BONUS SECTION >>>>>

THE kiteboarder magazine

ALL NEW! COVERING THE LATEST GEAR

Special INSTRUCTIONAL Supplement

- choosing a launch
- understanding gear
- learning about wind
- SLE Kites vs. C Kites
- what gear to buy?
- upwind body drag
- learning how to jump

Taking kiteboarding lessons is a very exciting time for any beginning kiteboarder. With so much information being thrown at you in such a limited amount of time, beginners are often left with dozens of unanswered questions. While this guide should never take the place of actual kiting lessons, it does serve a great purpose of providing beginning kiteboarders and advanced riders alike with a reference for introducing and teaching the essentials of kiteboarding to those interested in the sport. Please feel free to copy this document and give it out to anyone and everyone who is thinking about getting into kiteboarding. All that we ask is that you give credit to the authors who dedicated their extra time to help us put this together.

- Ryan Riccitelli
Editor, The Kiteboarder Magazine

Learning the Wind

By Paul Lang

So, you've decided you want to be a kiteboarder? You've seen a few people doing it at the local beach, and have probably seen it on TV a few times. You've even got a little wakeboarding and surfing experience, so it should be easy, right? While almost anybody can learn to kiteboard if persistent enough, learning on your own is just downright foolish. Kiteboarding equipment is not cheap, so think of lessons as an investment just like your kite or board. What good does saving $350 on lessons do you if you destroy your $1500 kite, or even worse, potentially end up in the hospital?

When learning to kiteboard, remember that kiteboarding is a wind sport. It might seem silly that I bring this up, but it is often overlooked. Everything we do in kiteboarding is controlled by the wind, so it is extremely important to have a solid understanding of wind and how it relates to our sport. Most people without previous wind sport experience have a hard time finding where the wind is coming from because they've never had to think of it before. The first thing any kiteboarder should do when they arrive at their spot is find where the wind is coming from. There are a few ways of doing this that work better than licking a finger and holding it up.

Finding the Wind

One of the best ways to find the wind direction is to look for a flag. Flags always point downwind, and also give a good indication of how windy it is. You can also find the wind direction by moving your head from side to side. When facing straight upwind, you will feel an equal pressure in both ears. Holding your arms out also helps you gauge direction. Ripples on the surface of the water are another good wind indicator, as they move downwind. Until it becomes second nature, you should constantly be reminding yourself where the wind is coming from, especially if you are having trouble flying your kite.

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Lens: Ryan Riccitelli

There is no easier way to find out wind direction than by searching out a flag. Wind direction is a key factor in determining the safety of a site.

THE KITEBOARDER ACADEMY
kiteboarder

KNOW YOUR LAUNCH

Besides the wind, you also need to check the quality of the launch area. You always need to be aware of your safety zone – the half-circle of area downwind of you that your kite can fly over. If there are any solid objects or people in this zone, you should seriously reconsider launching your kite. **A good rule of thumb is any object downwind of you within five line lengths should be considered a hazard.** When getting ready to launch your kite, you always want to ask yourself what would happen if everything went completely wrong. If you lost control of your kite and it started pulling you, what would happen? If there are any solid objects around that cause you to worry when you ask yourself this question, find another site.

So, what is the ideal place to learn to kiteboard? A place with steady side-shore to side-on winds of at least 12 knots (but not too much wind for the equipment you have) and a huge sandy beach with no solid objects downwind. In the ideal world, you would also add flat, shallow water. However, these ideal sites are rare, and there most likely isn't one in your area. Choosing a site is ultimately a judgment call; a trade off of positives and negatives of the site. Knowing your limits is the key to your safety. Always talk to the locals if you are new to a spot, and they can help you decide if the beach is good for your skill level.

Anything on the ground, and/or near your kite and launch person can be a hazard. Don't be afraid to move or find a more open space to launch if you feel the least bit wary.

Always take a good look at your launch area. There is nothing more dangerous than an unsuspecting person that is ill equipped to escape an out of control kite.

Watch your lines!! Getting snagged, or tangled could cause your kite to launch erractically endangering you and others in the path of the kite.

Lens: Jim Semlor

Estimating the Wind Speed

It is also crucial that you check the wind speed where you want to kiteboard. Not only do you need to have enough wind to ride, but it's also important that there is not too much wind for the equipment that you have. Despite what some may claim, the lower limit to learn to kiteboard is about 12 knots. In less wind than this, it can be extremely difficult to relaunch your kite from the water. If you have trouble estimating what the wind speed is, the best thing to do is to look at what size kite other riders are flying of comparable weight and skill level, and talk to other kiters on the beach. If you aren't sure if you have the proper size kite for the conditions, don't hesitate to ask someone more knowledgeable. Wind quality is an important aspect of the wind that most beginners overlook. The better the wind quality, the steadier the wind is, both in its speed and direction. Gusty or shifty winds make riding challenging and learning very difficult and frustrating. The best way to judge the wind quality is to look out on the water, watching the texture of the wind on the water. The more even the texture, the better the wind quality. If you see a very obvious distinction between light and dark patches on the surface of the water, the wind quality could be too low to go out.

Choosing a Riding Spot

Choosing the proper site to learn to kiteboard is one of the most important decisions you can make when learning to kiteboard. Rigging up and attempting to go out in less than ideal conditions can not only be frustrating, but can also be very dangerous. When you get to the beach, the first thing you want to check is the wind. You need to know direction, speed, and the quality of the wind.

Offshore Winds: These winds blow from the land to the sea. Offshore winds are dangerous for kiteboarders because the wind is always trying to pull you away from shore. Offshore winds are gusty and can be extremely dangerous in a large body of water (like the ocean). As a general rule, even experienced kiters should never go out in these conditions.

Onshore Winds: Onshore winds blow from the sea directly onto land. Beginner kiteboarders should almost always avoid learning to ride in onshore winds unless you have assistance from an instructor or proper supervision. Your kite is always pulling you towards the shore, and if you make a mistake, you could find yourself dragging across solid objects or lofted into something hard with a fully powered kite.

Side-Shore Winds: This is what you are looking for as a kiter. Side-shore winds blow parallel to the shore and make the beach easy to safely leave and return to.

Combination winds are also common such as side-on or side-off. When learning to kiteboard, the best conditions are side to side-on (with the wind blowing onto the beach no more than 45-degree angle).

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Lens: Rick Iossi

Judging Conditions

By Lindy Devries and Shanna DeVries-Merrill

A few years back, a kiter from our crew was lofted 20 feet into the air and drug into a snow fence. The rider escaped serious injury only by sheer luck. The same week, another rider was fatally injured under similar circumstances. These events and others around the world reinforce the importance of knowing and evaluating weather conditions.

Here are some safety tips to help you judge conditions:

Gauge the wind speed. Small whitecaps start to form at about 13 knots, and sand blows at just over 20 knots. Don't go out in conditions that are above your skill level – you might get more air than you're ready for. Usually 13-20 knots is ideal for a beginner.

Don't go out in surf you wouldn't be willing to paddle out in. Whatever the conditions, you should never go out further than you can swim.

Cold water can be dangerous. Use the 100º rule: air and water temperatures must add up to 100º to kite in the water. Always wear an appropriate suit for conditions. Going in the water without an adequate wetsuit is never fun, and puts you at risk for hypothermia.

Check the weather forecast. Always! Watch for predictions of a quick and significant drop in temperature. This indicates a low-pressure system moving in with strong winds. This also can set the stage for storms and squalls, so watch the sky. If it's black, head on back to the beach or do not go out.

Storm indicators:

- **Fast moving squall lines**, which look like a wall of dark clouds.
- **Fluffy white cumulus clouds** growing taller and flatter at the top, resembling anvils. These are thunderheads or cumulonimbus clouds, which are indicative of gusty winds and storms.
- **Cirrocumulus, or "mackerel sky,"** looks like thin lines of clouds packed closely together. This tends to precede turbulent weather conditions, including spotty precipitation and storms.
- **Mammatococumulus clouds**, which look like the udders of a cow, can produce the funnel clouds of tornadoes.
- **A rush of cool air** usually precedes a thunderstorm by about three miles.
- **You can estimate the distance** of a storm by counting the seconds between lightning and corresponding thunder. Thunder takes about five seconds to travel one mile. Don't wait until the storm is overhead – lightning is most common around the perimeter. If you ever see lightning, play it safe and stay off the water.

Getting a two-line trainer kite, with or without the aid of an instructor, is the perfect place to start with your kite experience. Most often these kites can be bought for under $100.00

Learning control and steering on a small kite will speed up your learning curve on an inflatable kite.

Photographs courtesy of REAL Kiteboarding

TRAINERS

By Paul Lang

When you make the decision that you want to become a kiteboarder, one of the best things you can do for yourself is to go buy a trainer kite before your lesson. Trainer kites are cheap and can be passed on to friends or family. It is important to understand that flying a trainer kite is not exactly like flying the real thing. What trainer kites do well is teach you the mechanics of steering the kite and show you the wind window.

GETTING STARTED

Lay out the kite on the sand with the bridles up and the trailing edge towards the wind. Put sand on the trailing edge. Starting at the kite, unwind your lines by walking upwind. Straighten your lines by walking between them and attach them to your kite. When you are ready, simply tug on the bar and the kite should launch.

STEERING

Now that you have the kite in the air, the first thing you want to learn is how to steer. The way you steer a kite is by rotating it. You can rotate the kite to the left or right, and it will move in whatever direction you point it. To rotate the kite left, pull with your left hand and push with your right. Your movements should be similar to Tai Bo punches. Concentrate on pushing away with the opposite hand, as most people have a tendency to pull with both hands. If you are steering the bar like a steering wheel, so you are spazzing out and need to think back to Billy Blank's Tai Bo punches.

LEARN THE WIND WINDOW

Once you feel you have good kite control it is time to learn about the wind window. The window is defined as anywhere the kite will fly. Along the edge of the window, where the kite is far upwind, the kite has the least amount of power and will respond slowly. The more downwind you fly the kite, the more power it will produce and the faster it will react. Practice flying the kite on the edge of the window, without powering it up. This will allow you to keep the kite in the air with minimal pull. Also practice doing figure 8s with the kite, Start at the top of the window and dive the kite down vertically towards the ground, then back up to the top of the window. Practice until flying your trainer becomes second nature. By spending time with your trainer kite, you will be able to progress more quickly and get more out of your first kiteboarding lesson.

Picking the right board shape and size for your riding conditions and skill level will aid your learning curve.

For light wind days, or for venturing out into the surf, adding a kite-specific surfboard to your quiver will be a must.

There are many harnesses to choose from. Make sure yours fits right, and compliments your bar and riding style.

Your first purchase will be your kite. Knowing the wind you will be kiting in, as well as having a list of essential features will help you narrow your choice to quiver size and brand.

Lens: Jim Semlor

By Matt Nuzzo

The kiteboarding industry has been rapidly growing ever since Bruno Legaignoux made the first leading edge inflatable (LEI or C) kite. Every year we have seen some quality improvements in kites and boards, but 2006 has proven that this year's gear is insane.

Working at REAL we get to try almost all major manufacturer's equipment, and I have to say that there were very few kites this year that we didn't like. The new C style kites have much better wind range and usability, while the bow/flat/SLE kites have really stepped into a whole new realm of depower and functionality.

CUTTING THROUGH THE HYPE

With so much gear on the market it can be really hard to weed through all the propaganda and see what kite and board will work for you. One manufacturer's write up on their bow kite might say it is best suited for the safety-oriented beginner, while the next promotes that it is a high end wave killer, which is sure to leave anyone questioning who is it for, the beginner or the advanced rider? The answer is that many of the kites on the market will work for the beginner, but they will also perform for the advanced rider. With most other sports you need to upgrade your equipment as you increase your ability. With kiteboarding, if you buy the right kites, the only time you will need to upgrade them is when you ride them into the dirt or want to add more sizes to your quiver.

CHOOSING YOUR QUIVER

When you are buying your gear you need to address a few main issues. These considerations will be your body weight and the wind conditions you will be riding in, the quality of the product and the reputation of the manufacturer, and your personal goals within the sport. Addressing the size and wind range that you will most typically be kiteboarding in is really the most critical consideration for choosing the right gear. For the average size male a good starting kite for most places will be a 12m to 13m. From there, add a 16m or 17m if you live in a lighter wind area, or an 8m or 9m for high wind riding. Your average sized woman will start out with a 9m or 10m and build her quiver starting with the larger or smaller kite sizes depending on the local conditions. The best thing to do is to talk to local shops and riders, who can help determine the best size kite for your area. Typically, you can cover 90% of all of your kiteboarding needs with three kites in your quiver.

WHO CAN YOU TRUST?

Your second consideration in getting geared up is finding the kite and board manufacturer that has a good reputation and that you trust. There are a lot of brands out there; some are backed by good companies, and some are not. Through the R&D process, there will always be some ideas that just don't work out in reality, and it is important to buy gear from a company you are confident will back up their products. Do a little research to find a company that you are confident will be able to service your needs as a consumer.

WHAT ARE YOUR RIDING GOALS?

Finally, when choosing gear make sure that you get what is going to work best for the type of rider that you are and the type of rider that you want to become. We have seen people as young as 8 and as old as 78 out kiteboarding.

These two types of kiteboarders have different needs, and so do all of the people in the middle.. Are you a big jumper, wakestyle, or a cruiser? There is gear out there best suited to each style of riding.

BOARD SELECTION

We always recommend getting a board that is one step above your ability level. We teach people to first ride on monster 170 to 180cm boards. They work great for learning, but most will outgrow this size in a couple of weeks of riding. Our most popular size board for a first time buyer is a 140 to151cm. I personally ride a Jimmy Lewis Model III 133cm board for all around powered conditions and the same board model but 145cm for light wind days.

GET OUT THERE!

The main thing you need to consider is that the longer that you wait to get your new gear, the less time you will have on the water. If you already kiteboard, 2006 is your year to upgrade your equipment. If you are just starting to kiteboard, you need to remember the words of our friend Matt Raincock : "If you don't learn to kiteboard now, you will still suck this time next year!"

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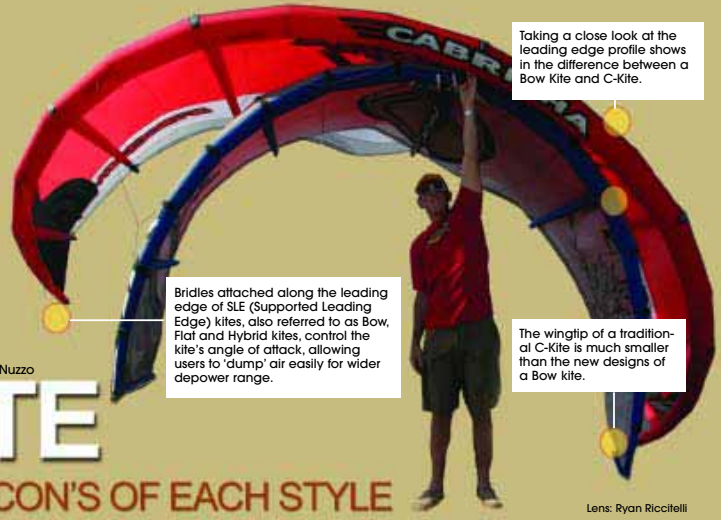


SLE VS. C-KITE

PRO'S AND CON'S OF EACH STYLE

By Matt Nuzzo

Lens: Ryan Riccitelli

The SLE or 'bow' style kite is not new. This shape was one of the first types of kites made, but was abandoned because of complications that the original designs had. With their rebirth in 2006, there's a lot of hype behind these designs. Having ridden a lot of the different styles, below are the major differences between SLE and classic C-shaped kites.

TECH TIME!

. First we need to talk about the obvious di ferences between bow and C kites. The most obvious is the look of the kite. The C kite has a C-shaped leading edge, and has been the standard for the past five years. The SLE kite has a flatter profile, very swept back wingtips, and the leading edge is supported by a bridle. C kites can be flown on 4 and 5-line bars whereas bow kites are only 4-line.

PERFORMANCE

Next we can look at the major performance characteristics. The C kite will traditionally have smooth power output, light bar pressure, fast turning speed, a variety of safety releases, and overall ease of use. The SLE kite has a large wind range, handles gusts well, rapid depower, and the option for hooked in safety release. The 2006 C kites have seen a great increase in wind range and usability. They have always been well rounded, but it seems that this year's batch is particularly user friendly. Also, most C kites are rigged from the manufacturer with 5th line safety. I think the 5th line safety is by far the safest system on the market.

A lot of manufacturers have introduced the SLE or bow style kites into their kite line-ups this year and the most noticeable feature is the wind range that these kites have. The chicken loop is twice as long as a C kite, which combined with the flat profile of the kite and leading edge bridle allows the kite to dump power on command. This feature can be a little challenging for the first time rider because you can turn the power on and off so fast. However, if you know how to ride a chicken loop bar, the range of these kites is impressive. Most of the SLE kite manufacturers promote letting go of your bar for the safety release. That can work in normal power situations, but in overpowered conditions can be very dangerous. Overall, the SLE kites are user friendly and have a lot of de-power, but they can be challenging to self-launch and self-land.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

You should buy a C kite if you want a reliable and tested safety system (5th line), smooth power output, performance for the beginner to the advanced rider, easy self - launch and self landing, and a proven design. Buy the SLE kite if your riding area is extremely gusty and want to have maximum wind range, the latest in tech, 4-line ease of use, easy re-launch, and a safety system that can activate while you are hooked in.


Lens: Sander Len10

A little advice on deciphering the growing buyer's market

WHICH ONE SHOULD YOU BUY?

Don't get confused and don't tech out too much! You will drive yourself mad if you believe all the hype from every company and person on the beach. You need to assess what conditions you are going to ride in, what manufacturer you believe in, and what your goals are in kiteboarding. That will weed out a lot of kites right there. Once you get a gut feeling for what you want, go for it. At Real, we get the opportunity to ride most kites on the market and there were very few this year we did not like.

As a trend, we have been seeing a lot of people going for SLE kites for 12m and smaller, and C kites for their larger kites. One of the reasons for this is that SLE kites tend to have more bar pressure that gets heavier as the kites get bigger. Many of the new C kites have very light bar pressure, and this is consistent from 5m to 25m kites in many manufacturers kite line-ups.

For boards, you should get one that is a bit above your ability level if you are learning, but most of the time a 140 to 151cm would be a great starting point. For powered conditions you can get a board based on your body weight. We see most people 100-140 lbs going with 120 to 132cm boards. For 140-180 lbs, most are riding boards in the 128 to 138cm range. For the 180lbs + mark, 132 to 142cm boards are the most popular sizes.

The other considerations that you need to look at with boards are price, durability, and accessories. Generally, the more you spend on a board, the more responsive and lightweight it will be, but it will also be more delicate. Durability is an important factor, but don't get so hung up on the durability that you get the wrong board. Most people will not break their board from riding unless they start to hit sliders or just generally abuse it. Put your feet in a board and make sure the pads and straps fit your feet. You can get most boards with fins only and add on the pads and straps that you want. There are a lot of good accessories out there and you can mix and match them if the ones that come with your board don't work for your feet.

Finally, invest in a board bag. Most of the wear that my boards take happens in the back of my truck or taking it in and out of my truck. A board bag will add a lot of life to your board, so the $50 will pay off in the long run.

TUNING YOUR KITE

Don't Skip This Step!

By Matt Nuzzo

Tuning your kite is the most important piece of gear tech that you can learn. An improperly tuned kite will not only fly poorly, but it could potentially hurt you or others around you. There are a few characteristics that will be specific to the type of kite that you are flying. Get these key points down and you can make sure that you have a properly tuned kite.

Tuning a C Kite:

Test your bar:

You have to test your bar. If you don't, this could be the problem with your riding that you could not figure out. Obviously it is not good to blame all of your riding problems on your gear, but an improperly tuned kite is one of the most common problems that we see people having on the beach. Generally speaking, all 4 or 5 lines should be the same length when you attach them to a single point. The wild card in this is the 5th line. The leading edge bridle length will determine how long the 5th line needs to be. The main point is that your two center or power lines need to be the same length as your rear lines when the lines are attached to a fixed point and the chicken loop is hitting the bar. If your rear lines are too short it will choke off the kite and make it fall backwards out of the sky. If the back lines are too long then the kite will not steer. If the 5th line is too long the safety will not work and if it's too short, it will make the kite fly too forward in the wind window and not have any power.

Look at the wingtips:

The wingtips on your C kite will tell you what is going on with the kite. The key thing to look for is to make sure that the wingtip of the kite is parallel with the wind direction. If the wingtips look really flared out or opened to the wind, it means that there is too much back line tension and the kite is being choked off. Choking off the kite is one of the most common problems in tuning the kite, so if the kite is falling backwards in the wind window or if the wingtips look flared out, this is probably the issue. To fix this problem you can adjust the tuning knots at the kite, pull the depower strap, or sheet the kite out to reduce the back line tension.

Fly your kite:

To get the proper tune on your kite you need to test your bar and kite match up. Many brands bars and kites are interchangeable if you have them tuned right. Getting all lines equal length is your best way to start, but flying your kite will really tell you if the kite is tuned properly. The best time to do this with any size kite is on the 10mph day. That is enough wind to keep the kite stable in neutral, but not enough wind to have everything go wrong if the kite is not tuned properly. Flying your kite on light wind days will not only make sure that it is tuned right, but you can practice valuable skills like self-launching and self-landing.

Tuning a SLE Kite:

Test your bar:

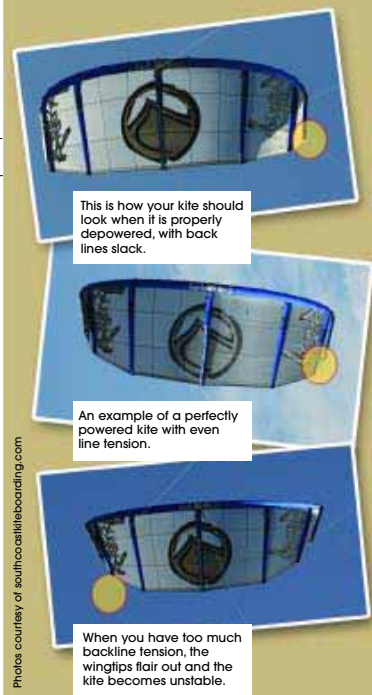
SLE(Supported Leading Edge)/bow-style kites use a 4-line bar unique to their particular design. The main difference with the SLE kite bar is that it is has an extremely long chicken-loop line. The bridle on an SLE kite will allow your kite to pivot off of the LE and dump a lot of power as you sheet the bar out. Tuning the bar is similar to most other standard 4 or 5-line bars in the sense that with the chicken loop at the bar, all 4 lines should be equal length.

Check your tuning in neutral:

The SLE kite is a little harder to see if it is not tuned right because of the very swept back wingtips. The swept back wingtips will not flare out if the kite has too much back line tension like the C kite will, so it is hard to visually tell if the SLE kite is not tuned right. You will find out if you have too much back line tension if the kite starts to back down out of the sky. To get the kite back to neutral you can sheet out the bar and just like the C kite, the SLE kite will climb back to the neutral position. A properly tuned SLE kite will sit parked in the neutral position when your bar is about 6" away from the top of the chicken loop. Just like the C kite, the most common SLE kite error is too much back line tension. For both C and SLE kites it is best to have a little more front line tension than back line tension.

Fly your kite:

See part 3 of C kite tuning



Photos courtesy of southcoastkiteboarding.com

Special INSTRUCTIONAL Supplement


Lens: North Kiteboarding

Tip: Test your new kites and boards on light wind days and take the time to work through all settings

Basics for your new Gear

When you get your new gear, make sure you do a few things to be sure that you understand your gear. The best thing is to test your kites and boards on the light wind days. Go to the beach or local park (with a very wide berth!) and fly your kites. Change the tuning knots and see what makes the kite fly the best. Test the safety system and practice self-launching and self-landing. To dial in your board, ride it behind a boat or a jet-ski if you can before your first session. You will not only improve your board skills, but it will also increase your comfort level on the board that you will be kiteboarding on.

Don't be afraid of all of the new gear and the different kites on the market. There's a lot of good stuff out there and not getting geared up now will leave you behind the times. Get good advice from people that have ridden the gear you are interested in, and buy what seems right for you. Try to read between the lines of hype and dial in a kite and board combo that will best suit your needs and riding conditions. Remember that everyone is different and has different likes and dislikes. The most important part is honing in on your gear needs and getting what will best serve you for the long run.

Want more water time? Learn how to self-launch

Living and riding in Cape Hatteras, you would be surprised how many good kiteboarders we come across who cannot self-launch or self-land their own kites. We are not talking about just beginners here. There are many riders who can stay upwind, jump, ride waves, and even pull basic tricks but cannot launch and land their kites by themselves.

The ability to self-launch and self-land not only gives you the confidence to take a session anywhere in the world, but also directly addresses these questions:

"What if I'm the last one off the beach going out for a session?"
"What if I'm the first one back to the beach after a session?"
"In these situations, who will help me with my kite when there are no other kiteboarders around?"

A major part of Kiteboarder Safety and Responsibility is taking responsibility for your actions and gear. While you would always prefer to have a fellow kiteboarder assist you in launching and landing your kite, it is far safer to self-launch and self-land than it is to rely on a non-kiteboarder, if there are no other kiters around. Non-kiteboarders can easily make a mistake, grab the wrong side of the kite, or release the kite before you are ready, opening up a titanic can of trouble that you never saw coming. By practicing self-launching and landing on light wind days, you will be ready for your first self-launch/land on the next windy day.

As with any launch and landing, it's important to follow the basics. As you travel from beach to beach, wind directions change, and it can be easy to lose your bearings and set yourself up incorrectly for the launch or land. To properly orientate yourself, stand with your back to the wind and extend your arms straight out to the sides. Sighting down your arms will show you the edge of the wind window, where the kite and rider should be positioned for a self-launch. Failure to orientate yourself and your gear in this manner can result in you "hot launching" the kite too far downwind, or having the kite upwind too much causing it to roll through the window to the hot launch position.

Your wind window travels with you on the beach and water, anywhere you travel to kite in the world. Using the above method for wind direction will help you properly orientate yourself to any beach with any wind direction.

Once you have defined the edge of the wind window, bring your kite there and secure the lower wingtip with sand. Grabbing one wingtip, let the rest of the kite follow the direction of the wind. Secure this wingtip to the beach by folding it over and piling a GENEROUS amount of sand on top of it. If you are self-launching on grass or other non-sand surfaces, using a sandbag to secure your wingtip can also do the trick. Double check that your lines are not folded around strut ends, pulleys, etc. and that they are tangle free back to your bar. As you walk from your kite to your bar, always keep an eye on your kite to make sure it -stays secured to the beach or ground surface. For SLE kites, you self launch the same way except you may want to put a little sand on the inside of the kite before you fold over the wingtip for extra stability.

Never set your kite up for self-launch and then leave it that way. ONLY set up your kite for self-launch when you are ready to launch your kite. Once it is set up for self-launch, launch your kite immediately and get out on the water. For maximum safety, always remember to launch unhooked whenever possible.

Photos courtesy of Realkiteboarding.com

By Trip Forman

self Launch

Once back at your bar, attach your safety leash and get ready to launch your kite. You will need to reconfirm that you are positioned correctly with the wind direction. To do this, slowly pull the bar to tension the lines and kite. Check the kite to make sure it is properly filled with wind and ready for launch. If it is luffing, move yourself upwind. If it is filled with wind and turning into the wind down towards the sand, this means that you are positioned too far upwind. Before launching, move yourself downwind to bring the kite closer to the edge of the wind window. All of these pre-launch checks are performed while the kite is still secured to the beach. Once you have found the proper position, firmly pull the bar towards yourself to release the sand from the lower wingtip. Slowly raise the kite upwards, grab your board and head out onto the water.

Photographs courtesy of REAL Kiteboarding

LANDING YOUR KITE

Rule: Never let a random bystander catch your kite. One wrong move and they could seriously hurt them self and you.

1. The international signal for kite landing assistance is tapping your head a few times with your hand.

2. Steer your kite slowly to the edge of the window (preferably toward the water) in the direction of your kite catcher.

3. Steady the speed as you lower the kite gently into your kite catcher's hands.

4. Once you see that your kite catcher has the kite, unhook and go secure your kite to the beach.

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Landing Etiquette- ALWAYS help another kiteboarder land their kite. Don't be that guy who is too cool for school to help out. The beach is a safer place with assisted launching and landing.

Learning how to self-land could save you in a pinch

By Trip Forman

Different types of kites (4-line, 5th line, and SLE/bow style) require different styles of self-landing. Without a doubt, I think the safest and easiest type of kite to self-land is the 5th line. The 5th line leads straight to the center of the leading edge and grabs the kite "by the balls," just like how you walk it down the beach. In this position, the kite will generate absolutely no power. To self-land a 5th line kite, make sure there is nothing downwind of you, and your leash is secured only to the 5th line. Unhook from the chicken loop and release the bar. All tension will transfer to the 5th line, causing the kite to flip upside down and float powerless to the land or water surface. Walk hand over hand up the 5th line until you get to the kite and secure it to the beach. NEVER wrap any kite lines around your hands.

The safest way to self land your SLE kite is to combine the benefits of the SLE, with the proven methods of the 4-line self landing. Position your kite at the edge of the window, near the ground, with your safety leash attached to the ring/ring system on either your front (preferred) or your back lines. Unhook from the chicken loop and release the control bar. The kite will fall to the ground and slowly roll, without power, downwind. Walk your way up the line your leash is attached to, until you get to the kite and can secure it. Never wrap kite lines around your hands. Use a hand over hand method, quickly making your way to the kite. Properly secure your SLE kite to the land with plenty of sand or a heavy sandbag to make sure it doesn't blow away.

If your SLE kite does not have a ring/ring system on the front or back line, position your kite at the edge of the window near the ground. Fully depower your kite with your depower strap or trim cleat. With your safety leash attached to the chicken loop/safety leash attachment point, release the bar and the kite will fall powerless to the ground at the side of the window. Secure your chicken/leash point to the ground and walk your way quickly up the front line closest to the ground until you get to the kite and can secure it.

Taking the time to learn the skills of self-launching and landing will help to make you a more independent kiteboarder. Remember that you would always prefer to do an assisted launch or land with a fellow kiteboarder, but the ability to launch and land your kite on your own will come in handy when you find yourself to be the only kiter on the beach.

Maybe you've seen it before… a fellow kiteboarder rigs his lines up wrong, has an out-of-control kite, or is being lofted right before your very eyes. While there is no doubt that safety systems have improved over the past few years, knowing and understanding your safety release options is imperative to kiting safely. Following are a few of the common systems you will see.

Pin Release – Most safety systems have some kind of a pin or Velcro release. Find out if it is activated by a push or pull motion and if it can be easily put back together before you have to use it. Practice using it and putting it back together until you can do it without looking.

The standard wrist leash – It will depower the kite if you let go of the bar while unhooked. If you are hooked in, you have to first release your harness loop, either by unhooking or by pulling your pin release. Practice doing this BEFORE you get into a bad situation. If your system has a ring attachment for a leash, make sure it attached to the moving ring, not the fixed ring!

Oh Sh!t Handles – Some riders choose to rely on these in lieu of a leash. To activate, you have to grab hold of the handle while releasing your chicken loop. This is not an ideal system, because it can be very difficult to grab the handle in an emergency situation.

Punch-out – Some older designs utilize punch-out safety systems. You can activate it by simply pushing the bar away from you.

Recon – This is a Cabrinha specific system that should be fully understood and practiced before ever going out on the water. Generation One and Two bars are very different, so be sure that you understand exactly how yours works.

5th Line – Every company has their own way of activating their 5th line safety, so familiarize yourself with how your system works. 5th line systems give your existing set-up extra depower and allow for easier re-launchability than standard 4-line set ups. If your kite is not 5th line compatible, you can get your local repair guy to do it for $20. The 5th line safety is largely acknowledged as the safest system currently on the market, but you can rip your kite in half if it rolls in the surf and the 5th line is wrapped around the kite.

Bow/SLE/Flat kites – These kites haven't been on the market long enough to determine the pros and cons of the various kites and bars. However, almost full depower can be achieved by simply pushing the bar away from you or letting it go.

Suicide Leash – This leash is used by advanced riders who don't want their kite to drop from the sky if they accidentally let go of the bar during an insane trick. It will NOT de-power your kite and can be very dangerous.

All kites are designed with one or more safety systems. Before your first session on new gear, understand how to activate and reset your safety releases. If in doubt, refer to your kite's manual or ask a fellow kiteboarder. Keep yourself and others safe.

Upwind Body Drag

By Michael Giebelhaus

Back in the old days before we knew better, almost all kiteboarders used board leashes. After many leash-related injuries, it became common knowledge that wearing a board leash while kiteboarding was dangerous. However, many kiters don't take the time to learn how to recover their board by body dragging upwind, so they have trouble keeping the board with them. Leashes solve the problem of losing your board, but can be dangerous as they cause the board to recoil back toward the rider. If you do decide to use a board leash, I recommend a reel-style leash and that you ALWAYS wear a helmet! If the leash is long enough, the board WILL hit you!

Everyone will lose their board while kiteboarding, whether you are just learning the sport or trying the latest trick. Couple this with currents, wind, and waves and you will be missing your board before you know it. Unless you have a buddy willing to dedicate their session to retrieving your board, you better know how to get back to it yourself!

Follow the steps below to learn how to body drag upwind:

Step 1. After regaining control of the situation hold onto the control bar using only one hand (opposite hand of sailing direction).

Step 2. Your other hand will act as the rudder and is extended in front of you and slightly upwind. Turn your body in the direction you want to go by trying to put your lead shoulder underwater.

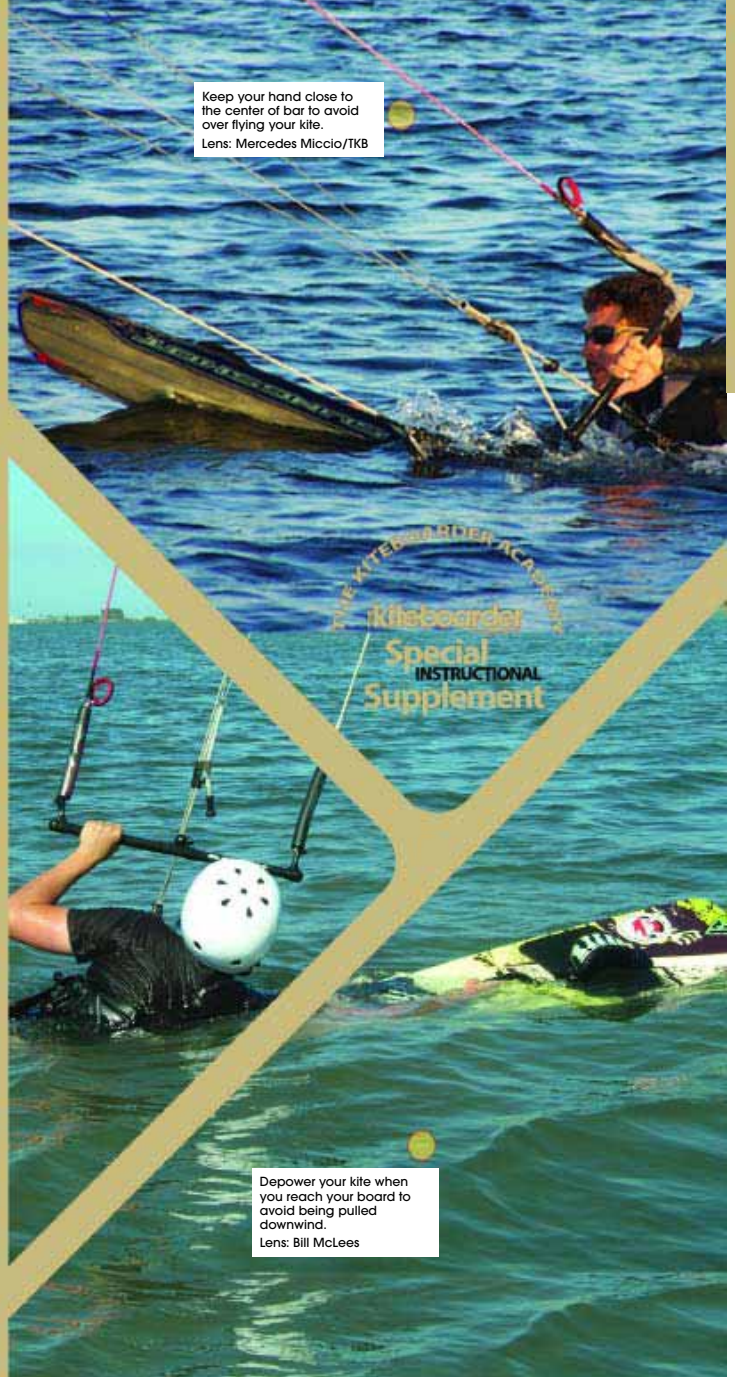
Step 3. Move the kite to the side of the wind window you would like to travel. Keep the kite about 45º above the water's surface.

An important aspect of body dragging upwind is to get the appropriate power in the kite. A good rule of thumb is to depower the kite first, and then power up as needed.

Step 4. Feel yourself gaining and losing ground upwind and adjust the angle of your "rudder" and the aggressiveness (sining) of your kite.

Step 5. You will reach the edge of the window and will need to switch things to travel upwind on the opposite side. Follow steps 1-4 above in a zigzag pattern until you have reached your board. Even if you can't get upwind, your board will drift downwind to you, as long as there is not much current.

If all else fails, $20 and a six-pack of good beer is a bargain price for board retrieval and is far cheaper than replacement.



Keep your hand close to the center of bar to avoid over flying your kite.
Lens: Mercedes Miccio/TKB

Depower your kite when you reach your board to avoid being pulled downwind.
Lens: Bill McLees

Lens: Matt Cotton

This is the ideal body position to go upwind and looks cool.

By Paul Lang

If you are a beginning kiteboarder, then you are definitely familiar with the walk of shame. You ride back and forth for a while and suddenly find yourself a few hundred yards downwind of where you started. No matter how hard you try, you just can't make it back to where you started from, so you are forced to come in and walk your humble butt back upwind. Being able to kiteboard upwind is one of the most important skills to learn in your progression to becoming a competent kiteboarder. It can also be very frustrating to learn if you are trying to figure it out on your own. Following are a few tips that will walk you through how it's done.

To be able to stay upwind while kiting, you first have to understand the main two components of going upwind: Proper Equipment and Proper Technique.

Proper Equipment

To get yourself upwind, you need a kite that will generate the proper amount of power for the board you are riding. Too little power and you will find yourself having to head downwind just to stay on a plane. Too much power and you will continually get pulled off your edge, sliding downwind towards the kite. Having the proper equipment for the conditions is critical for going upwind; even expert kiters have to do the walk of shame if they have too much or not enough power in their kites. Until you gain experience in picking the proper kite and/or board for the conditions, watch other riders on the water to judge how well their equipment is working for them.

Proper Technique

Kiting upwind is not a hard skill, but there is a definite technique to it. When you pop up out of the water and start riding, do not worry about going upwind until you have a good amount of board speed. If you try to point the board upwind while you are moving slow, your board will start sliding and you will land on your butt. As your speed increases, weight your back foot progressively more and more and lean away from the kite to dig your heel edge into the water. The more you edge your board and weight your back foot, the further upwind the board will travel. Here's where the tricky part is: If you edge too hard, you will slow down too much and force the kite to the edge of the window, which will cause you to lose power and sink back into the water. You have to develop a sensitivity to how powered the kite is. When you feel a lot of power, you weight your back foot and edge, and when you feel the power going away, you flatten the board and shift some weight to your front foot. The key is to find a point where you can keep constant edge pressure, while still moving upwind with good speed.

Correct body position will help you immensely in going upwind. When you edge your board, keep your front leg straight and your back leg slightly bent. Lean away from the kite with your shoulders, not your butt. Keep your back straight and think about driving your hips up towards the kite. As you edge, keep your ankles locked at 90º and lift up with your toes. It often helps to look over your forward shoulder at an upwind point.

All kiteboarders go through the process of learning how to ride upwind. It often takes a lot of practice. Go out and concentrate on using proper technique and only staying upwind. Once you have the skill to ride upwind, you will get to spend your sessions kiting, instead of walking.

Lens: Ryan Ricciteli

Proper Equipment

Check your gear before every session to ensure everything is safe to fly and ride.

Body Position

In lighter wind, keep your body upright and the board flat.

Don't do the frog squat; it doesn't work and looks like crap.

Photographs courtesy of REAL Kiteboarding

LEARNING TO JUMP

By Paul Lang

Special INSTRUCTIONAL Supplement

THE KITEBOARDER ACADEMY

Make sure you have good board speed heading into the jump, and get your kite at 45-60 degrees above the water. Remember, try not to move your kite a lot.

Stay loose and land with your knees bent and your board pointing downwind. Congrats! You just stomped your first air.

Photographs courtesy of REAL Kiteboarding

Almost all kiteboarders remember the first time they saw someone kiting. You probably thought, "Yea, that's pretty cool" until you saw the rider jump out of the water, do a trick, and ride away like it was nothing. That's when the "that looks cool" turns into "I want to do THAT." For many, jumping is the whole reason they get into kiting. After leaning to stay upwind, learning to jump becomes the next hurdle to overcome.

Have you tried to jump yet? If you have, I bet I know what happened the first time: You decided you were going to jump, so you sent the kite in the other direction, causing it to lift you above the water. You thought you would shoot 20 feet into the air just like the guys in the videos, but you didn't go up very far. Instead, you went flying downwind, splashed hard on your butt, and to add insult to injury, your kite fell out of the sky. This is a common mistake most beginners make. If you want to learn to jump properly, you have to first learn how to do an ollie: a small jump where you are using board pop, not the kite, to pull you off the water. Just like you have to learn to walk before you can crawl, you cannot jump 20 feet into the air if you cannot jump two feet with control.

The ollie is the most basic trick – you are simply popping the board off the surface of the water. Once you are able to do this, you can combine an ollie with sending the kite. When timed properly, this is how you jump HIGH. Learning to do small ollies before you try to jump big will teach you proper board technique for when you want to start going big.

Jumping Tips.

Start out riding with your board flat with good speed, and your kite 45-60º above the water. Through the whole maneuver move your kite as little as possible. In order to pop the board off the water, you need to do two things: create line tension and force the tail of the board down, which will cause the water to push up on your board.

- Start with your board flat on the water, moving with good speed.
- Begin edging your board and putting your weight on your back foot. Progressively increase edge pressure. This is known as a Progressive Edge, which is how wakeboarders jump.
- As you are increasing edge pressure with your Progressive Edge, push down with your back foot.
- Pop the board off the water by standing tall and pushing off your back foot. The line tension will carry you up and forward.

Bend your knees and land with the board pointing downwind.

It's really that simple. This entire process happens in less than a second, and there is a lot of timing to get right, so practice, practice, practice! If you edge too hard or too quickly, you will force the kite to the edge of the window and lose power. If you edge too slowly, not hard enough, or do not have enough board speed, you will not get any pop.

If you take the time to learn to jump using only your board skills, you will be able to work up to bigger and bigger jumps by sending the kite, timed with popping the board off the water. Before you know it, you will be the guy soaring above the waves, inspiring someone on the beach to say, "Now I want to do THAT!"

SHARE THE STOKE

kiteboarding etiquette

Photographs courtesy of REAL Kiteboarding, North Kiteboarding, Best Kiteboarding, Amundson Customs/John Amundson, Ryan Riccitelli Photography

While kiteboarding is all about freedom and the pursuit of happiness, sometimes there's not much justice—just ask anybody whose favorite local spot no longer allows kiting. With this in mind, we offer up the following thoughts on kiteboarding etiquette.

Go out of your way to protect the non-kiteboarders around you. Be sure you rig, launch, ride, and land in a place where even an idiot can't get hurt by you or your equipment.

Everyone else has the right of way. Most know there are on-water nautical rules (e.g. the rider with the right hand forward has right of way, etc.). However, when it comes to actual on-water practice, don't depend on those rules. It builds good faith, helps avoid accidents and rarely costs you anything to give somebody else the right-of-way whether it is rightfully theirs or not.

Surfers/windsurfers: Don't jump or spray them!

Swimmers: Avoid launching around swimmers at all times. Don't practice new tricks around them either – the kite could drop, power up and seriously injure someone.

When you are kiteboarding around a beginner, give them space. We were all beginners once and remember those first few sessions when we weren't sure what was going to happen next. Having someone else crossing (or jumping) close upwind or downwind of you is terrifying. Give 'em some space.

Avoid flying your kite over someone else on or off the water. With 30-meter lines and tons of power, we definitely have the potential to affect a large area around ourselves. In most places where kiteboarding access is being denied, it can be traced to reactionary governing agencies or unreasonably scared citizens. But if you dig deep enough you'll probably also find a kiter or kiters that have done something stupid to piss off or scare others on the beach or in the water.

Remember, kiteboarding is a privilege, not a right, so a little extra effort to grease the social wheels is not that big a deal to ensure that we can continue our pursuit of freedom and happiness.

Profiles

Ryan Riccitelli is the editor of The Kiteboarder Magazine and runs South Coast Kiteboarding School based in Corpus Christi, Texas. For more information check out southcoastkiteboarding.com or TheKiteboarder.com.

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Matt Nuzzo and **Trip Forman** are the co-founders of REAL Kiteboarding in Cape Hatteras, NC. For more info about gear, tuning, riding, self-launching and self-landing, check out the new REAL Instructional DVDs "Zero to Hero" and "Evolution" at your local kite shop or www.realkiteboarding.com .

Bart Gaska is the manager and head instructor for Kitesurfari in Seal Beach, CA. A full service retail and online shop, Kitesurfari is an IKO approved school and an excellent resource for info on kiting in the Los Angeles area, and all the new gear.

Michael Giebelhaus established Kite-Line.com in 1999, a store which prides itself on excellent customer service and industry knowledge. Kite-line offers lessons in the Northwest and Baja, kite adventures and domestic/international sales. In the winter, Michael operates out of La Ventana, Baja, offering demos of the latest gear.

Todd Martin is Senior Research Analyst for Kite-line. As part of the Kite-line 'tribe,' he gets to test all the latest gear and reports to the shop and customers on the pros and cons of each. His day job is consulting on environmental restoration and waste management at former nuclear weapons facilities.

Lindy DeVries-Campbell and **Shanna DeVries-Merrill** grew up in South Haven, Michigan. Along with their husbands Chris Campbell & Mike Merrill, they founded Sharkless Boardsports, an online kiteboarding resource and plan on opening a retail shop and formal kiteboarding school in the spring of 2006.