

ARMS – used for balance

1. Extension of shoulders for more torque and drive.
2. Reach/extend and follow through with paddling.

HANDS - for gripping board when going through waves

1. Pushing up to get on feet.
2. Can also represent eyes to guide direction.

WAIST - pivot from waist for more torque in turns

1. Beginners can be taught to use waist on up as one unit for basic turns.
2. Do not bend forward from waist - use knees (this will cause students to fall forward).

HIPS/BUTTOCKS – used for drive and weight adjustments

1. Keeping hips tucked in helps keep the student centered and balanced.
2. Sticking buttock out (stink-bugging) may cause student to fall forward (improper positioning).
3. Hips thrust forward helps when hanging ten.

KNEES - used as shock absorbers for balance

1. Use knees to bend and squat for projecting out of turns.
2. Do not go to knees when getting to feet.
3. If the student is having trouble getting to his or her feet make sure their back knee is not straight making them extend too far to get up.

ANKLES - loose and flexible

FEET - proper placement is the foundation for the rest of the body positioning.

1. Too far apart does not allow student to turn.
2. Too close and there will be no stability.
3. Front foot pointing forward will cause student to fall backwards.
4. Used on longboards to walk up and down the deck to keep the board in trim and get to the nose for nose riding.
5. Place over the fin or on tail of board for flat turning.

TOES - for safety keep toes and ball of foot on the tail of the board.

1. Put weight on the tail to prevent from nose-diving.
2. Used to help make slight weight adjustments forward or backwards while in the prone position.

Back on the Beach

Debriefing refers to some form of discussion or "reviewing" of "what happened and what was learned." Debriefing is quite common in the instructional world, but not always recommended with surf instructors. In surfing, it is better not to debrief but to approach the "review" more subtly, such as by focusing on how well each individual did on their first wave or casually initiating discussion about the wave conditions and progress amongst the entire group.

In all cases, try to discuss what should be worked on and what the next lesson will focus on with each student, particularly if you are unsure if there will be another lesson. If they're not going to take another lesson, you can also tell them what they need to be doing when surfing on their own, which is generally just riding more whitewater waves, and trying the outside on the smaller days. If you happen to have a bigger day on any particular lesson, be sure to point out the reforming, unbroken waves on the inside if there are any, as good waves to ride on bigger days.

One of the final suggestions an instructor might provide as the lesson ends is advice to each student on the size and type of board they should buy for a first board if they decide to purchase one. Many times a beginner will go into a shop with no idea about what they need and end up getting something that they may never be able to ride successfully. A few words of advice will go a long way in a student's mind when they recommend you to other beginners. (However, encourage them to rent at first and use soft tops if possible.)

Other Instructional Presentation Tips

Lower your "message density": Make an effort to get "straight to the point" in your initial teaching with descriptive suggestions that are clear and in a single message. Settle on the simple and catchy "you can do it" slogan, and repeat it over and over.

Speak in the lingua franca: Instructors often speak in non- surf slang language or only use slang terms when accompanied by literal descriptions. Many of your students, particularly those from other parts of the country, expect you to use the “colorful” surf-slang language in your speech. Accommodate them but also make sure they know what you are saying.

Use Visuals: Visuals on the beach work wonders. When describing to students how to position themselves for an oncoming wave, rather than just drawing a picture, make a sand model of the wave on the beach and use a small piece of wood (Popsicle stick) that is the general shape of a surfboard to describe what happens. Another safety technique is to chop at your legs just below the knees when describing the consequences of a board positioned sideways between the student and the oncoming wave.

Be conscious of those who bring/accompany the student:

This is an interesting situation. In many cases, parents expect to be right up front on the beach encouraging kids and bringing cameras to get pictures. Or, a spouse pays for a lesson and then they want to watch and take pictures. These are facts of life and you need to accept it. Don't leave the parent out of the lesson but provide both comments and encouragement for safety awareness whenever the situation permits, and it always will, during the lesson.

Teaching Young Children

When teaching young children (8 and under) there are some special approaches that work to enable learning. First and foremost do not give a lesson when the surf is challenging. Children get scared easily even in smaller waves. When you first meet the child, assure them that the surf is not something to be afraid of and that you will make sure they aren't going to have any problems.

Also, you shouldn't use a leash for very small children. When they are ready, follow the steps below.

1. Before the lesson starts, remind the parents that there is a federal law against child endangerment and if the child appears too uncomfortable after the lesson starts you will be unable to continue.
2. Have a fun warm-up; don't tell them what could happen if they aren't warm when they get in the water.
3. Make sure they listen when you explain what you are going to do. Often the child never even looks at you, only the waves and their parents.
4. Have the child lay on a board and then just have them stand up without explaining how. After a couple of times you will see which foot to put the leash on.
5. Only go a little way out into the area where the wave has already broke and where the child can stand up.
6. As you walk the child out, hold their hand and tell them to turn sideways and jump when the wave comes. You can lift them with one hand with the board in your other hand.
7. Have the parent be part of the lesson. A good way to do this is have the parent stand right at the shoreline when the child comes in on a wave. Explain to the parent NOT to get in front of the



board but slightly to the side.

8. If you have a 6 or 7 year old, have them prone in on a “beta” board (right) to get them used to both a board and a wave pushing them. Make sure the first couple of waves are easy ones.
9. Tell the child they caught a wave when they prone in regardless if they stand upon not.
10. If the child appears comfortable on the beta board switch them to a regular small soft-top board.
11. Ask the child if they want to take a break about every 10 minutes.

Try to End the Lesson with a Photo- op:

All students like photos of their class and especially of them surfing. They want to remember their lesson and might even do additional advertising for you. When possible, always try to end the lesson on a positive note with a camera in hand, or at a minimum, provide the opportunity for the student to get a surfing picture of their instructor or have their picture taken with their instructor. If you have school T-shirts or hats, this is a great time to give them out as well. This is the best direct advertising you can get to their friends.

Photo-Op Guidelines

Have a camera available.

- Advertise and offer to have a video taken for an additional fee.
- Use a backdrop with your sign in it if possible for the beach picture.
- Send an email with the picture of the student.



Instructor Pay

Instructors usually get paid by the lesson.

A one and one-half or two-hour lesson is not just the time the student is present. Instructors are expected to arrive for the lesson a minimum of 10 minutes early to suit up, and possibly help with the sign-up process and wetsuit fitting if so requested.

The student lesson generally ends while the students are getting out of the water. Instructors should plan for an additional 15 or 20 minutes after the lesson ends to get equipment off the beach and back to the vehicle, stacking boards, etc. Unless the instructor needs to return the boards to an office, once the boards are stacked the instructor is done.

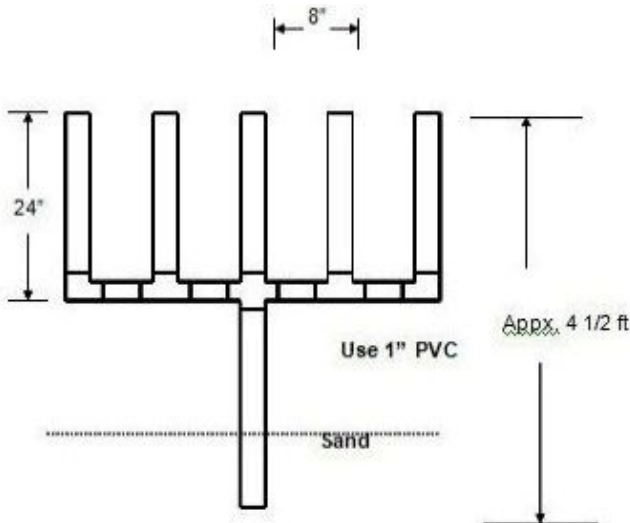
Summary of Instructors' Duties

- 1) Get to the lesson not less than 10 minutes early, and be ready to suit up students and set up equipment as necessary
- 2) Get the waiver signed and have them warm-up
- 3) Make sure to cover safety rules and etiquette
- 4) Teach wave theory and wave riding techniques
- 5) Help the students with standing up on the board
- 6) Get the students standing up and riding

- 7) Show the students how to catch waves by paddling or jumping into the wave
- 8) Instruct the student in the water on wave judgment
- 9) Give the student follow-up guidance
- 10) Pose for pictures with students if asked
- 11) Rinse sand from boards and wrap leashes and provide fresh water for student rinsing
- 12) Rinse and disinfect wetsuits/rashguards. Disinfect all equipment before and after use with ordinary bleach. Prepare a bleach solution by mixing 5 tablespoons (1/3cup) bleach per gallon of water. Won't hurt wetsuits but rinse with water after use. Some schools have a tub to dip the wetsuits in and then rinse with a hose in their shop or in the ocean after.
- 13) Stack boards on vehicle

Useful Surf School Support Equipment

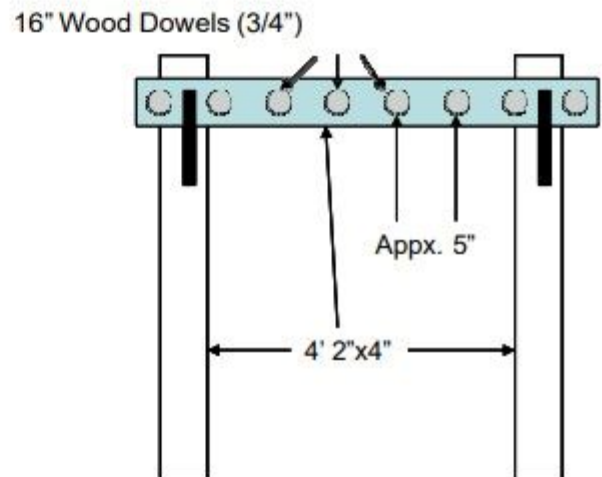
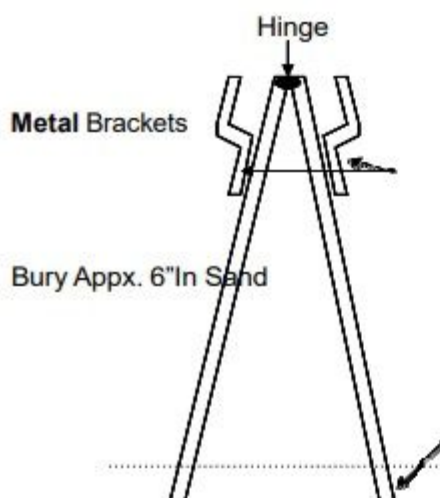
There are a number of helpful items that will make your lessons more successful. These can include chairs and a table for setting up, a fold



up tent awning for shade, a board rack, a drying rack for rashguards and wetsuits, fresh water to rinse feet off with and for disinfecting, a board dolly to haul boards on and off the beach, and a banner to advertise your presence to other beach goers. Some school locations have the luxury of having these things permanent and readily available on the beach near their business office while most just set up and take down on a regular basis. The problem with most of these items is that they are heavy and their usefulness will vary

depending on the size of the lessons and how far a student or instructor has to walk to get to the lesson area. The figures below depict a few easy to build and light weight items that are useful.

A small light weight set of board racks will keep the sand off your boards and makes them easy to be worked on during hot days. The figure shows a simple 4-5 board rack that is easy to build from 1 inch PVC pipe and only takes a minute to bury the bottom in the sand.



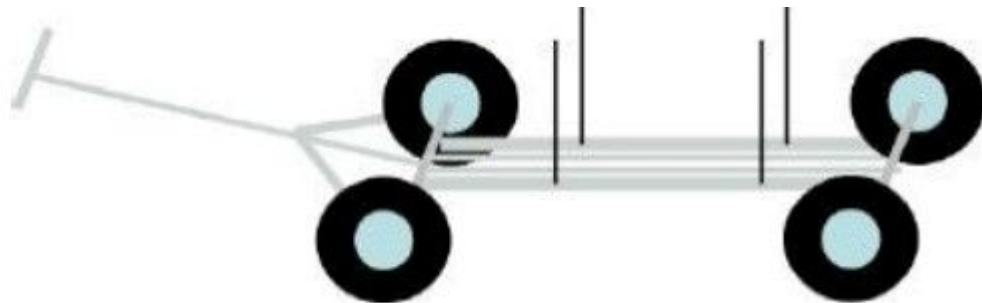
This design doesn't work for more than 5 boards (4 with one on top) as it becomes unstable. The portable beach drying rack is very useful for hanging rash guards and wetsuits.

When you have multiple students using rashguards and wetsuits during the day, it is imperative to stop the spread of bacteria by disinfecting the materials between each use. These racks allow for easy disinfecting and subsequent drying before you load up for the day. There is virtually no work involved with the setup.

Hand carts for hauling the boards over the sand to a location near the water are a tremendous help to instructors who would otherwise work their backs carrying boards. The problem is that there isn't a commercial product made for surfboard beach carriers, only something made for kayaks. Most schools are now building their own carriers using a combination of plastic pipes, wood, and larger inflatable tires. The objective is to build a cart that is both light weight and easily transportable in a van or pickup that also carries the boards. The cart should be able to handle at least 4 boards at a time over the sand.

Special Equipment

Not really special equipment, more of a special help for those who surf off a boat.

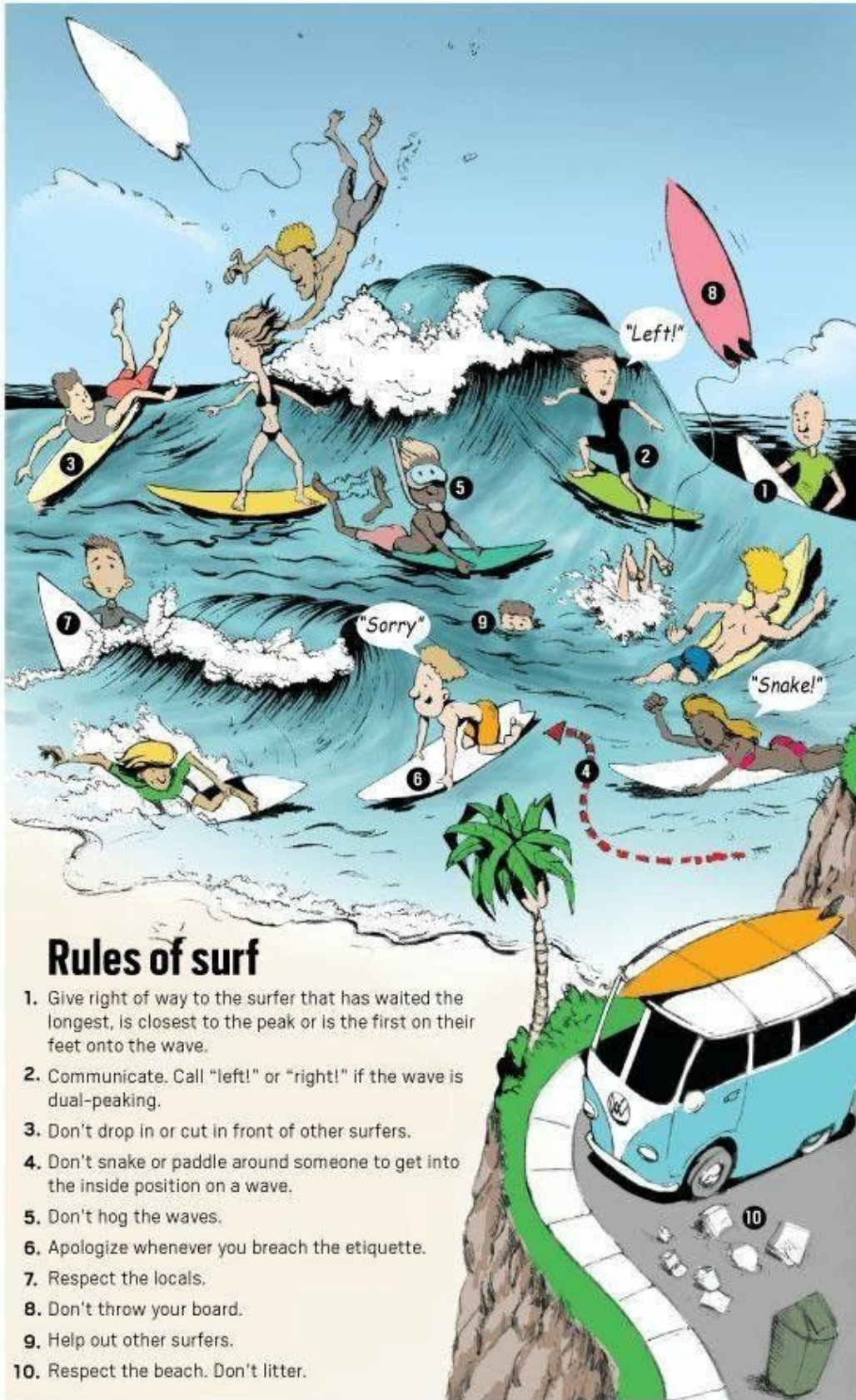


Boat

but

Having spent my entire life on the river I've never seen this wonderful important safety trick....I hoisted many people out of the water and killed my back ,but this is special..hope this helps someone someday!





Rules of surf

1. Give right of way to the surfer that has waited the longest, is closest to the peak or is the first on their feet onto the wave.
2. Communicate. Call "left!" or "right!" if the wave is dual-peaking.
3. Don't drop in or cut in front of other surfers.
4. Don't snake or paddle around someone to get into the inside position on a wave.
5. Don't hog the waves.
6. Apologize whenever you breach the etiquette.
7. Respect the locals.
8. Don't throw your board.
9. Help out other surfers.
10. Respect the beach. Don't litter.

JEFF GOERTZEN, SCNG