

LEARN TO SURF

FROM SCRATCH



WHAT TO EXPECT



1

Learn To Surf: Safety In Surfing

2

Learn To Surf: The Ocean

3

Learn To Surf: Outside The Water

4

Learn To Surf: In The Water



Learn To Surf: Safety In Surfing

Where Are You Surfing?

As a learner surfer, it is important to know what questions to ask when starting. One of the first things that you need to look out for is the location or the beach that you will be learning to surf on. We can start by asking, "where do you want to surf, where is the location, what is the location like where you want to surf." We need to learn the condition of the beach, we need to know how many people are there and why.

Simply, we are looking for whether the beach is the best place to surf for a learner surfer. If we look at a beach, do we see a lot of people in the white water waves? Do we see a lot of people at the back behind the impact zone? Because if no one is in the white water waves, that might give you an indication that it might not be the best location to learn to surf. If you see plenty of people in the white water waves and they're all catching waves, you know that it's a great place for you to learn how to surf. This is because there's a whole bunch of other people doing it.

Pro-Tip: It's all about knowing what to do first regarding catching the right wave. As a learner surfer, you should ONLY be catching white water (broken) waves. White water waves are green waves that are broken and are generally closer to the shore, and that is where you find learner surfers. Green waves are where surfers can perform tricks and maneuvers.



Learn To Surf: Safety In Surfing

Correct Equipment: The Surfboard

You may have seen people buying their surfboards at your local surf shop, especially learner surfers getting their big boards. But it's not as simple as entering a shop asking for the biggest board just because you saw other people doing it. Yes, a bigger board is better for a learner surfer but we have a lot of things to consider.

Why is a big board the right equipment to use when you are a beginner surfer? A big board gives you a variety of options, including better floatation, better balance, and better stability. Since bigger boards are thicker they offer more stability and it's wider which offer better balance. Learning how to control our boards as learner surfers may not always be easy. The reason why we use bigger boards is that they offer more forgiveness while we are still trying to perfect our techniques.

My best tip is to factor in your height, weight, and your athletic abilities. All of which will help you decide the right board for you. Remember that the most common mistake that learner surfers make when buying their first surfboard that I've seen over and over again, is trying to progress to a shorter board too quickly. When you do this, you don't only skip a few learning stages in your journey but you actually hurt your techniques and basic skills needed to surf on a shorter board. Get an appropriate surfboard for your size and body type.



Learn To Surf: Safety In Surfing

Correct Equipment: The Wetsuit

Another piece of equipment that we need, especially if we are surfing in cold waters, is a wetsuit. Now, a wetsuit does quite a few things, it does not only keep you warm but if you are limited to where you can surf having a wetsuit would be beneficial for you. Especially if you can only surf in places with lots of rocks or reefs.

Even if the water is warm, you can wear what we call a summer suit. A wetsuit also protects you if you fall and if you scrape yourself on the rocks or the reefs. It's a form of protection.

Another thing that a wetsuit does for you is that it takes your mind off the cold feeling from the water, it doesn't just keep you warm. But instead of thinking you are cold, you are actually able to focus more on things you need to do and improve as a learner surfer.



Learn To Surf: Safety In Surfing

Correct Equipment: The Wax

I am not talking about candle wax or beeswax, but I am talking about surf wax. Most learner surfboards are soft materials that you don't necessarily need to use wax on. If you are riding a different kind of learner board, for example, if you're riding an NSP (which is a hardboard for learners) you will probably need to apply wax on that board but most learner surfboards do not require wax.

You may be asking, what is the purpose of a surf wax? To put it simply, surf wax is applied to our surfboards to help surfers with traction and grip for our feet on the surfboards.

As a learner surfer having the correct equipment to help you learn how to surf while staying safe in the water is very important. Depending on the type of board you are using not having surf wax handy may make it hard for you to maintain grip or traction of your feet on your board.

Pro-Tip: Knowing more about the correct equipment and how to use them is vital. There is a lot of company that makes surf wax and it depends on personal preference. Please remember that there is cold water wax and warm water wax, make sure you have the correct wax for the condition you are surfing.



Learn To Surf: Safety In Surfing

Correct Equipment: The Leash

Attaching your leash to your ankle is very important as you don't want to lose your board while surfing. Knowing that you've got something that floats really close to you is a very reassuring feeling.

However, knowing to get a leash won't be effective if you don't know how to properly wear or attach them to your ankle. Make sure the velcro on your leash is still working properly. If you notice some parts of the velcro are not sticky anymore, replace them. Secondly, you have to make sure to never have the leash too loose or too tight around your ankle. It should fit you tight enough, but not feel uncomfortable. Having your leash too tight could cause damage to your ankles and putting them too loose defeats the purpose of the leash.

It's important to know where to attach your leash to. Attach the leash to your back foot, this is the foot you put at the back of your board when surfing. So knowing where to attach your surf leash can make the difference in not only improving your surfing but in preventing accidents, for yourself and other surfers.



Learn To Surf: Safety In Surfing



Correct Equipment: Other Protection

Besides the other safety measures that you need to take to progress on your surfing journey, such as the surfboard, wetsuit, surf wax, and leash, there are still other things that you must not forget. This includes sunscreen, a bucket or a bag, and enough food and drinks to prevent dehydration.

Sunscreen

If you are wearing a wetsuit then you would probably use less sunscreen than someone who isn't as your skin is already protected. As a learner surfer, you will be exposed to the sun both while you're in the water and out. Having sunscreen with you at all times is important so that you can provide that proper protection to your skin.

Bucket or Bag

Another great helpful piece of equipment is a bucket or a bag, go down to the hardware store and spend a few euros or dollars on one of those nice big round buckets. Because you can put your wetsuit in that, you can stand in that when you take your wetsuit off so you don't damage your car and get everything wet and get sand everywhere. It's a really helpful piece of equipment that is a must-have.

Snacks

The other thing that we need as learner surfers is to remember to take snacks and water to the beach.



Learn To Surf: Safety In Surfing

Optional Equipment

Previously I've told you what you need to have. Now, let's talk about things that you don't necessarily need but should consider having as a learner surfer. This includes booties, a friend to go out and surf with, and a GoPro.

Booties

Booties have multiple functions, it not only keep your feet warm, but they can also add traction if you are not using a surfboard with wax and you are surfing on one of those boards that have no wax and it's got that material. Booties add a form of traction and offer protection. For example in the Maldives or in places where there's a lot of rocks, reefs, or corals, booties act as a form of protection when you are walking through these reefs or corals, especially in places without a beach break. So very much suggested.

Surf Buddy

Friends can be a great advantage to have when you go surfing or the worst things to go surfing with. First, they can be great to be with for when something happens to you they have an extra set of eyes on you and if you are doing really really well, they could be on the beach taking pictures of you. On how they can be a bad thing is when you have a friend or friends that are at a different level than you, they might paddle out and just leave you then you are stuck. That's why you have to pick your friends or surfing buddies very carefully.



Learn To Surf: Safety In Surfing

Optional Equipment

Waterproof Camera

You don't want to miss a second of you standing on that board for the first time. Invest in any waterproof camera and stick it on the front of your surfboard, because when you catch that first wave you want to remember that for the rest of your life and if you can capture it on a camera it is priceless. I wish I had caught the expression on my face when I rode my first wave.

After learning about the safety measurements that you can take in starting to learn how to surf, we will slowly proceed with the more technical aspects of learning to surf from scratch.



Learn To Surf: The Ocean

Understanding The Ocean

One of the greatest things that you can do for yourselves as a learner surfer is studying the ocean, studying the waves, studying the surface in the water because that's going to tell you a lot of information. One of the things to look for is where are the people entering the water, where the people start paddling from, where are they coming out of the water.

You have to know where people are paddling from, where they are coming out of the water. Because it might not necessarily be the same place.

This way you can easily traverse the ocean and the waves when you try to enter the water yourself. When you go down to the beach and you're going surfing and you are a learner surfer you don't need to stay in the water the whole time.

Come out of the water for five minutes and look at surfers in the water, go back in the water, practice, take one or two waves, come back and sit on the beach. No rule states you need to stay in the water for you to learn to surf. There is so much to learn from other surfers in the water. Doing is learning. But observing is just as powerful.



Learn To Surf: The Ocean

Where Do People Paddle

The second thing you want to look at is, where do people paddle. Going out into the water is one thing, but before you do or after you learn where people enter and exit the water you need to know where are they paddling. Are they paddling around an area or are they paddling straight through? What are they doing, where are they paddling, is there a channel?

A channel is a deep part of the water where the waves don't break and it's relatively flat and it's a safe area where you can go and you can paddle your board without worrying about waves coming and crashing. Now, a beach break doesn't necessarily have a channel. You generally can find a channel at a point break.

Understanding the ocean, by looking at other surfers is a great tool that learner surfers can utilize. Entering the water without knowing whether there is or there is no channel at a beach break may cause some problems along the way. Lastly, as a learner surfer analyzing the ocean and the waves to know where to paddle could improve your surfing experience and your learning experience, as well.





Learn To Surf: The Ocean

Where Do People Catch Waves

We've looked to see where people come in and out, and we've looked where people paddle. The next thing we need to do is we need to look to see where people actually take the wave from. Where are they catching the wave? This is very important to know because if we don't know where the waves are going to be, where we should be positioned, we're not going to be in the correct position to catch the wave. So if we can look at the ocean, we can look at the waves, and look at the other surfers in the water, we will then have an idea on more or less where that take-off area is.

Preparation is key. Understanding the environment that you are going into before you are out of your comfort zone will make you feel more comfortable. Again, if you're at a beach break, you might have multiple spots, multiple peaks. A peak is the highest point that's where the wave comes up

Correct positioning will allow you to catch the waves more consistently. Plus, knowing the take-off area can tell you how other surfers are positioned. Being aware of your environment as a learner surfer will improve your confidence so that you can catch more waves.





Learn To Surf: The Ocean

Surfing Etiquette

Another very important part of learning to surf is how the surfers in the water are lined up. In other words, are they in one line? This brings me to the supermarket rule. You never push in the queue, when you go and buy groceries you don't just walk right to the front of the line and say sorry I'm gonna pay I need to go, you have to wait your turn.

At certain breaks, there are actually take-off points where you start riding the wave. When you finish riding the wave you don't just paddle straight to the take-off area, you wait your turn **(the supermarket rule)**.

Learning how other surfers act in the water is important for a learner surfer. Learning how other surfers act is important for learner surfers because we don't know how to control our boards yet it's important to be aware of the other people in the water so we don't cause any injuries to ourselves or other people in the water. Everyone has a right to learn to surf but remembering safety always has to be at the front of our minds.



Learn To Surf: The Ocean

Where Do Waves Break

The next thing we got to look at is where do the waves break and where do the surfers finish the wave, this is also very important because, you want to know how long that ride is, you want to know how shallow it is. Do they finish the wave super close to the beach cause as a learner surfer, remember we haven't learned to control our bodies or our board yet?

Because it is important to understand that when you finish the wave very close to the sand, it's going to be shallow which means you need to know how to fall. You need to know how to land to protect yourself, and that is, you never in a million years dive in with your head first. Whenever you fall off your board you should be in a position called a starfish position.

The starfish is a position where you have your legs out, arms out chest up and you fall chest flat onto the water if you can. Preferably if you can jump over the wave and behind it because that is where the deepest part of the water is, you don't ever want to jump in front of your board.

The value of knowing how and where to catch a wave is just as important as knowing where it finishes. Just as knowing how to stay on the board with proper traction is equally important as knowing how to fall properly from your board after catching a wave.



Learn To Surf: Outside The Water



Practicing On The Beach

Besides analyzing or learning about the ocean while sitting on the beach, there is still a lot of preparation that you can do before you can catch a wave. Once we've studied the ocean, we know that our goal is to catch a wave. So what we can do while we are outside the water is to practice catching waves.

After preparing all of your equipment, you would think that you are ready to enter the water immediately. Wrong. You can start by practicing certain techniques and moves while you are at the beach.

The more you are confident and able to do the surfing moves on land, the more confident you will be once you're in the water. Let's talk about one of the most important foundations that every surfer needs to have in moving forward with their journey. Because not everyone can successfully ride their first wave or even stand up on their boards, the first time they try. But there is no harm in trying.

Confidence is not achieved by repetition. Confidence is achieved by education!



Learn To Surf: Outside The Water

Knowing Your Dominant Foot

You should figure out this very important aspect of surfing. Which is your back foot and which is your front foot? How do we figure it out? There are quite a lot of different ways and everyone has their different theories and ways of doing it.

One of three ways could be. One, if you had snowboarded before or if you've skateboarded before, or if you've wakeboarded before, you should have a front and a back foot. What I would suggest is keeping it like that. Don't change it. So if you've wakeboarding or snowboarding or skateboarding and you have your right foot at the back and you now want to start surfing, keep your right foot at the back. Vice-versa. If you do it with your left, keep it at the left.

Another method of identifying which of your feet is your dominant foot is by kicking a ball. What foot would you have used to strike a goal, strike the ball, to shoot to goal.' If you use your left foot to strike the ball then that is your strong foot, that's your dominant foot. I would put that to the back because after learning how to surf, your back foot is your control foot. That is going to control your board left and right. If you strike the ball with your right foot, your right foot goes to the back.



Learn To Surf: Outside The Water

Knowing Your Dominant Foot

If you are not familiar with the first two scenarios or situations that I've given you then there's another way of knowing. Another way of finding out which is your dominant foot is by standing with your feet together and your hand by your side, close your eyes and have someone gently push you from behind. You must not know when that's going to happen. It must be kind of like a surprise. But the foot that comes forward first generally is gonna be the most comfortable. Again, that's going to be your strong foot so, put that in the back.

But what do you do if, for example, you don't have a defined dominant or strong foot? Meaning you are comfortable with using either foot to provide that support to your body. Then this is where practicing on the beach comes into play.

As a learner surfer without a definitive strong or dominant foot, you have to train your body to have a certain way of surfing. Remember that there is no one right way of surfing and your way is something that you need to hone and improve. If you start swapping back and forth, your body is going to get confused. So, if you feel comfortable getting up a certain way, then just do that.



Learn To Surf: In The Water

Find Your Happy Place

There's something called, your happy place. I call it your happy place. I didn't invent this name or phrase but it's something that I always teach my clients to improve their surfing. Your happy place is the position on your board where you can lie down on your board and paddle where there's no water splashing over the front of the board.

What I want you to do is to lie as far forward on your board as possible that when you paddle, there's no water splashing over the front of your board. I'll say that again. When you're paddling your surfboard, you want to be laying as far forward as possible but without water splashing over the board when you paddle. That is your happy place.

If you have the chance in calm water. It could be a swimming pool, a dam, a lake. or maybe the ocean is flat one day. That is when you want to go and accustom your body. You want to go and get your body used to paddle. You don't want to figure this out on your first day in the big white water waves. It's not going to be pretty. So if you have that chance, then that's what I suggest doing. Paddling your board, see where that happy place is.



Learn To Surf: In The Water

Paddling in Your Happy Place

Remember, your happy place is going to change when you change surfboards, it's not necessarily going to be in the same place. Don't forget that the situation of the ocean or the waves is always changing. As a result, it is important to practice as much as you can to try and figure out your happy place.

Obviously, we want to practice on the beach. We want to practice lying on the board. When we lie on our surfboard in our happy place. Do not ever put your chin down on the surfboard when you paddle. The board can come up and knock you on your chin and cause you injury. You want to try and be in what I call the arrogant paddle position. You can do this by putting your chest up, head up, while you are paddling. Plus, you have to keep your back arched and you have to lift your chest. Now, you can practice that a few times on the beach.

Pro-Tip: Transitioning from a bigger board to a smaller one, you need to know that it takes more energy to paddle in a smaller board than a bigger one. Try doing certain exercises to improve your fitness for surfing



Learn To Surf: In The Water

Entering The Water With Your Board

My best advice for you when entering the water with your surfboard is to always keep your board on your side. Never hold your board in front of you or in front of your face when you're walking into the water. You're going to change the beauty that's going on Trust me, I have seen some knocks of bruises on their forehead because people held their boards in front of them. So, as you're walking into the water, always keep your board next to you.

For ninety-five percent (95%) of learner surfers often have the same struggle when giving their first try in getting into the water to ride a wave. Trying to figure out how to navigate through the waves and how to put themselves in the best position to catch the right waves is definitely a challenging feat.

Pro-Tip: Before you even go into the water, take the time to study the ocean. After a few minutes, you will start to see the patterns and the stories that the ocean has to tell you



Learn To Surf: In The Water

Chest-High Level

What I suggest as well is you go into the water, don't go deeper than chest-high water. The reason for that is, as soon as you start going deeper than chest-high water, you don't have enough weight to control yourself to push off the sand and the water starts controlling you and pushing you and manipulating your body in places that you don't want to go. It's vital to never go deeper than the chest-high water level, as a learner surfer.

Without any pressure on your feet, if you don't have enough weight, you just don't have the ability to control. What happens with this is you actually start losing confidence and you get a little bit nervous because when you lose control, that's when the mind starts playing tricks on you. As a learner surfer, I always tell people to go back to the basics, go back to what they know. Don't try and race. Don't try and jump to the next level. Keep it basic.

You know you've got weight. You know you've got control. So remember, as you're going into the water, try not to go as deeper than this. There are gonna be times guys, conditions change. Conditions change, beaches change, the tide is high, the tide is low. There are going to be times where you can walk out and catch waves. That's why I always say to you, before you go into any water anywhere, look.



Learn To Surf: In The Water

Catching Waves

Now we are going to learn how to catch waves. I would suggest that the first couple of times that you guys catch a wave, don't try and stand up. First, get used to the feeling of the wave pushing you. Get used to the feeling of paddling and the wave coming up behind you and actually catching the wave.

When you're riding the wave because you can literally put your arms up. Put your arms up on the side of your board and ride the white water wave for a few meters. This is going to give you the feeling of what it's actually like when the wave starts to pick you up and you are now being pushed by the wave. One of the biggest mistakes that learner surfers make is paddling too early to try and catch the wave. When you paddle too early and the wave then gets to you, and you try and stand up, as you feel the impact of the wave, you actually try and stand up at that point. And that's actually the point of when you paddle and you paddle to make sure you catch the wave.



Learn To Surf: In The Water

Catching Waves

When you are wanting to catch a wave, don't start paddling when the wave is 20-30 meters away from you. For a white water wave, you only need to start paddling when the wave is 4 or 3 meters away from you and only about 50 or 40 percent energy.

With paddling, it's always about timing. So what we wanna do is we want to wait for that wave to be two or three more meters away from us, start paddling for about 30 or 40 percent as the wave hits you. That's when you make about three or more paddles at about 80 or 90 percent to make sure you catch the wave and you will feel the speed change. So, when you lift your arms and you just let the board take you. Now, I suggest you do this on four or five waves before you start thinking about standing up.

When you are paddling for a whitewater wave and feel the wave impacting the back of your board and your feet, there should be an extra 3 or 4 paddles that you do, to make sure that you have enough speed to catch the wave. A common mistake that learner surfers make is that they try to stand up as the wave impacts the back of their board and their feet, and they don't make those extra 3 or 4 paddles.

