

Teaching Surf Instructors to Teach



National Surf Schools and Instructors Association Instructors and Coaches Training Manual



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Advanced Instructional Techniques Part 5 B

Effectiveness as an Advanced Surf Instructor

The NSSIA is committed to training instructors so they develop better insight into themselves and their abilities, to recognize and avoid the pitfalls of instructing, and that once their technical and safety training skills are developed, to continue their training focusing on improving their educational effectiveness when dealing with more advanced students. Understand that there is an underlying premise here that not every instructor can effectively teach higher level skills to advanced students. Also understand that the instructor does not necessarily need to be an advanced surfer to be able to teach these advanced skills.

Guide for Advanced Surf Instruction

This section will focus on techniques an instructor can use when dealing with students that have already developed their basic surfing skills. Additionally, there will be some material related to providing a lesson to a more advanced surfer interested in developing skills at higher levels. Students with more advanced skills should primarily be taught with private one or two person lessons. Therefore, learning names, providing a board, etc. will likely not be an issue. If the student needs a board or wetsuit, follow the suggestions in the basic instruction section.

Prior to Lesson Interviews

Before you can even consider giving an advanced lesson, you really need to find out what “advanced” means to the student and also if you can even help them. Ask as many questions as you can for a better feel of the student and their level of surfing. Below are some simple questions that you need to consider.

- Have they had any previous lessons? If so with who, where and how many?
- How many months/years surfing and how often do they surf?
- Where have they surfed and what is the biggest waves they’ve ridden?
- Ask them to tell you what they think their strong and weak points are.
- What do they expect to accomplish in the lesson.
- What kind of boards have they surfed/owned?
- Other board sports they have done.
- Any other sports/ physical activities past and current.
- What kind of physical shape are they currently in?

Getting Ready for the Lesson

Since you will be working in a primary break area, advanced lessons should only be given in decent surfing conditions. If the tide is too low and the waves jack up, or if there are too many surfers in the lineup, then try somewhere else or try a different day.

Another idea to think about: if conditions are not favorable for surfing a boot-camp style training session can be done in regards to strength conditioning, health and nutrition can be addressed if the advanced surfer is not already addressing this.

The need for a formal warm-up with stretching prior to a lesson is extremely important. This is both a legal requirement, and also a requirement for the student to get the most out of their lesson. The instructor also needs to stretch out so as to be able to keep up with

the student. The best approach is for both student and instructor to do their warm-ups together.

Checking In

As with beginner lessons, checking in is easy but also is the time to protect yourself and your school. Again, a significant item to complete before your lesson actually starts is to have your student sign a liability waiver. If the student is under 21 years old, have their parents sign for them. A sample liability waiver was provided in the basic lesson section of this document.

Safety Rules

Once the actual lesson actually starts, the instructor has the same legal issues as with any other lesson. Mention that you have sun screen if the student doesn't already have it. Also, re-explain basic safety rules including surf etiquette. Even if the surfer is experienced, stating safety rules legally protects you and your school should something unforeseen happen during the lesson.

Get the Student to Say What They Expect

Some general discussions and the questions above can take place when scheduling, but having the student specifically tell you what they expect from their lesson is the important first step before you go any further. The discussion should take place as soon as the lesson starts, not before. You don't want an extra half hour tacked on to the lesson before it even starts. The discussion will help you decide where in the break is the best place to work with the student, and also give you a good feel for planning how to run the lesson.

For instance, if the student is having trouble with something basic like getting to their feet quickly or making a flat or carving rail turn, knowing the problem will let you immediately focus on correcting their pop-ups. Likewise, if the student says they want to be able to do well in contests, the instructor must observe the student's technique under various wave situations and make a judgment on the less obvious items such as style, wave positioning, and aggressiveness that will generate higher scores from judges.

Sand drawings and sculptures on the beach can significantly help describe where the best positioning and focused placement on a wave face will enable the trick to be successful.

In the Water

Spend the first 15-20 minutes of the lesson watching the student surf. If you are close enough that you can watch from on the beach, this is best since you can take notes.

Many times students will come to a lesson and want to learn about how to do a specific maneuver, but they lack the basics of strong paddling, catching waves at the peak, popping up quickly and properly, poor arm control



or a lack of ability on how to gain speed. When they come back to the beach after their initial surf and your observations, talk about where they need to start.

Tell them to look at their board when it is critical (not down the wave as you suggest) to get the board to do what they want it to. Too many “almost” beginners are not in touch with their boards and this will hinder them from advancing. One of the most prevalent problems is the student needs to learn how to generate speed. Nearly all strong moves in surfing come from having enough speed to get through them.

For speed, I tell the student to get up, stay high on the wave and work to work the board up and down to gain more speed. Next they have to learn how to use the speed to perform the move and still stay in control. It is a long process of practice trial and error.

Students with Speed Knowledge

If they know how to generate speed, tricks or developing style require other approaches all together. The best way to teach tricks is to go into the break and show the student how to do the maneuver first. Then watch them try the trick over and over until they understand how to perform it better. Sometimes this is all you can do during a lesson leaving it to the student to develop the trick to perfection on their own.

Style is difficult to teach. Make sure you have spent a few minutes describing what style means to a contest judge before you even go in the water. Then watch for how the elbows are positioned during a ride and how stiff the student looks when they are pumping on a wave. Aggressive is fine but not to the point of appearing jerky. Get them to surf with their elbows in and use their hands to point at their wave face targets during the ride. Since you need to be able to provide feedback immediately after a ride, you will need to be positioned so you can see all parts of the ride. This can be next to the surfer on the inside as they take off, well out on the shoulder (also good for blocking others), or in the impact zone or near where the ride ends for best results.

Wave Judgment

Picking the right wave so that a particular maneuver can be performed is significant to teaching advanced students. When you first paddle out, sit in the lineup with the student and help the student spot oncoming waves with potential and where they should paddle to get into the best takeoff position.

Video Cameras

A very useful training tool for both beginners and advanced lessons is the use of a video camera. To show style, an onboard camera works well. For reviewing aggressiveness and wave positioning, shooting from the beach is better. The first board mounted camera picture shows a beginner with instructor while the second picture shows an advanced surfer on a wave.



When the lesson is over, spend a few minutes reviewing not only the progress of the student, but also what they can learn from watching themselves surf.



Body Dynamics

As was presented in the beginner section of this manual, the following points address advanced body dynamics, the specifics of how each part of the body affects the way a person surfs. These points have been tailored for advanced students to better help them understand body/wave interactions.

HEAD/EYES -look where you are going by picking out at least two successive points to aim for on the wave in front of the surfer

continually. The surfer should also look towards the direction of travel, thinking 2 or 3 move's ahead. This will make maneuvers become more automatic and make it easier to implement changes as the positioning and wave changes.

NECK - look over your shoulders. Look side to side as you are paddling and entering the wave, looking for additional surfers and changes in the best take off spot.

1. Make sure no one is on the wave or about to take off inside, particularly if you are in a contest and they want to cause you to interfere
2. Watch the wave for any changes to help judge timing on take-off.

SHOULDERS - used to guide the direction to go in. In most cases should be aligned with the wave or direction of travel, this will promote balance and counter balance and make all of your maneuvers possible.

1. If too open may cause student to fall backwards.
- 2, Should continually align with your hands

ELBOWS- tuck elbows in to enhance smoothness during the ride

1. Work like shock absorbers when in the push up stance going over waves or gliding before getting up on feet.

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

ARMS – used for balance with the forward arm for direction of travel, rear arm as trailer or counterbalance, rail grabs and staling maneuvers.

1. Extension of shoulders for more torque and drive.
2. Throw your arms into a turn for more power or to generate additional torque.

HANDS – used by advanced surfers to point towards wave face attack points

1. Can also represent eyes to guide direction.
2. Don't forget to use them for protection for your head or to deflect objects.
3. Useful for style points in competition.

WAIST - pivot from waist for more torque in flat turns

1. Do not bend forward from waist - use knees.

HIPS/BUTTOCKS – used for drive and weight adjustments

1. Keeping hips tucked in helps keep the surfer centered and balanced.
2. Sticking buttock out (stink - bugging) impacts style
3. Hips thrust forward helps when hanging ten.

KNEES - used as shock absorbers for balance

1. Drop knees slightly inward for balance and stability
2. Use knees to bend and squat for projecting out of turns.
3. Bending your knees and crouching into a tight ball enables the surfer to get inside smaller tubes

ANKLES - loose and flexible

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

1. Back foot perpendicular to the string, front foot the same or the toes pointed slightly forward (If both feet are pointed outwards will not be able to turn properly). Too far apart does not allow the surfer to turn cleanly for better style.
2. Used on longboards to walk up and down the deck to keep the board in trim and get to the nose for nose riding.
3. Place over the fin or on tail of board for flat turning.
4. Placed more towards the middle for shortboard carving turns

TOES - for safety keep toes and ball of foot on the tail of the board while paddling out. For longboard surfing this is the most used position for taking off on the wave.

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

Competition Training

A good method for competition training is to hold mock heats one on one or against someone else very good. Try to have the training partner re-create conditions that might happen in a contest such as sitting on the outside of the student, or paddling across the peak to wave hop or trying to cause an interference call on your opponent. Not only will this will help them see how intense contest can be, it will also help with their aggressiveness and wave positioning. The student should “Train to the limit so they can compete to the limit.”

Tape the lesson so they can see how each wave was scored. Learning how to judge is important for understanding competition scoring.

Another lesson should be at a contest with top surfers in competition. Have the student watch the surfers and how they use various parts of their bodies. Also have the student watch some film of great surfers concentrating on various techniques used for attacking waves including foot positioning, hands, etc.

Wave Reading

Visualization helps with wave reading. Basically, you need to be able to read a wave to determine how to get the highest score out of it. The idea is to see in your mind how a wave is going to break and then try to get into position so when it does break you can score. Below is a multi-photo sequence of how you would approach and then maneuver on a wave about to break in front of you.

Takito Adachi – Wave reading is essential









Making Turns More Snappy

A technique used by a number of coaches with their athletes to help make turns snappier is to have the surfer practice with a board at least one foot longer than their regular board at least two hours each week.

Keep the Elbows Down

You may have heard of the Cardiff Kook. It's a statue in Cardiff showing a surfer with his elbows out and his fingers spread. For a surfer to look stylish to judges, work on keeping your elbows in and surfing with your fingers together.



Big Wave Surfing

From Tom Cotton and Tom Ward:

“The bigger the wave, the faster it is, so generally you want a bigger board,” says Cotton. “They’re called ‘guns’ and they start at about nine feet. You can get a ‘step up gun’ to help bridge the gap and get you used to it, but a bigger board with more length and volume is definitely a must when riding bigger waves.”

Define your own goals

“A super important thing to get across is that the definition of a big wave is very personal,” says Cotton. It doesn’t have to be 100-foot to be considered a win. Even surfing something a bit bigger than you might usually go for is a step in the right direction. “I can remember my first few big waves at my local beach,” Cotton says. “I was pushing my ability. The first place to master is definitely your local spot.”

Tame your Fear

“It’s about baby steps,” Cotton says. “Riding big waves is about confidence building.” In terms of actually catching a wave, Cotton says you need to “follow what your senses are telling you.” “You have to sit under the wave and it’s not a natural place to put yourself,” he says. “It’s about being comfortable in that situation, then having the confidence to turn and paddle and believe that you’re gonna make it.”

Nail your Stance

“The classic big wave stances are standing with your feet slightly wider apart and your center of gravity lower,” Cotton says. “The worst things you can do are look at your feet, or stand up straight. As soon as you do that you’ll fall. Look where you want to go, keep low, and point your body in that direction.”

Be Safe

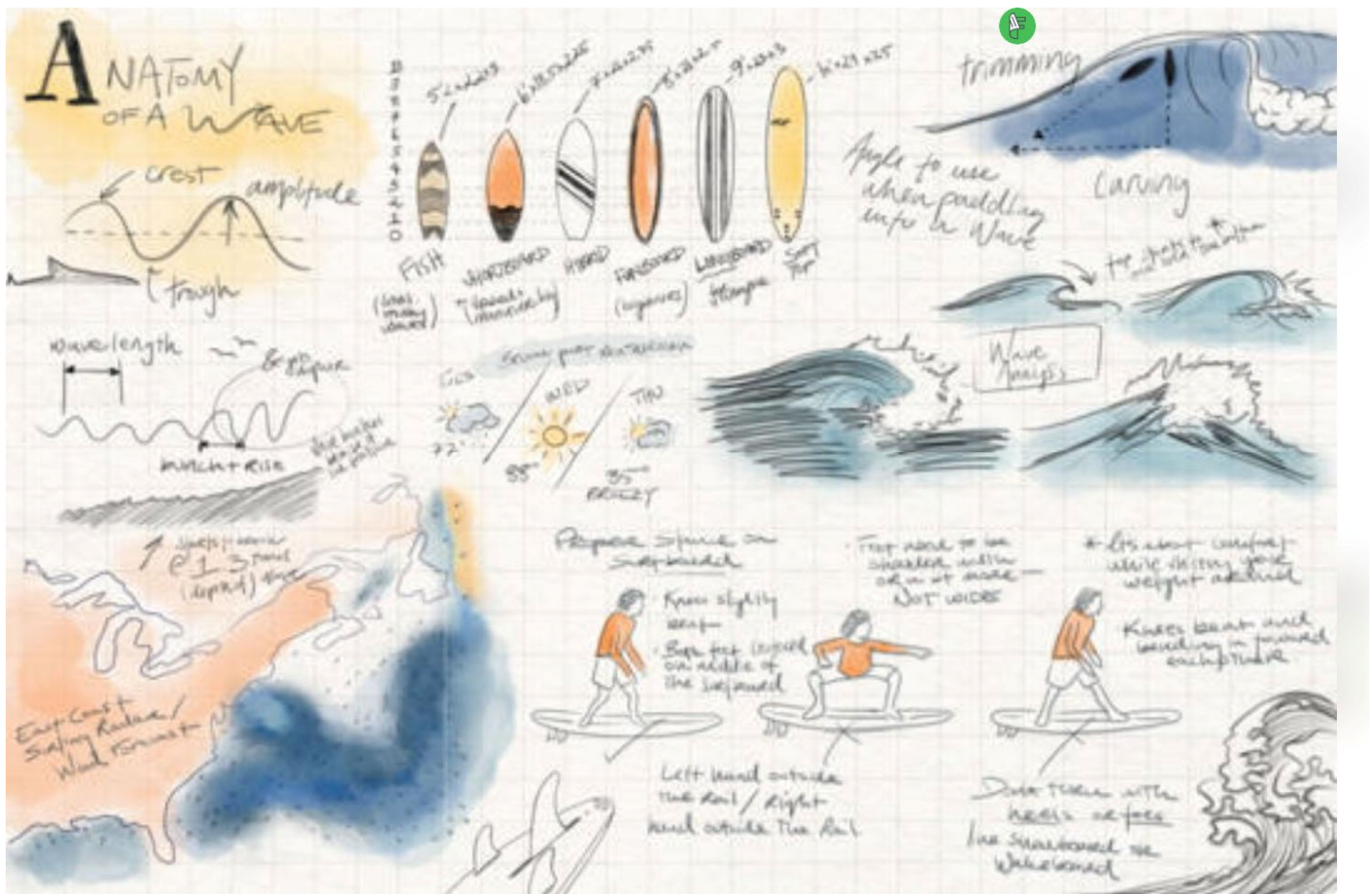
“Find a buddy to share the journey with you. It’s about motivation and finding someone to push you,” Cotton says. “But it’s also about safety. The ocean is dangerous. It’s about safety above all else.” That’s to say: don’t go off by yourself. Don’t push it too far. And always surf where there’s a lifeguard, or at least a few of your buddies with a jet-ski or a boat to come and get you should things go wrong.

Framing for Big Wave Surfing

An important concept in big wave surfing is the ability to frame your ride. Problem framing is the process of discovering and defining a problem and then creating a set of steps that guide you in understanding, defining, and prioritizing the real problem you face. This allows you to come up with a good solution. Break the ride up into successive

smaller steps. Unlike a smaller wave ride, a big wave ride has too many parts to consider all at once. Below is a typical frame.

1. Takeoff positioning – You have studied how the wave breaks. Make sure you are in a good position for your takeoff.
2. Takeoff – You need to focus on a takeoff that allows you to immediately set your line from the beginning of the ride.
3. Wave face positioning – Put yourself in a position for maximum speed and performance on the face of the wave.
4. Way out – Look for the place where you can get out of the wave after your ride.
5. Recovery – If you have a wipeout, get yourself into the best position for protection and recovery.



Global Shape

When we say an athlete is in good shape, most of the time we mean physical shape. However, the most important type of shape is global shape. Global shape not only includes physical, but also psychological, tactical and technical shape. Even equipment is

included within technical shape. The idea is to see all parts of the training as components of ONE big pie.

The pie is the athlete, who in turn is made up of several pieces (tactical, technical, physical, etc.) Any small change in one piece changes the ONE. If you want a change in one specific piece, sometimes it's better to get this changed through another piece of the pie. For example, in a competition, the athlete is going to put all parts of the pie in action at the same time during a heat. At that time, if the surfer is motivated and focus, he or she will find the physical endurance to catch waves by hard paddling, even if they don't train endurance very hard. Therefore, even though they don't train hard, they get excellent results through motivation and focus.

Every training session planned should be prepared as a global activity. So, if you are training tactical aspects, that's the focus or the main aspect of that training session. However, the exercises never focus only on the tactical aspects in isolation. If you want to increase their motivation, run an easy tactical session (without their notice) where they will do everything right, increasing in this way their motivation and self confidence!

Non-Surf Training and Discipline

The act of physically, mentally and emotionally throwing yourself into the hard training program necessary to enhance successes in the surfing world will not only develop your physical strength, but also the mental tools to become better. The question you may ask is "why?" Why does hard physical exertion, both in the surf and in the weight room or on the track, transform a regular surfer into a champion? Most will agree it's discipline. Nobody is born with discipline but what we are born with the desire to attain it.

While they exist, few individuals are born with natural surfing ability, and these will always stand out in whatever they do. For the rest of us it's just hard work and dedication. There are a lot of people, in fact, probably most people, who think a competitive surfer is absolutely nuts for doing what it takes to win. The training necessary embodies the ethics of hard work, giving up comfort to attain goals, both short and long term, working with others (coaches, parents, peers) to accomplish a difficult goal.

It's unnatural to walk into a training room full of sweating athletes for hours at a time, often getting your body sore and bruised more than you would like. Getting up early to go run and lift weights aren't natural acts. But an athlete knows if they don't do this type of training, they will likely take a beating when they paddle out to compete with those individuals who do the training and are totally dedicated to beating all comers.

Surfing, in itself, doesn't offer a moral compass for people to train in as a sport. So if this is the case, why does surfing make someone better for having participated and competed in it? Again, it's the factor of discipline. The only way to be successful at competition surfing is to train hard, train smart and push yourself so you achieve your goals. No one will do it for you. You either succeed or fail on your own.

That philosophy pretty well answers the question that hard training does, indeed, make a person better. The "why" is the motivation to succeed, and the only way to make it happen is to discipline one's self to do the things necessary to achieve success, and to achieve it in such a way that you can be proud of having done it. There are a number of

ways to win at something and not all of them are good, fair or honest. It takes discipline to know how to achieve victory honestly and strive for success from that point of view.

As someone once said "There is no learning without discipline."

Skateboards

Longboard skateboards can be used for dry land training to correct certain body dynamics problems related to the global shape. For instance, say the student can use their knees correctly, but don't use their arms and hips to support their knee motion. To correct this and other dynamic problems, have the student try to create the same movements (rail to rail) that a surfboard does in the water. The instructor can stand close to the student giving constant verbal explanations and they can work in a repetitive way all the body dynamics at the same time.

Summarizing, on dry land you can train the different parts of a specific maneuver (a cutback for example and all the body dynamic associated with it), and in the water you can further train the complete move under various wave situations. You can even train tube riding positions with the help of a pipe made for it plus a lip made of foam!