

Teaching Surf Instructors to Teach



National Surf Schools and Instructors Association Instructors and Coaches Training Manual



SUP Riding with a Dog

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Stand Up Paddle Board (SUP) Riding with a Dog

Paddle boarding can be a great way for owners and their dog to get exercise and enjoy time together outdoors. It's something you can offer your students as well as surfing.

The following section offers techniques and tips that will help make teaching the dog to ride on a stand up paddle board easy, safe, and fun for the dog and the owner.



EQUIPMENT

The Right Board

The best paddle boards for dogs are the wider and longer stand up paddle boards because they are more stable. The best is at least ten feet long and 32 inches wide.

Be sure to consider the person's weight, and weight of the dog. The larger the dog in comparison to the board, the more unstable it will be. Paddle boarding with large or multiple dogs is no problem as long as you have the right board.



Good Surface Grip

Many paddle boards may not provide much grip for the dog's paws. Get a paddle board with enough grip to make the dog won't go sliding off when you hit a wave. The best SUPs for dogs are boards that have a full deck pad, or at least an extended deck pad. Inflatable boards typically come with extended deck pads. If your board does not have a large enough deck pad, there are other options. Old yoga



mats or bath mats with suction cups are alternatives if that's all you have. But you can find good full traction pads on-line that can be applied to a slick SUP.

Pet Floatation Device (PFD)

Many dogs are good swimmers, but since the paddle board and being out in the middle of a body of water adds an element that the dog isn't familiar with, and you may be paddling far from the shore, a life jacket should be used for the dog. Prior to taking the dog into the water make sure the PFD fits and that the dog is comfortable with wearing it.

INTRODUCING THE DOG TO THE BOARD

1. Basic Commands

Before you get the dog out on the water, make sure he has mastered basic obedience commands like "sit" and "stay".

2. Master the Paddle Board

The owner should not get on a SUP with the dog until they're confident using one by themselves. They need to be comfortable standing up, on the water, paddling, and turning. Make sure they can fall and get back on out of the water. Dogs will mirror your stress if you are not comfortable. So being on a SUP with a dog along for the ride will only make things more difficult for beginners.

3. Introduce the Dog to the Board

Before hitting the water, have the owner introduce the dog to the board on solid ground. Put the board in an area of the house where your dog is comfortable. Allow him to sniff it, look at it, and explore it on his own terms. He need not jump on right away it's just there for him to get used to.



4. Put Treats on and Around the Board

Once the board has been in the house awhile, put a treat on it to encourage the dog to walk on. Once on the board, direct them to sit and give another treat. After repeating this a few times, the dog should be somewhat comfortable with the board. Take it slow and don't force them. The board should be a place that is safe and fun for the dog. The dog should never feel afraid or pressured.

5. Do a Dry Run

When the dog is comfortable, put on the life jacket and get them on the board again in the same manner on shore near the water. If you do this several times, standing on the board

with his life jacket will feel more natural. Then, the only difference when you are out on the water will be the surroundings.

6. Practice Commands For Getting Off the Board

Before you get out on the water, practice a special command for getting off the board, and only reward them when they jump off with that command. If they get off without the command, lead him back on the board and try again. After a while, they should pick up staying on and getting off the board on command.

7. Reward Good Behavior

Make sure the dog jumps off the board only upon command, and reward him with a treat or praise when he does. It's common for the dog to get excited and jump off the board when coming in when you're getting close to shore. This can throw you off balance and into the water, which can be more dangerous near the shore. Be careful and aware this could happen. It is therefore important to get the dog to learn the command for off the board very consistently.

PREPARING TO SUP WITH YOUR DOG

1. **Make Sure the Dog Can Swim.** Just as in surfing, before paddling out with the dog, ensure they are comfortable swimming. If he is a weak swimmer or afraid of water, the experience will not be enjoyable. Allowing the dog to swim on their own several times should be enough to help him get over any fears. If he just can't get used to the water on their own or won't go in the water at all, you can suggest to the owner they may want to consult a certified dog trainer for advice.
2. **Trim Sharp Nails.** Anyone who has ever swam near a dog knows that shorter nails are better than long, sharp ones. By keeping your dog's nails short and dull, (this can be done with a dremel tool) you will also minimize the finish of the board getting scratched, or the deck pad torn.
3. **Bring a Bag Full Of Treats.** As usual, have treats available when you go out on the water with the owner to continue rewarding good behavior. That way, if the dog likes to jump off out on the water, you can mark his good behavior when they stay on the board.
4. **Tire Out Energetic Dogs.** Recommend to the owner to play fetch, let them run, go for a walk or swim together before getting them out on the board, in order to tire the dog out. Energetic dogs do not like to sit still on a SUP especially when you've been out for a while. This makes it hard to keep your balance. A tired dog is less likely to throw both of you into the water.

GETTING OUT ON THE WATER, STEP BY STEP

1. **Make sure the dog's PFD is on.** First, have the dog stay on shore as you start to go out on the board into the water. Wave to him, laugh, and smile so they know it's fun and not scary, and you are ok, and not in danger.

2. Hold the board still in shallow water and allow your dog to get on. Walk the board through the shallow water and allow him to jump off if they want.
3. When you're both ready, get onto the board with the dog. Start out paddling on your knees for better balance.
4. Stand up with the dog between your feet. Be careful to paddle without accidentally hitting him with the paddle.
5. Small dogs can sit on the nose of the board. Once you've mastered keeping the paddle away from the dog, they can sit in front of you on the board. For better weight distribution and balance, large dogs can sit on the back third of the board.
6. Keep it short the first time out. When you get back to shore, reward the dog and give him a lot of praise. Let the owner know it may not go perfectly the first time out, the dog may fall off, or they may fall off, but it's all part of the learning experience.
7. Be prepared for the dog to jump off at any time. The board will move a lot when a large dog jumps off, and when it happens you may fall in as well. Make sure you're standing on the board only when in deeper water and stay well away from any hazards like boats or people, including other SUPs and water craft.
8. If the dog jumps or falls off the board, help him back on. This will help prevent him from scratching the board's finish when trying to climb back on. It's best to have a life jacket, PFD, with handles for you to grab the dog with.
9. Bring water out for you the dog, and the water. If you are paddling on the ocean, your dog might try to drink the salt water. Taking in too much salt water can cause further dehydration (and other health issues). Changes in mood or behavior may be an early warning sign of salt poisoning.

Instructor Tip: be patient. Not all dogs were born to ride. If it isn't clicking, don't force it. Getting frustrated will make the experience unenjoyable for both of you. Let the owner know that the dog is not a good candidate for Supping.

SAFETY TIPS FOR SUP'ING AND SURFING WITH A DOG

1. **Bring A First Aid Kit.** Have a portable first aid kit for you, the owner and the dog.
Apply Sunscreen To the Dog. Dogs are at risk of sunburn just like humans, especially on their bellies. Remind the owner to apply sunblock to the ears and nose (and belly, if needed) 30 minutes before going outside. Some dogs have a very thin layer of fur in that area and can be burned by sunlight reflected off the water. Apply sunscreen to any exposed areas of the dog and try not to spend more than a couple hours in the sun at a time with any type of dog. There are vests that the dog can wear that block ultraviolet rays and sunscreen made with dog-repellent ingredients to keep them from licking it off.

2. **Kneel or Sit Near Hazards.** Only stand on the board when in open water, away from docks, shallow water, boats, people, or any other potential hazards. This is always recommended when paddle boarding, not just when you're with a dog kneel on the board when paddling out to the deeper water. However, it is especially important with a big dog or an energetic dog that could throw off your balance at any time.
3. **Rinse the Dog Afterward.** Paws and skin can be irritated by salt. After being in the water, remind the owner to rinse the sand and salt water off, and make sure not to neglect the ears. Ear infections can result if water is left trapped in the dog's ears.
4. **Be Aware of Beach Hazards.** If near the ocean jellyfish pose a hazard for dogs and humans. Hot sand can also harm your dog's paws. If the dog is standing on the beach, try to keep the dog in the shade or even in ankle-deep water, or on the edge of the shore.
5. **Have water available.** Take water for you, the dog and the owner, and offer it frequently. If the dog gets thirsty, they may try drinking salt water, which can lead to toxicity and make the dog throw up. A few gulps won't hurt, but watch for vomiting and early neurological signs of salt poisoning, such as dullness and depression.
6. **Protect their eyes.** If the dog has eye problems, there are dog eye goggles aka doggles, with sun shade. This is a good tip for the owner.
7. **Running on sand is strenuous exercise.**
A dog who is out of shape can easily pull a tendon or ligament, so keep a check on your dog's activity. And always remind everyone, hot sand will blister tender paw pads.



SUMMARY

This module adds riding a stand-up-paddle board to the types of training you can offer students. The paddle boards, for use with dogs riding along, should be wider and longer versions and have full deck traction padding. A pet flotation device (PFD) with a handle is also important for this sport. The section entitled Introducing The Dog To The Board sets out seven requirements for getting the dog riding along safely and easily. It requires the dog to know basic commands, that the owner has experience riding a SUP. Then, use treats to introduce the dog to the board. It is recommended to practice with a dry run by going through all the steps on land before going into the water. It's imperative the dog knows and has practiced a command for *getting off* the board and that you reward such desired behaviors. The section entitled Preparing To SUP With Your Dog includes four tips that will make the experience easier and there is a section describing step-by-step, with nine steps, setting out how to get out onto the water with the dog, including what to do if the dog falls off. The safety tips section sets out eight important considerations for protecting the dog's welfare.