

INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE by Ryan Riccitelli

When I look back at my personal journey of learning to kite in 1999, a variety of images fill my head. Most of them are scary. But things have definitely changed since then. Kiteboarding schools have popped up around the world. Kiteboarding clubs and associations have organized to help promote and advocate responsible riding and to protect launch sites. The equipment is getting better every month, allowing light-wind warriors the ability to enjoy the sport in nearly windless conditions. However, the most important changes are the new faces I see every time I go to the beach. With the growing kiteboarding population, we must work together more than ever as a community to keep this sport thriving and safe.

We have put together this Introduction to Kiteboarding to offer a basic overview of the sport. By no means do we advocate that anyone should learn to kiteboard just by reading this. If you are a beginner, we hope you come away understanding the value of knowing safety precautions, taking lessons and getting involved with your local associations. Our goal is to point you in the right direction.

In this guide you will find many tips that will help save you time and money and ensure a positive kiting experience. It is broken down into many sections for both before and after you've had your lessons covering the aspects of the sport most important to beginners. We also tackle the most commonly asked questions in each section of this guide, as well as some general ones at the end. On the final page we list as many credible sources for learning and getting gear as we could find.

There were no schools when I learned to kiteboard. If this guide can help shorten your learning curve and teach you to kiteboard responsibly, the kiteboarding world will be a better place.

Ryan Riccitelli, Editor Kiteboarding Magazine.



WHY TAKE LESSONS? by Paul Menta

So you're wondering, why should you shell out the money for lessons? The most important reason is so you don't hurt yourself or others. You will also save yourself time and money by learning from qualified instructors who have developed instructional programs that will guarantee a positive learning experience. The following list gives more reasons you should take lessons:

1. **Save Money.** You will save more money by taking a lesson than you will trying to learn on your own. Why trash your new equipment when you can take a two-to-three-hour lesson and use the school's kites, boards, bars etc.
2. **Knock the learning curve in half.** Instructors will show students safe shortcuts and will get riders up to speed more efficiently.
3. **Experience.** Most schools have worked with thousands of students and can efficiently assess and address bad technique and set you on the right track.
4. **Equipment Education.** Schools are a great place to learn about the multitude of equipment available and what equipment is best suited to a beginner.
5. **Discounts.** Many schools have deals set up with shops and manufacturers. That way, when you are ready to buy your equipment, you will know you are getting a fair price.
6. **Positive Experience.** Most important, you will have fun and learn in a safe, nurturing environment.

Please make sure you take lessons from a certified school or instructor with insurance. Many schools will issue a card after your lesson detailing your experience and level. If you are having trouble choosing a qualified school, get in touch with your local kiteboarding association. Your local association will be able to supply a list of the most credible schools.

Paul Menta, Kitesurftheearth.com, Master Instructor for PASA.

Q&A

Q: How much does it cost to start kiteboarding?

A: A full set of gear (board, kite, bar, lines and harness) will run you anywhere from \$500 to \$2000 depending on what you decide to buy. Many manufacturers offer entry-level packages that are very reasonable.

Q: Is kiteboarding easy?

A: Yes and no. With good instruction, most people enjoy an incredibly fast learning curve. Without instruction, trying to learn kiteboarding can be frustrating and dangerous.

Q: Do I need to be in good shape to kiteboard?

A: A basic level of fitness is all you usually need. Modern gear can be adjusted to work for people with a broad range of physical ability.

Q: Why can't I just learn from a video or a magazine?

A: You can learn a lot from videos and magazines, but there is no substitute for having an instructor provide feedback, share local knowledge, maximize safety and customize instruction to your individual needs. Not to mention most of them are really cool guys!

Q: Why can't I just learn from my friend?

A: A friend is a good starting point, but he likely won't have the beginner-friendly gear nor the patience and experience to give you the most effective lesson.

Q: How much do lessons cost?

A: Lessons can range from around \$150 to \$300 for the basics.

Q: How do I find a school in my area?

A: Your local kiteboarding association or retail shop should be able to provide a list of schools in your area. Check out the back page.

Q: Do I need any skills before I take a lesson?

A: All you need is to be comfortable in the water and ready to learn. Many people learn kiteboarding despite limited board-sport experience.

Q: Why do lessons focus on flying the kite?

A: Flying the kite well is at least 90 percent of kiteboarding. Trying to ride a board without having good kite skills is like trying to wakeboard behind a boat that is swerving and changing speeds. It can be dangerous, and it is not much fun.

GET INVOLVED by Martin Kirk

From Florida to Hawaii, kiteboarders are uniting to address safety issues with the sport and to keep the sport growing. If you have a club in your area, check it out. If the group is serving the community and promoting safety, they could use your support. You can become a part of something bigger than yourself and collectively the group will achieve more than one can imagine. If you are a rider and your area doesn't have a club, let us help you start one. Don't think your riding area will never be challenged. One serious accident may very well be all the justification a local government needs to ban this new sport. Be proactive and help keep our sport growing safely. Join a club and get involved!

1. Joining a club opens members to the valuable exchange of information.
2. Periodic e-mails keep members informed on upcoming events such as scheduled meetings, beach cleanups, public hearings that affect our sport and, of course, beach parties.
3. Membership also provides recreational riders the opportunity to speak with the pros and learn from their experience.
4. Many clubs have connections with equipment retailers/manufacturers and many extend special discounts to the members.
5. Some clubs have a mentoring program. After completing professional instruction, new riders are matched up with a more experienced rider to learn the ins and outs of the riding area.

Martin Kirk, Kiteboarding School of Maui, president of HKA, Maui chapter.



TIMELINE

Times given are based on a poll of instructors.
Riding 3-5 times a week, with some instruction,
good steady winds and the correct gear.

Clueless

(1 to 3 hours) You can set up and fly the kite safely, use it to body drag and re-launch it when it crashes.

Semi-Clueless

(3 to 6 hours) You can water-start and stay on a plane for a good run and maybe even pull your very first air. Don't get too excited yet. You will be going downwind and usually walking back upwind.

Humbled Clueless

(6 hours to 3 days) You can stay on a plane consistently but have to stop to change directions and you are still crashing your kite often. You become humbled during this phase because you have a lot of time for introspection as you are walking upwind.

Humbled Beginner

(3 days to 3 weeks) You learn to pull basic flat-water transitions and/or jibes and can start experimenting with the whipping power of your kite. Once you learn to use the kite's power you are on your way to trying new tricks.

Dedicated Beginner

(1 week to 1 month) If you stay dedicated you can learn to stay upwind and your first jumps and tricks will come as you progress.

Kiteboarder

(1 to 4 months) You can stay upwind every time, land most of your jumps and your kite rarely crashes.

WIND

WIND WINDOW AND HOW THE KITE RELATES by John Holzhall

No matter what river, ocean, lake, or gorge you venture out on, you start kiteboarding by walking to the waters edge and putting your back to the wind in order to identify your kite clock and potential hazards. With your back to the wind, put your arms out left and right crosswind, or 90 degrees off the wind. Your arms are now pointing at where you want to go and where you want to come back to.

THE KITE CLOCK

With your back to the wind, raise your hands up over your head and place them together. Look forward and up. This is 12 o'clock on the kiteboard clock, or the "neutral position." However, it is only the neutral position if you allow the kite to settle at 12 o'clock. If your kite is traveling toward the neutral position you are creating lift and power. It's kind of like a car going downhill—if you shift the car into neutral just before you come to the red light at the bottom of a hill, don't expect to stop.

LOCATING THE POWER ZONES

Put your back to the wind and point your hands left and right. You are pointing at 9 o'clock and 3 o'clock, or crosswind, on the kite clock. As the wind changes, so does your kite clock. Raise each hand up one hour on the clock and you will be pointing at 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock. Raise your hands again and you will be pointing at 1 and 11. Raise your hands again one hour and you will be pointing up to 12 o'clock, or the neutral position. Very simply, the power zones on the kiteboarding clock are from 1 to 2, 2 to 1, 10 to 11 and 11 to 10. When powered up on the water, advanced kiteboarders spend the majority of their time with their kites at 2 o'clock or 10 o'clock.

John Holzhall, Instructor for Action Sports.

Q&A

Q: How can I tell which way the wind is blowing and its strength?

A: Pick up some sand and toss it into the air. The sand will blow in the direction of the wind. There are several efficient wind meters on the market that measure wind speeds accurately. It's a minimal investment that will help you ensure you take out the right kite.

Q: How much wind do I need to go?

A: With the right gear, a 170-pound person with average skill can ride and stay upwind in as little as 6 mph.

FORE PLAY by Paul Menta

A great way to prep for lessons is to train on a small foil kite. This will allow you to learn the basic physics and pull of a two-line kite without the danger of being overpowered. There are many trainer packages available. They run from \$69 to \$120 depending on the brand and manufacturer. If you are flying a power kite for the first time, DO NOT fly in over 10 mph wind, and make sure there is no one around who could potentially be injured if you lose control. Most importantly, always use your safety system when flying!

The following is an exercise you can practice with your foil trainer kite. Remember, the kite is small and it will react much more quickly than a bigger kite. If you are not careful you can develop the bad habit of oversteering.

Try launching your trainer kite and imagining a clock. Bring the trainer kite into neutral position or 12 o'clock above your head. Practice flying your kite from 12 o'clock to 3 o'clock in a steady pattern, taking the kite up to 12 and steadily diving it toward 3 and then back up to 12. When you have this motion down, switch to the other side and practice flying the kite from 12 o'clock to 9 o'clock in a steady pattern. This will simulate the power stroke or flying pattern of a larger kite and will prepare you for the crossover. Be sure not to jerk the kite or send the kite into loops. This type of radical movement can potentially cause injury with a bigger kite.

Q&A

Q: What is the best trainer kite to buy?

A: Most manufacturers sell quality trainer kites. Ask your local school instructor or dealer to help you make the right choice.

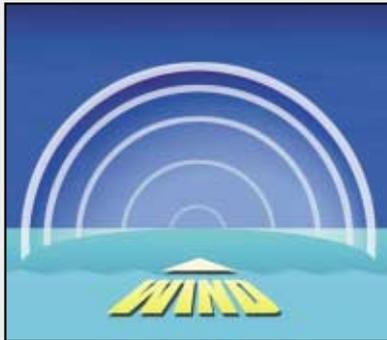
Q: Do I need to fly a trainer kite before I ride on the water?

A: Lessons are your best bet before purchasing or trying any new gear. Many schools will teach you briefly with a trainer kite and then help you learn on their equipment. This will give you the chance to kick the tires on different equipment and see what works for you.

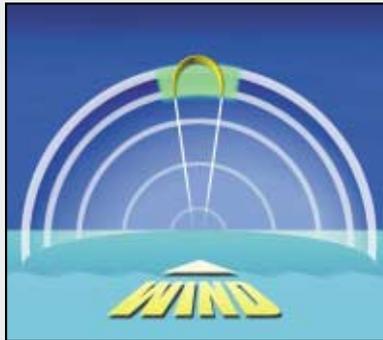


UNDERSTANDING WIND

WIND WINDOW



KITE AT 12 O'CLOCK



KITE IN POWER ZONE



LAUNCHING AND SAFE KITE-FLYING ON LAND by Dave Tyburski

Flying kites on land is an excellent way to develop the flying skills needed for kiteboarding. However, flying a powered traction kite on land, no matter how big or how small, requires following certain safety rules.

Keep your drop zone clear

One of the most important safety rules for flying kites on land is to give yourself lots of room downwind. Your drop zone is the area downwind and to the sides of the pilot, with the distance equal to the length of your lines plus half a line length. For example, if you are flying 20 meter lines, your drop zone would then be 30 meters downwind and out to the sides of you. Your kite and lines can affect anything in this area, and anything in this area can affect you. ALWAYS keep clear of people, trees, buildings, cars, lifeguard towers, power lines, etc. This will ensure safety for you and everyone around you.

Launch your kite out of the harness

When launching your kite on land, it is always much safer not to be hooked into the harness line. Most of the primary safety systems of today's control bars require the bar to be unhooked from the harness line in order for them to function. With a four-line kite, depower the kite with the sheeting strap while launching and then power it up again when safely in the water.

When on land, keep your kite in neutral at the edge of the wind window

As a beginner, you are likely to be taught to fly your kite directly overhead in neutral to keep the kite from pulling. This is true on the water. However, when parking the kite overhead in neutral on land, there are a few hazards every beginner should be aware of:

Pilot Lifting: In gusty winds, the kite can create sudden bursts of power that can lift the pilot off the ground.

Falling Kite: Another potential hazard is the risk of the kite's "hindenberging," or luffing, in which the kite can fall from the sky leading-edge first and power up before it hits the ground. Not only can this damage the kite but it can cause a beginner to be dragged along the ground.

Attention Focused Up, Not AROUND: With the kite overhead, beginners often focus on the kite in the air instead of paying attention to potential obstacles on the ground. With the kite in neutral at the side of the window, the pilot is able to see where he is walking and will have a better perspective on the drop zone.

The best way to avoid these hazards when on land is to fly the kite in the neutral zone at the side of the window instead of flying the kite overhead. When you become competent at launching, it is ideal to bring the kite up to the edge of the window and hold it in neutral to the side, without bringing it entirely overhead. This allows you to handle the gusts and lulls without having the kite fall from the sky. This may pull you in the direction of the kite in the window. If so, you should launch the kite so you are pulled toward the water.

Dave Tyburski, New Wind Kiteboarding School and Pro Rider.

Q&A

Q: Is it safe to jump on land with my kite?

A: It is never safe to jump on land at any level of kiting expertise.

Q: What happens if I put my kite up and I am lifted off the ground?

A: This can be a frightening experience when learning to kite. Don't panic! Try to sit down and steer the kite slowly to the side of the edge of the window. If someone is around, have them hold you down until you can safely land your kite. If all else fails, grab the tether on your leash and let your bar go. This will depower your kite enough so you won't get hurt.

KITES AND BOARDS

KITE DIFFERENCES by Peter Trow

Foils, Inflatables, Two-line, Four-line

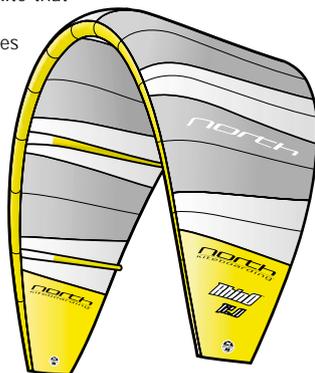
Have you ever noticed that at almost every beach you go to there are always some guys talking about the right or wrong gear to use? Of course, they are the ones using the correct gear, and in their opinion, everything else sucks. Are you confused about what type of gear you should be riding? Don't let these people get to you. Remember, the most important thing is that you use the equipment you are most comfortable with.

What's a foil?

A foil kite uses a double surface structure that provides a foil-like airflow similar to a traditional wing. Its wing-like shape is supported by a bridle that connects to a number of points on the kite's base and leads to a two- or four-line connection. Typically foils maintain their shape by air continually flowing into the leading edge and filling a series of cells within the body of the kite. No need for any pumps here! The kite will maintain its shape until its leading edge is moved out of the wind. The flat wing shape of a foil gives it a greater projected area, which equals more power and efficiency.

What's an inflatable?

An inflatable is a single-surface kite that has a semi-rigid structure. The inflatable's leading edge and series of struts allow these kites to maintain their shape while flying. Once the bladders are pumped up, it takes on a curved shape and stays that way until the air is released, either by opening the kite's valves or by a leak. Because an inflatable is more rigid than a foil kite, it requires fewer bridle lines, or none at all. Overall, inflatables are the most popular type of kite to use for kiteboarding because they float and, in general, they're pretty easy to re-launch.



Four-line inflatable

What's up with two-lines?

The big advantage to flying a two-line kite is simplicity. It's easier to set up and put away, and there's less chance of getting tangles. Because of these features, beginners may prefer to learn on two-line inflatable kites, which also tend to be easier to re-launch.

What about four-lines?

Four-line kites give you added leverage, making the kite very quick and responsive. On four-line inflatable kites you have the ability to sheet the kite in and out, thereby adjusting the kite's power in gusts and lulls by changing the pitch of the front lines. This really opens up the wind range of the kite. Four-lines can be more complex when setting up because there are four lines to deal with, making a greater potential for tangles. Despite this, four-line kites are very popular and have expanded the light-air limits of kiteboarding.

What's up with three-lines?

Most three-line kites are foils where the break line bridles are attached to a single line that runs down to the center of the bar thus giving the name the three line kite. Many of the modern three lines are designed to give the rider the ability to change the pitch of the leading edge by using a chicken loop system, which allows the rider to power and depower the kite through the gusts and lulls.

Peter Trow, pro rider and videographer.

BOARD! WHAT SHOULD I RIDE? by Ryan Levinson

Kiteboarding encompasses such a variety of riding styles it's no wonder there are so many types of boards to choose from. You can have a blast on pretty much any board, but some are better-suited for certain types of riding. Here are some generalizations that may help you decide among directionals, twin-tips and wakeboards.

Directionals have a clear nose and tail, and usually have three foot straps and three or four fins toward the tail. They can range from 4'6" to 8'6" long and are usually between 16" and 20" wide. If you are used to surfboards or sailboards you may find directionals have the most familiar feel. They are popular in the surf and in flat water for riders who like a "surfy" feel to their boards. Directionals are thought by many people to be the easiest boards for beginners to get upwind, and consequently easy to learn on.

Wakeboards aren't usually the wakeboards used behind boats, but they look pretty similar. Wakeboard-style boards are popular among riders who are into wakeboarding behind a boat and like technical wake-style tricks or who like to use their edge to ride very powered up.

Twin-tips offer versatility. If you want a board that works in the widest variety of conditions, twin-tips may be the ticket. They allow you to switch directions (jibe) with the ease of a wakeboard, yet they work over a wide wind range like many directionals.

Ryan Levinson, West Coast Kiteboarding School, president of SDKA.



Directional



Twin-tip



Wakeboard

Q&A

Q: What kites are best to learn with?

A: Many foils are used for trainer kites. However, it is recommended you use either a foil kite that can re-launch efficiently or use an inflatable. Most schools teach with inflatable kites.

Q: How many kites do I need?

A: Modern kites can handle a wide range of wind conditions. In most areas you can get by with two or three kites.

Q: What happens when you crash your kite?

A: With some instruction and practice, many kites (especially inflatables) can be re-launched from the water. Make sure to find out if your kite is water re-launchable. If so, take the time to learn this important skill.

Q: Can I put straps on a surfboard or use any old wakeboard to learn?

A: Yes, you can use either, but your learning curve will be shortened with a board designed specifically for kiteboarding.

SAFETY

KITEBOARDING SAFELY by Ken Winner

Big kites aren't kid stuff. They can yank you harder than a Rottweiler on a leash chasing a baby stroller. They can drag you over rocks, fences and highways. A kite that gets out of control on the beach can hit moms and kids while going 30 mph. A tensioned kite string can work on skin like a deli slicer. An untensioned line can loop around a finger or an arm and leave the limb owner bereft when the kite unexpectedly powers up and takes off. In short, kites, their lines and their control bars can be dangerous to flyers and to everyone else nearby. So how can you safely enjoy kiteboarding? There are so many kite don'ts that it's scary to list them all. Take some time to study this list.

Ken Winner is the producer of Kiteboarding How to Rip Videos.



KITEBOARDING DON'TS

1. Don't fly near or over people. Don't even fly within 100 yards upwind of beach-goers. Experts may violate this rule by sailing among windsurfers and other kiteboarders, but novices should avoid others at all costs.
2. Don't fly near power lines, roads, trees, electrical storms and so on. Power lines are a particular problem because they cross water and run along some shores. A kite can drag you into a power line that you think is a safe distance downwind. For that matter, a kite can drag you onto a highway that runs near the shore.
3. Don't fly a full-sized traction kite on land—at least not until you have a lot of experience with it. It's best to walk into hip-deep water before you even launch your kite. If the water's too deep for walking, do what kiteboarders in the Gorge do: Swim.
4. Don't fly in onshore wind until you're an expert. You're likely to get pulled onto the beach.
5. Don't fly in offshore wind unless you're an expert. You'll get blown offshore. This rule doesn't apply, of course, to small lakes.
6. Avoid gusty winds. They make learning very difficult and somewhat dangerous.
7. Don't go any farther from shore than you're willing to swim back.
8. Don't get tangled in the kite lines or bridle. If you have to self-rescue (fold up the kite while on the water and paddle to shore), pull the kite to you by pulling only on the kite line to which your kite leash is attached. Put no tension on the other line.
9. Don't practice jumping on land. It's really dangerous, especially if the wind isn't rock-steady. If you want to practice jumping before you get on a board, do it in deep water.
10. Don't fly the kite while holding the control bar at one end. The kite will spin out of control and twist the lines so that further control is impossible.
11. Don't unwind twisted kite lines by looping the kite (until you're an expert). Spin your body instead.

KITEBOARDING DO'S

1. Spend several hours flying a small stunt kite on land before you fly a big traction kite.
2. Follow normal kite-flying safety procedures; that is, fly in clear, open spaces.
3. Always fly or ride with a kite leash that (a) ensures that the kite totally depowers should you have to let go of the control bar and (b) keeps the kite attached to you when you let go. This can save you from a long swim. More important, it helps keep the kite and control bar from hurting other people.
4. Always employ a kite leash with a reliable quick-release device. The quick-release ensures that you can quickly, easily and thoroughly separate from the kite should you need to.
5. Most kiteboarders will be pulled through a briar patch, across a highway and into a 10,000-volt power line before they'll let go of the control bar. It's an anti-survival instinct. To overcome it, practice releasing the control bar under safe, controlled conditions.
6. Consider wearing a helmet to protect your head from the board.
7. Enlist a friend to help you launch your kite.
8. Ride with a buddy who can assist you, and whom you can assist, should something go wrong.
9. Wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket if you have any doubt about your ability to swim.
10. Wear a wetsuit, booties, sunscreen, Lycra shirt, sunglasses and other protection from the elements.
11. Learn in light, steady wind.
12. Use the kite to pull you to one side of the board or the other whenever the board is upwind of you. That way you can avoid being directly downwind of the board and in a position where a wave or gust can throw it into you.
13. Always keep the board's whereabouts in mind. If the kite starts to pull you into the board, release the control bar.
14. Always know the kite's position and direction of travel. When in doubt, fly the kite high.
15. If you launched in side-shore winds and are being blown onto a lee shore, start planning well ahead of time how you're going to get the kite down safely. Wait too long and you'll find yourself in trouble.

SAFETY

LAUNCH SITES by Trip Forman

Choosing the right place to ride can make your first days on the water a lot more enjoyable. Conditions to consider when choosing a proper launch include:

1. Wind direction and strength
2. Wind direction in relation to beach orientation
3. Beach size and surface
4. Crowd factor
5. Skill level required for the launch
6. Water conditions
7. Local rules and regulations for your chosen launch



The most important element in kiteboarding is wind direction and strength. For people coming from non-wind oriented sports like wakeboarding, snowboarding, skateboarding, skiing, etc., learning wind conditions and direction will take a few days. It may seem too basic, but when watching the weather on TV or the 'Net, wind directions indicate the direction from which the wind is coming (not where it's going). Southwest winds come from the southwest and flow toward the northeast. Wind strength is another element to familiarize yourself with. Your riding will now depend on wind strength measured in knots or miles per hour (1 knot equals roughly 1.17 mph, take a shot). Before kiteboarding, days at the beach were "windy" or "breezy" or "calm." Now you must know the difference between 10 mph, 20 mph and 30 mph. Using a wind meter to measure the wind strength can help you learn what these wind speeds look like on the water's surface (especially if you do not come from a wind sport and lack the necessary experience evaluating wind speeds). Knowing the wind strength will ensure using the right-size kite for the conditions and will prevent you from putting one up in dangerously windy conditions or wasting your time when the wind is obviously too light.

Once you have determined the wind direction, your next step is to choose a launch location where that wind is blowing between side shore (parallel to the beach) or side onshore (45-degree angle onto the beach from the right or left). Straight onshore winds are not good for beginners because without upwind riding ability you cannot get off the beach. Offshore winds are dangerous for all riders because beginners will blow out to sea and advanced riders can be stranded if their gear fails. Offshore winds are also very inconsistent in velocity and direction due to obstructions on land. If your local beach has either onshore or offshore winds, look for another location that has a different beach orientation to align these winds more side shore to the beach. If you are unable to stay upwind, make sure there is a safe location to land downwind of your launching spot.

Your first days of riding should definitely be at an uncrowded beach with few or no people in the immediate area of your launch on the land. Crowds in the water are also something to avoid. Never kite in the designated swimming areas and also avoid crowded surf spots (unless you like finding your windshield smashed). Choose a launching area that will allow two times the line length of extra space beyond the kite in every direction. Surface conditions are also important. Sand is forgiving. So is grass, although it's more technical to navigate with a flying kite. Rocky launches are very dangerous and should be avoided until you reach expert level, if not totally. Once you are of more advanced ability, you can choose tighter launches, but avoid them in the beginning and err on the side of being too safe.

Don't overestimate your ability when choosing a launch. You should always be able to return to shore safely under your own power. If you show up at your beach and the surf is big or the wind is too strong and these conditions are clearly beyond your ability and/or equipment, take the day off and wait for the conditions to subside. If you have a choice, flat water is far easier for learning to kiteboard than surf conditions. Warm water or water that is comfortable given your wetsuit selection will also facilitate learning. If the water is cool, never underestimate your suit selection. Always have enough suit for a long swim back to the beach. Always be aware of local currents, both down the beach with the wind and rip currents that can drag you out away from land.

Many established riding areas have local rules and regulations governed by kiteboarding clubs, organizations or associations. Know these rules and regulations so you don't ruin it for everyone!

Trip Foreman, REAL Kiteboarding, Cape Hatteras

Q&A

Q: Do I have to live near an ocean to kiteboard?

A: No! Anywhere with a stretch of clear land, water, snow and wind can be ridden. People ride on lakes, rivers, snowfields, grass fields, even hard-packed dirt. So for all of you middle Americans, this sport is the best-kept secret. Take it to your windblown lakes and snowfields!

Q: Is it safe to ride in offshore winds?

A: It is never safe to ride in any conditions you cannot handle. Make a plan before you go out and designate where you will drift if you or your equipment fails. Most importantly, never ride alone!

LOOK OUT! KITEBOARDING RIGHT OF WAY By Ryan Levinson

As kiteboarding gains in popularity, spots are becoming more crowded and collisions are more likely. Knowing who has the right of way helps limit the chances of colliding with someone and getting hurt, and ultimately can prevent bodily injury or destruction of gear. Kiteboarding right of way is based on where you and the other riders are located relative to the wind. For this article, assume that you are riding facing your kite (on your heel edge).

There are three types of collisions: kite, board and other.

Kite collisions are the most common, yet are the easiest to avoid. Just that remember the upwind kiteboarder (closest to the wind) flies the kite higher, and the downwind kiteboarder flies the kite lower. This guarantees the kites will pass by each other without tangling lines. Remember "up-wind, fly high" or "upwind, up kite."

Avoiding board collisions takes a bit more thought, but with practice will become second nature. To avoid board collisions, remember:

1. If a rider has the right arm forward (toward the direction of travel) and the other rider has the left arm forward, then the rider with the right arm forward has the right of way: "Right has right."
2. If both riders have the same arm forward, then the downwind rider (farthest from the wind) has the right of way.
3. A rider being passed from behind has the right of way.
4. When close to the shore, a rider heading out has the right of way over a rider returning.

Other collisions occur when a kiteboarder or kite collides with a non-kiteboarder (swimmer, surfer, kids, families, etc.). These collisions can easily lead to negative public feelings and more restrictions. To be safe, assume that non-kiteboarders have the right of way over kiteboarders. Better yet, TRY AND STAY AWAY from non-kiters and don't sweat it.

Having the right of way does not make it OK to smash into someone. If there is a collision, both riders are at fault. By being aware of your surroundings and by following these guidelines, you will lessen the chances of a collision, help the flow of riders and ensure the safety of everyone around you.

Q&A

Q: What do I do if someone is coming right at me and I don't know what to do?

A: The best thing you can do is to look at your surroundings. If you see someone coming in your direction, either ride downwind of them or put your kite in neutral well ahead of their passing you. Many new riders make the mistake of panicking and putting their kite straight up in neutral at the last minute. If you know your surroundings you will have time to telegraph your position.

Q: What do I do if someone tries to out-point me when I have the right of way?

A: Give them plenty of room to pass you. They are clueless!

Q&A

THE ONLY STUPID QUESTIONS ARE THE QUESTIONS NOT ASKED!

Q: Can I kiteboard in very light wind?

A: Yes, we have seen kiteboarders riding in as light as 5 knots of wind. In addition, the equipment is evolving quickly to be more efficient in light wind.

Q: Can I kiteboard in very strong wind?

A: Yes, you can kiteboard in over 40 knots of wind, but must use a kite size suited to the wind range you are riding in. If you are a beginner, be accompanied by a credible instructor or professional.

Q: Can I re-launch the kite from the water?

A: Yes, most kites will re-launch very easily depending on the kite's size and rider experience. Some foil kites are not designed to re-launch. However, some have inflatable cells to aid in a re-launch. Please check with your local school or dealer to make sure you buy a kite that is best-suited to your skill level.

Q: What equipment do I need to kiteboard?

A: You will need a kite, a bar and lines, a board, a harness and an open mind. In addition, there is a variety of optional acces-

sories to customize your equipment. Please do a little research on the Internet or through your local dealer or school to ensure you buy the right gear.

Q: Can I kiteboard on the snow or ice?

A: Yes, you can use your kite to pull you on a snowboard or skis. Many riders have been crossing over to the snow and developing boards and equipment specifically for this riding style. Check out www.kitesnowboard.com for information and tips.

Q: Do I need an assistant to launch or land the kite?

A: You normally do not need any assistance to launch or land your kite unless you are in a crowded beach where the safety of others is at risk or you are learning. It is not recommended to have an inexperienced person launch or land your kite at any time. Often they put themselves and everyone around them in danger if something goes wrong. Different kites have different launching, landing and water re-launching techniques. It is best to work with your local school or dealer to learn the ins and outs of your equipment before you get into a bad situation.

SHOPS SCHOOLS AND ASSOCIATIONS

USA ASSOCIATIONS

Bay Area Kitesurfing Association
www.bayareakitesurfingassociation.org
California Kiteboarding Association
www.calkite.org
Florida Kitesurfing Association
<http://fka.kitelife.com>
Hawaii Kiteboarding Association
www.808kite.com
San Diego Kitesurfing Association
www.sdka.org
Southern California Kiteboarding Association

SHOPS

CA

Action Water Sports--Marina Del
Advanced Surf Designs--Burlingame
Advanced Surf Designs--Santa Cruz
Berkeley Board Sports--San Francisco
Boardsports Berkely--Berkely
Boardsports Marin--Marin
Boardsports San Francisco--San Francisco
Bruce Sheldon--Rio Vista
Captain Kirks--San Pedro
Caution Kites--Santa Cruz
Chris Ruddy Kitesports--Oceanside
Delta Windsurf Co.--Rio Vista
Extreme Sports--Island Mirada
Kites Etc.--Sunset Beach
Lake Tahoe Waterski School--S. Lake Tahoe
Liquid Force--Oceanside
Litewave Designs--Fair Oaks
Long Beach Windsurf Center--Long Beach
Marin Boardsports--Marin
Mountain & Surf--Sacramento
Murray's Marine--Carpinteria
SOL Boarding--La Jolla
Solo Sports--Irvine
Sports Ltd.--Thousand Oaks
Windcraft--Rio Vista
Windsport--San Diego
Windsurf Diabolo--Antioch
Xstreamline--Wilmington

CO

Got-Ta-Go Windsurfing--Durango
Larson's Ski & Sport--Wheatridge
Outpost Sunsport--Fort Collins
S & W Performance Marine--Denver
The Edge--Pueblo
Tommy's Slalom Shop--Denver

DE

East of Maui--Dewey Beach

FL

Ace Performer--Ft Myers
AquaGlider.com--Melbourne Beach
B.C. Surf and Sport--Ft. Lauderdale
Catch A Wave--Coconut Grove
Hana Crew--Satellite Beach
Flying Fish Flight School--Islamorada
Island Style Windsurfing--Sarasota
Key West Kite Company, Inc.--Key West
Kitemare.com--Neptune Beach
Rouge Wave--Destin
Sandy Point Progressive--South Daytona
Sea & Sky Sports--Fort Walton
The Board Room--Naples
Tommy's Surf, Slalom and Guitar--Lake Worth
Upwind Surfing--Miami
Water Play--Coconut Grove
Water Sports Unlimited--Fort Lauderdale
Watersports West--Largo

GA

High Tied Surf Shop--Tybee Island
Whitcap Windsurfing--Evans

HI

Extreme Sports Maui--Kahului
Gravity--Kailua
Hanalei Surf Company--Hanalei
Hawaii Surf & Sail--Haleiwa
Hawaiian Island Surf & Sport--Kahului
Hawaiian Watersports--Honolulu
High Performance Kites--Honolulu
Hi-Tech Surf Sports--Kahului/Kailua
Sailboards & Kayaks--Kailua

Kite High--Wailua
Kiteboarding.com--Kahului
Maui Windsurf Company--Kahului
Naish Hawaii Ltd.--Kailua
Neil Pryde Maui--Maui
OffDaLip.com Inc.--Honolulu
Power Zone--Kahului
RNR Surf & Ski--Kaneohe MCAS
Sea Star Kauai--Kalaheo
Second Wind Sail & Surf--Kahului

ID

Ground Zero--Sandpoint
Ketchum Windsurfing--Sun Valley

IL

Bitter End Yacht Club--Chicago
Windward Sports--Chicago

IN

Outpost Sports--Mishawaka

LA

West Lake Watersports--West Lake

MA

Bob Smith's Wilderness House--Boston
Force 5 Sailboards--Nantucket
Sail World Cape Cod--Buzzards Bay
Sound Sailboards--Hyannis
The Wilderness House--Cambridge

MD

East of Maui--Annapolis

MI

Crystal Lake Adventure Sports--Beulah
Kiteflight--Allan

MI

Mackinac Kite Company--Grand Haven
Modern Skate & Surf--Royal Oak
T William Cat Surf & Sport--Keego Harbor
Wind & Wake--Detroit
Wind & Wake Boardshop--Grosse Pointe Shores

MN

Scuba Center--Minneapolis
The House--St. Paul

MO

Summer USA--Lake Ozark

MS

Warped Sports--Ocean Springs

MT

Caird Boatworks--Helena
Rocky Mountain Windsports--Great Falls
Surf Cycle N' Sail--Whitefish

NC

Action Surf Shop--Atlantic Beach
Blowing in the Wind--Wilmington
Fox Sports--Buxton
Hatteras Surf & Sail--Waves
Hatteras Wind & Surf--Avon
Kites Unlimited--Atlantic Beach
Kitty Hawk Sports--Nags Head
Kittyhawk Kites--Kill Devil Hills
Realkiteboarding--Cape Hatteras
Ride Hatteras--Avon
Sail World Cape Hatteras--Avon
Windsurfing Hatteras--Avon

NH

Baxter Sailing Center--Sea Brook
Brave New World--Point Pleasant Beach
Island Surf & Sail--Brant Beach
Lighten Up--Stone Harbor

NV

BC Wake N Skate--Boulder City
Levitation Kiteboarding--Las Vegas
Snowind Sports--Reno

NY

Curtis Sport Connection--Hamburg
Main Beach--Wainscott

Windsurfing Hamptons--South Hampton

OH

River Sports--Rocky River
Ski Limited--Youngstown

OR

All Surf Industry--Portland
Big Air Windsurfing--Langlois
Big Winds--Hood River
Cleanline--Seaside
Floras Lake Windsurfing--Langlois
Gorge Performance--Portland
Lester Polyester Surf Shop--Hood River
Northwave--Hood River
Northwest Surf Shop--Bend
Ocean Pulse Surfboards--Newport
Pacific Wave--Warrenton
Storm Warning--Hood River
Westside Ride--Bend
Windance--Hood River

PA

Extreme Windsurfing--Bethlehem

RI

Island Sports Middleton--Middleton

SC

HalfMoon Outfitters--Charleston
Sail & Ski--Myrtle Beach

TX

C D Ski & Sport--Fort Worth
Cline Street Sailboards--Corpus Christi
Precision Kites--Portland
Pro Kitesurf Gear--Corpus Christi
Retail Concepts--Stafford
Traction Sports--Seguin
Windsurf INC--South Padre
Windsurfing Sports, Inc.--Seabrook
Wings--Orange

UT

Cloud 9--Draper
Marine Products Pro Shop--Salt Lake City
Talon Sport--Midvale

VA

Atlantic Water Sports--Chesapeake
Headrush--Virginia Beach
South East Expeditions--Cape Charles

VT

Inland Sea Vermont--Burlington

WA

N x NW Surf Company--Port Angeles
NW Boardsports--Lynnwood
Ranier Board Co.--Lynnwood
Taggert's Dive Locker--Gig Harbor
The Pro Shop Inc.--Longview
Urban Surf--Seattle
Waterwalker--Carson
Westvista Windsurfing--Wenatchee
Windwing Designs Inc.--Stevenson

WI

Coontail Watersports--Boulder Junction
Fish Creek Kite Company--Fish Creek
Rich's Watersports--Madison
Southport Rigging--Kenosha

French West Indies

Surf Ace--Saint Martin

Puerto Rico

VelaUno--San Juan

Canada

AB

Potter's--Edmonton

BC

North Shore--Vancouver
Pacific Boarder--Vancouver

ON

Boardsports/Wind Promo--Toronto
Sepp's Ski & Snowboard--Kingston
Ski Pro Shop--ST. Catharines
Tropical North--Barrie
Silent Sports--Thornhill

NS

Kannon Beach--Dartmouth

QC

Boutique Sharks--Laval
30 Noeuds--Vanier

MEXICO

Twist Sports--Guadalajara
JA Mexico

SCHOOLS

Baja

Los Barilles Highwind Center--Los Barilles

CA

Santa Barbara Kiteboarding Co.--Santa Barbara
West Coast Kite boarding--San Diego
Xtreme Big Air--Shell Beach
Manta Wind & Watersports--San Diego

CO

Real Kite boarding--Breckenridge

Costa Rica

Kitesurfing 2000 School

FL

3-2-1 Kite School--St Petersburg
Kitesurf the Earth--Key West
Kitesurf USA--Ft Lauderdale

French West Indies

Kitesurfing Club Nathalie Simon--Saint Martin

HI

Action Sports Maui--Kahului
Aloha Kiteboarding Academy--Kailua
Kailua Sailboards & Kayaks Inc.--Kailua
Kiteboarding School of Maui--Kahului
Maui Sailing Center--Kahului
Maui Sports Unlimited--Kahului

MI

Naish Kiteboarding School--Detroit

NC

Kitty Hawk Kites--Kitty Hawk
Real Kite boarding--Cape Hatteras

NJ

Extreme Wind Surf--Atlantic City

NY

Windsurfing Hamptons--South Hampton

ONT Canada

Windsalof--Windsor

OR

New Wind Kiteboarding School--Hood River
Ocean Signal Kite School--Hood River

PR

Real Kite boarding

TX

Mongani Sky Pirates--Corpus Christi

WI

Fish Creek Kite Company--Fish Creek