

# ***Teaching Surf/SUP Instructors to Teach***



## **National Surf Schools and Instructors Association Instructors and Coaches Training Manual**



### **General SUP Instructional Techniques Part 5A**

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## **History of the Stand Up Paddle (SUP)**

Stand Up Paddle Surfing is an ancient form of surfing where the surfer uses a paddle to move through the water while standing on a surfboard. Stand Up Paddle Surfing is derived from its Polynesian roots with its more recent popularity emerging in the Hawaiian Islands. The Hawaiian translation is Ku Hoe He'e Nalu; to stand, to paddle, to surf a wave.

However it started, early surfing instructors could better maneuver and manage their large groups of learner surfers since standing on the board gave them a higher viewpoint. This upright position enables the individual to see the swell long before the prone surfers. Early instructors would use a one-bladed outrigger type paddle for control and quick maneuvering.

In the early 1960s, the Beach Boys of Waikiki would stand on their long boards, and paddle out to take pictures of the tourists learning to surf. This is where the term "Beach Boy Surfing", another name for Stand Up Paddle Surfing, originates.

By the early 2000s Hawaiian surfers such as Dave Kalama, Brian Keaulana, Rick Thomas, Archie Kalepa and Laird Hamilton were using SUPs as an alternative way to train while the surf was down. Now you can find SUP surfers in many traditional surf and paddle board contests within their own division.



A big difference between traditional surfing and SUP is that with a SUP you don't need a wave. This has led to an influx of SUP participants in areas such harbors, lakes, rivers or any other large body of water, plus it has enabled ocean located surf schools to offer lessons when the swell is non-existent.

As of October 3, 2008, the US Coast Guard classified SUPs as vessels. As a result, SUP riders are obliged to wear a personal floatation device when paddling in certain areas. Whether this will affect the continued take up of stand up paddling in the USA remains to be seen.

## **Effectiveness as a SUP Surf Instructor**

To develop an understanding of learning principles and to be able to facilitate such learning in a SUP student is a formidable task that requires not only a well-experienced facilitator, but the delivery of sophisticated training and appropriately guided experience. For starters, to be effective, the SUP instructor must be skilled in flat water or ocean water SUP riding, and be able to display excellent form and balance as well as paddling technique. Teaching someone else is another matter. The NSSIA is committed to training SUP instructors, both flatwater and ocean, so they develop insight into themselves, to recognize and avoid the pitfalls of instructing, and that once their technical and safety skills are developed, continued training focuses on improving the instructors' educational effectiveness.

## Basic Guide for SUP Surf Instruction

Understand that besides the environment, there is one basic difference between teaching freshwater and ocean SUP. When teaching ocean SUP, most SUP students have either had some sort of introduction in rivers or lakes and want to progress to riding waves, or they have a surfing background. They have their basics down, but they may not have the feeling of wave action on their board, or how much pulling a big board like that has on the leash after a wipe out.



This section provides a basic guide for SUP instructors to follow during their lesson and/or camp program regardless if the instruction is for flat water or ocean instruction. It is sequenced to address each area of the instruction focus area as it would proceed on the beach or in the training area. Be careful, follow the suggestions herein and keep focused.

### Basic Instruction - Checking In

Checking students in is quick and easy. It's also the time to protect yourself and your school. A significant item to remember before your lesson actually starts is to have each student sign a liability waiver. This document provides some legal protection for the instructor and school if a student happens to injure himself or herself through no fault of the instructor. If the student is under 21 years old, have their parents sign for them. A sample liability waiver release for ocean SUP is provided below. Additional details on waivers are included in the business section of this course, plus some waiver examples are included in other parts of the CD manual.

*I the undersigned, recognize that stand up surfing and surfing is a difficult sport and that participants can and do get injured on occasion. Additionally, I specifically, fully and forever waive and release the \_\_\_\_\_ School, its officers, instructors, and staff from any and all liability and claims for damages I may sustain, or I may cause others to sustain, as a result of my participation lessons. I further agree to accept all responsibility for my personal actions and my behavior that may cause to injury to other students or surfers in the water, and I agree to obey safety and surf etiquette as described to me by my instructor.*

### Getting Acquainted with Students

In their teaching role, be it private or group lessons, SUP instructors must be friends, educators and facilitators. Create a non-threatening environment: encourage a non-threatening social environment in which everyone feels welcome to participate (consider using warm-ups, icebreakers, and get-to-know-each other activities before the actual lesson starts). It has been shown that students who experience social support during a training program learn quicker.

Another important note for instructors is about the need for student warm-ups. Most states have laws requiring an instructor to warm-up anyone they are coaching or training prior to their physical participation in a strenuous exercise or competition. Luckily, not many folks know the law exists, but as an instructor, you absolutely must be aware of it

and ensure you are protected. When the student signs in, and while you are getting acquainted, ask them to stretch out and say to them that they need to be loose before the training starts. A sample of suggested warm-up exercises is provided at the end of this part of the manual.

### **Learning Your Students' Names**

Learning names is one of the hardest skills a surf instructor needs to master. Being able to call out to your students by name will greatly help to improve your ability to teach amid the noise churning waters and the constant talking going on while in the surf or on flat water. If your class has more than four students, the problem may seem at best challenging and at worst, impossible.

There are numerous techniques available to help in memorizing names and associated faces. Some methods work better for smaller classes, while others may be used with large groups such as in a camp environment. Finding the method that works best for you is a matter of individual preference. Here are some suggestions for surf instructors modeled after published University Nebraska guidelines.

1. Have students give their name each time before they speak during warm-ups and while on the beach prior to going into the water. This technique should be continued until everyone (instructor and the students) feels they know the group in the water by name.
2. Use students' names as often as possible.
3. If possible, have a short quiz at the beginning of class over students' names.
4. For camps, spend some time during the first day of a lesson taking snapshots of all of your students plus a group picture. Take the time to write the student's name with each picture on a list and also the order on the group pictures.
5. Have each student introduce themselves by name and tell a little about themselves. The instructor should pick out a specific point about each student and then associate name, face and point. Information about the students' likes and dislikes, background, and goals in learning to surf are especially helpful memory hints.
6. While on the beach or shore, have a list of each student's name and have the student's line up according to the order of the list. In the lineup, work your way around to each student in the same order as you had them line up on the beach.
7. Students with the same name as another person the instructor knows can be associated with that person in the instructor's memory. This association is a good memory-jogging tool.
8. Some students "look" the way instructors picture a person with that name to look. (For example: "Jim" looks athletic, "Frank" seems very honest and forthright, etc.) Be careful of stereotyping, though.
9. If you hold a camp or have non-surf activities, have students sit in a circle. Each student must say his/her name and give one identifiable characteristic. The next person has to give his/her name and characteristic and repeat what the person before him/her said. And so on around the circle until the person "unfortunate" enough to be last (perhaps the instructor) must introduced recall all of those before him/her

10. Every so often give yourself a memory test looking at each student and saying their name to yourself.
11. For large classes: besides increased safety, dividing the entire group into smaller "working groups" will help facilitate name recall. Classroom time can be used to give small projects for each group to work on. Only having to remember 5-6 people in a small group is much easier than looking at 25 faces at the same time.

If you forget a name, try some of these suggestions. It's also a good way to break the ice on the first day.

- It's OK to not know everything! Instructors are human too, and they can make mistakes just like anyone else.
- Think positively! A good attitude will help anyone. Most instructors can remember 5-6 names at a time at most. Keep reminding yourself that you CAN learn a few names at a time, and work to build on this skill.

Be honest with your students! Let them know that you may have trouble remembering who they are. Ask them to be patient. Most students will be happy to help you learn if you are up front with them from the beginning. The "personal" interaction with using the student's name and addressing their personal needs is a proven technique for interpersonal relationships and is the strategy most effective in learning environments like those in SUP lessons.

### **Physical Indications/Limitations**

Once the instructor can address their students by name, it's time to address their safety needs. Safety is much more than just being able to identify when they become tired or frustrated, it's about a whole range of issues that can impact a lesson.

The instructor must first understand the physical limitations of their students, as well as knowing "instinctively" when the student doesn't have the potential to fully learn the sport. Another important physical limitation that must be considered is that most freshwater SUP instruction takes place on calm water, therefore the student must provide all the propulsion to move on the water (there is no current or surf to help push). It is important to remind the students not to paddle too far because they must be able to return without becoming physically exhausted. If the student is seriously out of shape or had poor natural balance, don't push them beyond their limits. Putting a student on a smaller board where balancing is difficult is the quickest way for a student to give up and quit. Provide confidence building exercises on the shore if necessary to get the student ready for the water.

One word of caution, don't ever give up on a student, even if you determine they will never learn to stand up surf. There is a philosophy in play here. If the person has a positive experience with SUP, they will remember it as fun and also that learning to do it is a worthwhile goal hard to achieve. This increases the respect for our sport among the general public as well as helps in recommendations to take lessons among the student's friends.

### **Clothing and Jewelry**

A couple of items should be checked before the lesson starts related to cloths and jewelry,

particularly if you teach in the ocean. Nice gold chains or bracelets look like lures to a large fish. Do not let any students in the water while they are wearing any jewelry. Wedding rings should be worn at the student's risk. Shoes are another item. Depending on where you teach, it might be practical to let your students wear tennis shoes or reef shoes. Finally, don't let your students wear cotton T-shirts. Rashguards should be provided if the student doesn't have one and requests one.

### **Wetsuits and Body Warming Outerwear**

With freshwater SUP, you may be giving the initial instructions in an environment where it is unlikely you'll actually be in the water. When the water or air is cold, providing body warming gear is a must for lessons.

What is the correct type of a body warming outerwear to choose for your students? This is a difficult question with a great many variables. Some people stay warmer than others at the same temperature. You want to provide your students with the right kind and fit of body warming gear to keep them warm while standing, gear that will keep them warm if they fall in cold water, but will also give them the freedom of movement needed for success in learning.

### **Water Temperature and Weather Conditions**

Freshwater SUP can be learned and practiced in much colder water than traditional ocean surfing because paddlers stay dry most of the time. In flat water environments such as lakes or reservoirs, you can predict how likely it is that your students are going fall in the water. If you are an expert SUP in a flat water area, it is unlikely you will be falling in the water and can plan your body warming outerwear appropriately. If you are taking a group of new students to that same body of water, you can assume, must assume, someone will be falling in the water and choose the proper body warming gear for them.

The *Rule of 100*: If you add the air temperature and water temperature together and the result is a number below 100 degrees Fahrenheit, hypothermia is a very real concern. This by no means should be a deterrent from instructing SUP in cold weather, but simply a tool to ensure proper gear in this cold environment.

Instructors should always advise students to have a warm and dry set of clothes to change into after the lesson. This could be the regular clothing the student wore to the class if they are wearing the gear you've given them as an instructor. In any case, they need to be able to change into dry clothes after the lesson or if they have fallen in the cold water and need warming. Instructors in colder regions should consider providing a tent or warming structure with a heat source, blankets, and hot drinks. This provides a venue where students can warm themselves if they fall in or simply want to defrost a bit at the end of a lesson.

Obviously, the colder the water, the greater the rate of heat loss is for someone in the water. Wetsuits work by the bubbles in the neoprene insulation, to varying degrees, against the colder water outside the suit, by trapping a thin layer of water in the suit, which is warmed by your body, and by reducing the flow of water around your body. That flow, along with heat lost through the neoprene, dissipates your body's heat into the body of water you are surfing in. Since your body cannot heat the surrounding water, eventually you will chill. The colder it is, the faster you will chill. Some waters are so

cold that an unprotected person can die in a matter of a few minutes from extreme hypothermia.

### **Footwear**

In freshwater SUP or ocean, your feet will always be wet. No matter what the water conditions may be, prepare accordingly. Neoprene booties or neoprene socks will keep your feet warm while they are wet. Waterproof socks (gore-tex) with a warm, non-cotton, sock underneath is another option.

### **Body Warming Outerwear**

The traditional ocean surfing method of body warming is a wetsuit, which will be discussed in detail later in this manual. However, there are other options available to keep the body warm while in a freshwater SUP environment. Because the range of motion needed from the gear by the user is in the air, and not underwater like in prone surfing, there is a big difference. The gear must keep the user warm and they must be able to move in the water, navigate themselves back on the board. This gear-flexibility gives rise to looser and different choices. This list is by no means exhaustive in nature. There are further iterations and combinations that can be combined to form the perfect body warming system for your students in the specific environment in which they will be learning.

### **Dry Suits**

This piece of gear is a full-body suit you put on which has gussets at the neck, hands, and feet (occasionally the feet are built into the suit) which keeps water completely out. In extremely cold (winter, below freezing) environments this should be considered seriously. Underneath the Dry Suit, insulating cloth layers can be used.

### **Dry Top**

A Dry Top is exactly like a Dry Suit, but in a jacket form. This keeps water from reaching your core and arms and can be combined with another type of lower body warming choice. Layering is also a must underneath the Dry Top

### **Splash Gear**

Splash Gear is a very broad term for any piece of gear that will repel splashes of water. It is akin to a rain jacket and rain pants. This gear will not keep you completely dry if you fall in because the water will seep in through the neck, arms, waist, and feet. However, once back on your board, it will trap body heat in the warming layer you have underneath and keep the wind from cooling you.

### **Layers**

The warming layer closest to your body is very important. This CANNOT, under any circumstances, be cotton. This needs to be a moisture wicking material such as polypropylene or wool (or any number of modern textiles). Depending on the conditions, you may want to wear several layers beneath your Splash or Dry gear. Fleece is another popular layering option.

## Thickness and Fit of the Wetsuit

The colder the water, the thicker the suit needs to be to keep you comfortable. Increasing the thickness of your suit, either with a single suit or layers of neoprene, reduces your body's rate of heat loss. If an individual's metabolism is such that they chill faster than others similarly geared, consider providing a thicker suit and the additional thermal protection it offers.

If a suit fits well, it will keep the water flow in and out of the suit to a minimum, thus reducing the rate of heat loss.

Wetsuits are specified in terms of millimeters. The chart below provides an approximate equivalency.

1/16 inch	1.5 mm
5/64 inch	2 mm
3/32 inch	2.5 mm
1/8 inch	3 mm
3/16 inch	5 mm

In the normal summer surf school environment, students usually only wear rashguards or vests. However, in cooler climates, “shorty’s” or full length wetsuits are commonly prescribed. Even in these climates, thinner wetsuits are normal for group lessons and slightly thicker wetsuits are normal for private lessons in fall or spring conditions. Very few schools, except in far northern or southern climates, provide boots and/or gloves.

A thicker wetsuit prevents chill and hypothermia. The chart below gives average recommendations for wetsuit thickness for water temperatures. The ranges overlap depending on individual body heat and comfort.

Temperature	Suit Thickness*
70°F - 80°F	1/16" (1.6mm) neoprene or lycra If necessary
65°F - 70°F	1/8" (3mm) neoprene
40°F - 65°F	3/16" (5mm) neoprene
20°F - 40°F	1/4" (6.5mm) neoprene
Cold	3/8" (9.5mm) neoprene, drysuit

## Wetsuit Size Selection

Another common item instructors need to understand is the correct size to select for a student. Not every school can afford to bring a large selection of suits to the beach every time a small group of students are being taught. The chart below provides an

approximate guide for suit selection. The best approach when unsure is to have available a small selection covering above and below for an individual that you are unsure of.

<b>Suggested Kid's/Men's Wetsuit Size Chart</b>								
<b>W</b>	<b>3'10"-4'4"</b>	<b>4'4"-4'10"</b>	<b>4'10"-5'4"</b>	<b>5'4"-5'8"</b>	<b>5'8"-5'10"</b>	<b>5'10"-6'</b>	<b>6'-6'2"</b>	<b>6'2"-6'4"</b>
<b>55-70K</b>	<b>MK</b>							
<b>70 – 85K</b>		<b>LK</b>						
<b>84 – 100K</b>			<b>XLK</b>					
<b>100-120</b>				<b>S</b>				
<b>120-140</b>				<b>MS</b>				
<b>140-160</b>				<b>LS</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>MT</b>		
<b>160-180</b>				<b>L</b>	<b>LT</b>	<b>XL</b>	<b>LT</b>	
<b>180-200</b>				<b>XL</b>	<b>XL</b>	<b>XXLS</b>	<b>XL</b>	<b>XLT</b>
<b>200-220</b>				<b>Custom</b>	<b>XXL</b>	<b>XXLT</b>	<b>XXLS</b>	<b>XXL</b>
<b>220+</b>				<b>Custom</b>	<b>Custom</b>	<b>Custom</b>	<b>Custom</b>	<b>Custom</b>

First letter indicates size, second/last letter indicates short or tall.

<b>Suggested Women's Wetsuit Size Chart</b>						
<b>W</b>	<b>5'-5'2"</b>	<b>5'2"-5'4"</b>	<b>5'4"-5'6"</b>	<b>5'6"-5'8"</b>	<b>5'8"-5'10"</b>	<b>5'10"-6'</b>
<b>85-100</b>	<b>XS-S</b>					
<b>100-115</b>		<b>S-M</b>				
<b>115-130</b>			<b>M-L</b>			
<b>130-145</b>				<b>L-XL</b>		
<b>145-160</b>					<b>XL-XXL</b>	
<b>160-175</b>						<b>Mens</b>
<b>175+</b>	<b>Custom</b>	<b>Custom</b>	<b>Custom</b>	<b>Custom</b>	<b>Custom</b>	<b>Custom</b>

### **Putting on the Wetsuit**

If your school provides a wetsuit, remember that most of those you teach might not have ever used a wetsuit before and have no idea on how to put one on. Many students put their suits on with the zipper to the front, only to struggle to take the suit off and turn it around when they realize their mistake.

Another problem comes up when a student gets a suit that is too small or one that won't zip well around the waistline. Still another problem is making sure the overlap at the top of the zipper is correctly latched so as not to cause a rash when the student gets in the water.

The best way to avoid problems, particularly when you have larger classes is to have students use the buddy system. After the proper size wetsuits are distributed, have the student's line up and while standing in front of the group, show them how to put the suits on, zipper backwards. If you have full suits, have them each put the suit completely on, but not zipped. Then have each turn one direction, with every other person lifting their arms in the air while their partner zips the suit up, and correctly latches the top with the Velcro strap pointing downward. When suits are finished, have them turn and repeat the process for their partner. It works best if the instructor checks the latch of each student just to make sure there are no places where the Velcro will rub on the student's neck.

## Safety Rules (and Legal Issues)

When the actual lesson actually starts, the instructor has broken the ice, had all students sign a release waiver, and learned the student's names. As part of the ice-breaker, the instructor might want to say a few words about the NSSIA and its goals and commitment to using proven training and instruction techniques during their lessons. Additionally, the instructor should mention about using sun screen and rash guards to protect the student's skin. Many schools have sun block available for students as part of their first aid kits.

### Legal Issues During a Lesson

- Liability Laws
  - Make students sign a waiver
  - Tell students that SUP can be dangerous and injuries are possible
  - Provide safety training and have a first-aid kit available
- Sports Coaching Laws
  - Make sure you tell students to warm-up
- Sexual Harassment Laws
  - If ocean SUP tell students you may need to grab them on an ankle or leg to prevent injury (implied consent)
- Littering Laws
  - Bring a trash bag and tell students to leave only their footprints

Next, it's time to carefully explain the school and SUP "rules and guidelines" clearly. Don't underestimate the importance of clear information in multiple formats to help the lesson run smoothly, plus protect yourself and your school from legal problems. The challenge is to present these rules in a nurturing, growth-promoting way, as opposed to the autocratic, school "marm" style. In other words, don't just read the rules, say why each is important to prevent injuries. Explaining the basic safety rules while still on the beach also addresses the liability issue. The rules are touched on here and fully listed at the end this section.

When dry beach training starts you need to get your students attention. Have the students look you in the eyes when talking to them, both on the beach and in the water. It seems to get their diverted attention and also help calm them if they are hyper. Use appropriate humor during instruction as well when possible for reinforcement.

## Safety Equipment

Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs) are required for SUP on some bodies of water. Consulting the specific guidelines for the body of water on which you are instructing is a must. Each student must be properly fitted by a qualified instructor prior to entering a body of water where a PFD is required.



In addition to being a requirement by the Coast Guard and state recreational authorities, PFD use is smart. Some bodies of water that appear to be completely still, such as a pond or smaller lake, have small currents. These small currents can be surprisingly strong and swimming against them or staying afloat in them can take a swimmer by surprise. Another concern is



other recreational boaters and watercraft users. They may be curious about you, as SUP is foreign to many inland people, and they drive their boats near you. This will cause potentially hazardous waves and wakes. PFDs also make you more visible in the rare case of you being separated from your board while in the water.

## **Leashes**

As the proliferation of SUP on both ocean and inland bodies of water happens, so will its regulation. As of now, being so new, there is no mandatory rule on wearing a leash unless you are ocean surfing at a leash required beach. In both flatwater and river scenarios, there are serious pros and cons to wearing a leash. Specifically, leashes that attach at the waist or arm are highly recommended in river SUP over leg leashes that may catch and cause injury or drowning in fast moving currents. Both students and instructors should know the pros and cons of wearing one in all scenarios.

### *Wearing a Leash:*

- The board stays with you and can be retrieved when/if you fall off the board.
- If you are fatigued and fall off the board, you are ensured to retrieve your board for floatation.
- Depending on the specific kind of leash you use, it may drag in the water behind you.



**Traditional Leash**

### *Not Wearing a Leash:*

- SUP watermen learn to stay with their boards more readily knowing they will have to swim in if they lose it.
- It encourages surfers to SUP more precisely, as losing control of yourself and your board may result in a swim to retrieve it.
- Surfers will be more aware of their swimming ability.
- Surfers won't trip over their leash while embarking on a river or flatwater session. It's easier to get away from the board when falling.

### *Cons of a Surf Leash:*

- False sense of security - it is not a life saving device they can and do break. A leash can spring back and hit you.
- A leash can wrap around you and seriously hurt you (fingers, toes, neck).
- When in river SUP environments, a dragging leash can be caught on obstacles, potentially trapping the paddler.

## **Paddles**

Paddles vary depending on pleasure or racing styles, how tall you are, etc. Various materials are available, including wood, for both shaft and blade, each with particular benefits. Fiberglass is light and stiff plus inexpensive. Aluminum and plastic are

inexpensive, with aluminum slightly lighter but colder to the touch. Carbon Fiber is the lightest and strongest, but also the most expensive.

### **Paddle Length**

The correct paddle length for your height is the most important part of equipment selection. Too long a paddle makes your arms tire easily while too short forces you to bend forward putting pressure on your back. In general the paddle should be 10-12 in. taller than your height for racing, 8-10 in. taller than you for flat water, or 6-8 in. taller than you for surfing. Paddles with adjustable length shafts are best when dealing with students of various sizes.

### **Blade Size and Angle**

A surf paddle has a larger surface area for extra power against the ocean currents. Surf paddles are great for bracing and can also be used for white water SUP and SUP racing. A flatwater paddle has a smaller surface area which puts less stress on the arms while paddling long distances. The angle of the blade increases efficiency of the stroke. The angle bends the blade backwards allowing it to more easily leave the water after a stroke, plus it creates a more natural wrist position.

### **Video Equipment**

Regardless of the type of SUP performed; flatwater or Ocean, racing or for fun, watching how the individual strokes and maneuvers their board will provide a significant tool to improving their ability. Visualization will point out such flaws as general stroking, stooping, angling your paddle or too far back on stroke release and return, looking down at the board, etc. Try to use a camera with a good telephoto for best results, particularly if you are in open surf.



### **Back on the Shore**

Debriefing refers to some form of discussion or "reviewing" of "what happened and what was learned". Debriefing is quite common in the instructional world, but not always recommended with SUP instructors. In SUP surfing, it is better not to debrief but to approach the "review" more subtly, such as by focusing on how well each individual did on their first wave or casually initiating discussion about the wave conditions and progress amongst the entire group.

In all cases, try to discuss what should be worked on and what the next lesson will focus on with each student, particularly if you are unsure if there will be another lesson. If they are not going to take another lesson, you can also tell them what they need to be doing when practicing SUP on their own, which can be in many different ways. Ask, if they don't plan on getting another instructional session, how they plan to move ahead with their SUP and tailor your conversation to assist them.

One of the final suggestions an instructor might provide as the lesson ends is advice to each student on the size and type of board they should buy for a first SUP board if they

decide to purchase one. Many times a beginner will go into a shop with no idea about what they need and end up getting something that they may never be able to ride successfully. A few words of advice will go a long way in a student's mind when they recommend you to other beginners.

### **Other Instructional Presentation Tips**

**Lower your “message density”:** Make an effort to get “straight to the point” in your initial teaching with descriptive suggestions clear and single message. Settle on the simple and catchy “you can do it” slogan, and repeat it over and over.

**Speak in the lingua franca:** Instructors often speak in non-SUP surf slang language or only use slang terms when accompanied by literal descriptions. Many of your students, particularly those from other parts of the country, expect you to use the “colorful” SUP surf-slang language in your speech. Accommodate them but also make sure they know what you are saying.

**Use visuals:** Visuals on the shore work wonders. When describing to students how to position themselves for an oncoming wave, rather than just drawing a picture, make a model of the scenario while on shore and use a small piece of wood to show the general shape of a surfboard to describe what happens.

**Be conscious of those who bring/accompany the student:** This is an interesting situation. In many cases, parents expect to be right up front on the beach encouraging kids and bring cameras to get pictures a spouse pays for a lesson and then want to watch and take pictures. These are facts of life and you need to accept it. Don't leave the parent or lesson but provide both comments and encouragement whenever the situation permits, and it always will, during the lesson.

### **Try to End the Lesson with a Photo-op**

All students like photos of their class and especially of them practicing SUP. They want to remember their lesson, and might even do additional advertising for you. When possible, always try to end the lesson on a positive note with a camera in hand, or at a minimum, provide the opportunity for the student to get a surfing picture of their instructor or have their picture taken with their instructor. If you have school T-shirts or hats, this is a great time to give them out as well. This is the best direct advertising you can get to their friends.

### **Photo-Op Guidelines**

- Have a camera available.
- Advertise and offer to have a video taken for an additional fee.
- Use a backdrop with your sign in it if possible for the beach picture.
- Send an email with the picture of the student.

### **NSSIA Guidance for Instructors and Students**

NSSIA instructors and schools offer basic rules, safety tips, and other instructional guidance for students as they learn to surf in a safe and healthy manner. The NSSIA's suggested guidelines are provided below and can be given to students separately as handouts. Instructors need to practice these rules as well as instill them in the students they teach. Students should read them to ensure they remain safe in the surf. They are in

no order of importance but all are relevant. Remember - surf safely and respect your fellow water babes.

Explain to Students Surfing Do's and Don'ts as listed below:

**Be Aware.** Be aware of other SUP paddlers and water users, of the water conditions, and of where you are SUP paddling.

**Comfort Zone.** You should SUP in conditions that you are comfortable in, don't get in over your head.

**Fitness.** Make sure you are physically fit when practicing SUP. You need to be able to swim back to shore if you lose control of your board at the end of an exhausting session - no mean feat in any conditions if you are well from shore. Don't SUP in any conditions in which you would not be confident swimming in.

**Fun.** Surfing is all about having fun, keep it in mind when you are in the waves.

**Practice.** If you want to improve, then you need to be in the water practicing SUP as regularly as possible. More time in the water actually riding waves is the only way to improve your SUP skills.

**Respect.** Respect the locals if you are visiting a beach. Remember that you are a guest and that local customs and unspoken rules should be shared.

**Sun Block.** Always wear a good waterproof sun-block. You'll know about it if you have been out for a few hours practicing SUP in the sun without it.

**SUP Buddy.** Always SUP with others if possible. Not only will you have more fun if you are sharing your waves but you will always have someone to help you out if you need it.

**Warm-up.** Always have a quick warm-up and stretch before entering the water. This will reduce the risk of muscle injury or cramp whilst you are surfing. A sample of typical warm-ups for "older" male surfers is provided in Appendix D.

**Check out the water conditions.** Take a good look at the water before you go out. Watch the river or flatwater until you can visualize a place where you can ride. This may be a very short time.

**Student Rules: Handout based on safety and common sense.**

### **NSSIA Instructor Guidelines For 1<sup>st</sup> Time Flatwater Beginner Classes**

Below are instructor guidelines for a beginner SUP lesson. This section offers more detail and is an actual plan to follow for teaching a lesson. It is provided only to NSSIA instructors and it is up to you to keep this information confidential for only those who have signed our NSSIA waiver agreement.

***Premise: All of our students are first-time beginners, which is why they are coming to a surf school.***

It is important to get them just the basics to get them up and paddling. Therefore, in their short 1 to 2 hour lesson, it is important to give them only the very most significant features of SUP to be sure that everyone is up and confidently paddling by the end of their first lesson.

### **I. THE PRIME GOAL FOR THE INSTRUCTOR: TEACH THE STUDENT HOW TO LEARN TO SUP ON THEIR OWN:**

Ensure every student knows flatwater SUP etiquette and safety, including board safety.

### **II. SUP LESSONS BREAKDOWN**

Below is how the above is achieved, and is what you are expected to do as a surf instructor at a NSSIA surf school.

## **ON-LAND INSTRUCTION**

Each class begins with On-Land instruction, providing enough time so the student has a basic understanding of body positioning, board handling and water safety to safely navigate the flatwater and confidently build their SUP skills. Once safety is covered, go to the standard conditions below.

Explain entering the water, pre-standing body positioning, and standing up.

## **TRAINING PHILOSOPHY: EASY BOARD, EASY SUP SESSION**

This is the basis of NSSIA training: Put a student on an easy board right away. An 'easy board' in terms of flatwater SUP is one that is large enough, and stable enough to allow a beginner student to stand up and retain relatively good balance.

## **ON-LAND, FIRST THING: CHECK THE CONDITIONS**

**BEGINNER RULE: WATCH THE SUP CONDITIONS BEFORE ENTERING THE WATER.**

In flatwater conditions this may seem unnecessary, but it is NOT. Freshwater SUP, on flatwater, is often the foundation for exploration in other SUP areas. Watching the river, identifying key features, where to launch, and obstacles - all before entering the water is essential. Watching the surf, as any surfer knows, is essential. Paying homage to this practice when embarking on flatwater sets the stage for the practice to continue in other SUP conditions.

## **SUP HISTORY FOR BEGINNERS**

Explain that it was originally all longboards through the fifties, then went to shortboards in the late 1960's. Further explain that for a long time, there was nothing but shortboards, but in the past several years, longboards and more recently SUPs have come back into vogue, and there are a lot who used to ride shortboards now ride longboards or SUPs exclusively.

**MAIN ON-LAND INSTRUCTION:**  
**WATER AND BOARD HANDLING SAFETY**  
**ENTERING WATER TECHNIQUES**  
**STANDING UP TECHNIQUES**  
**PADDLING TECHNIQUES**  
**PADDLER COMFORT/RELAXATION TECHNIQUES**  
**AT THE END OF THE LESSON:**

- Rinse all debris (sand, dirt) from boards, wrap the leashes and stack the boards on racks elsewhere in an orderly fashion.
- If you see a student having trouble carrying their board, instruct them on an easy way to carry it, show them how to work as a team (nose and tail carry), or take the board yourself.
- Assist students in getting out of whatever insulating gear they wore for the session. Instruct them to leave the gear in a pile on the pavement by the vehicle or in the bucket.

## Instructor Pay

Instructors usually get paid by the lesson. However, instructors are expected to arrive for the lesson a minimum of 10 minutes early to suit up, and possibly help with the sign up process and wetsuit fitting if so requested.

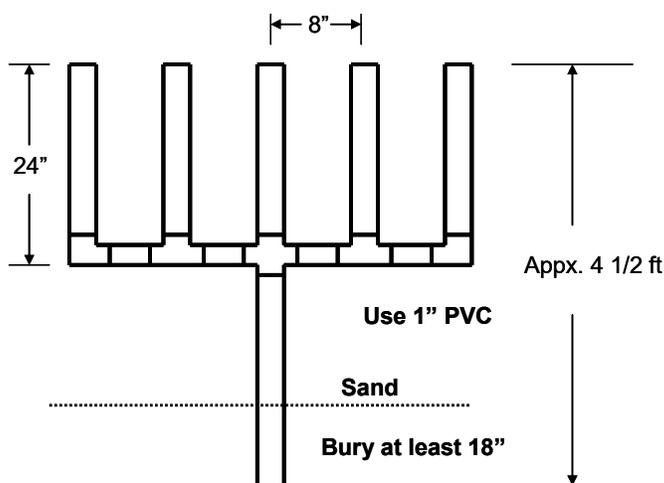
The lesson generally ends while the students are just getting out of the water. Instructors should plan for an additional 15 or 20 minutes after the lesson ends to get up off the beach and back to the vehicle and get the boards stacked. Unless the instructor needs to return the boards to an office, once the boards are stacked the instructor is done.

## Summary of Instructors' Duties

- Get to the lesson 10 minutes early and suit up equipment as necessary
- Get the waiver signed, check their clothing (and dry set) and have them warm-up and put on wetsuits (as needed)
- Make sure to cover safety rules and etiquette
- Cover board handling techniques
- Show student the on-land launching, standing, and paddling techniques
- Instruct the student in on-board techniques and paddling
- Pose for pictures with students if asked
- Rinse debris from boards and wrap cords
- Rinse and disinfect wetsuits/rashguards
- Stack boards on travel vehicle

## Useful SUP Surf School Support Equipment

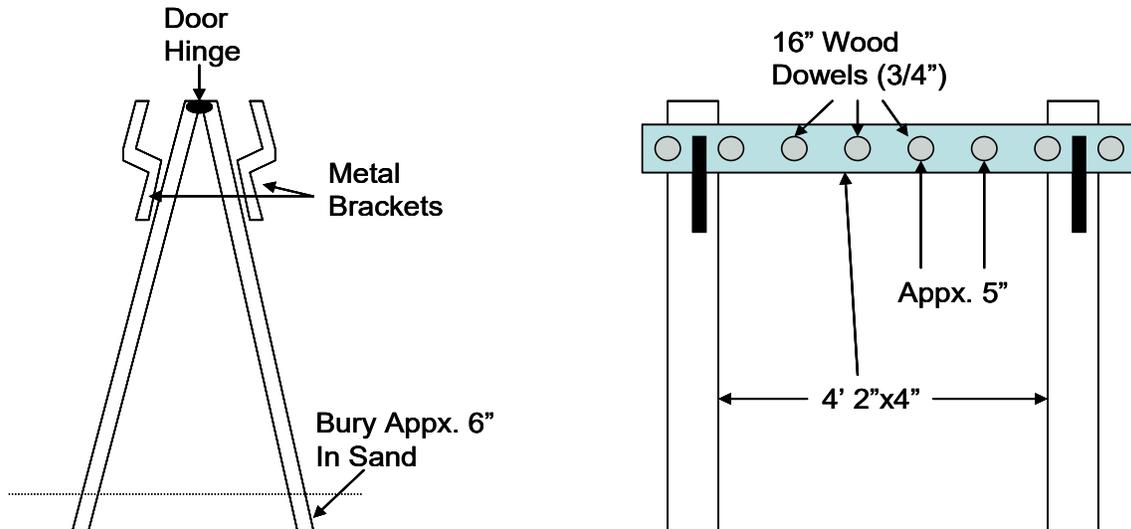
There are a number of helpful items that will make your lessons more successful. These can include chairs and a table for setting up, a fold up tent awning for shade, a warm-up tent (cold weather), a board rack, a drying rack for rashguards, wetsuits, and PFDs, fresh water to rinse feet off with and for disinfecting, a board dolly to haul boards on and off the beach, and a banner to advertise your presence to other beach goers. Some school



locations have the luxury of having these things permanent and readily available on the beach, wharf, or shore near their business office while many just set up and take down on a regular basis. The problem with most of these items is that they are heavy and their usefulness will vary depending on the size of the lessons and how far a student or

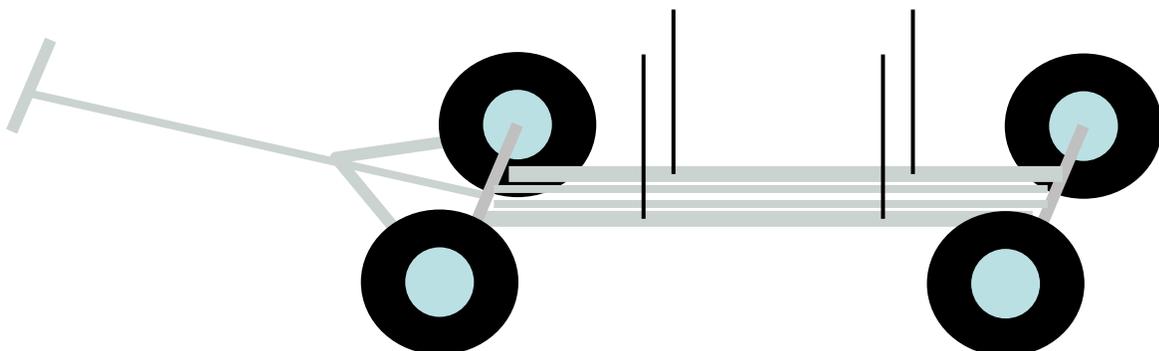
instructor has to walk to get to the lesson area. The figures below depict a few easy to build and light weight items that are useful. Remember that SUP boards are heavy, so the actual equipment used may be heavier than that shown.

A small light weight set of board racks will keep the sand off your boards and makes them easy to be worked on during hot days. The figure shows simple a 4-5 board rack that is easy to build from 1 inch PVC pipe and only takes a minute to bury the bottom in the sand. This design doesn't work for more than 5 boards (4 with one on top) as it becomes unstable.



The portable beach drying rack is very useful for hanging rash guards and wetsuits. When you have multiple students using rashguards, PFDs, and wetsuits during the day, it is imperative to stop MRSA that they be disinfected. These racks allow for easy disinfecting and subsequent drying before you load up for the day. There is virtually no work involved with the setup.

Hand carts for hauling the boards over the sand to a location near the water are a tremendous help to instructors who would otherwise work their backs carrying boards. The problem is that there isn't a commercial product made for surfboard beach carriers, only something made for kayaks. Most schools are now building their own carriers using a combination of plastic pipes, wood, and larger inflatable tires. The objective is to build a cart that is both light weight and easily transportable in a van or pickup that also carries heavier boards. The cart should be able to handle at least 4 boards at a time over sand.



## Warm-ups and Conditioning for Pre-Instruction

As an instructor ask yourself: “What group of surfers have the hardest time ensuring they are flexible and are conditioned to SUP? It's not younger kids with soft bones and bodies that can take lots of punishment during a first time lesson. Not even the moms and older ladies have the problem. The group with the serious need is the over 40 crowd with desk jobs that always wanted to SUP surf, seldom workout on a regular basis, and don't want to hurt themselves or anyone else when they do get in the water. If not for the money, there are plenty of instructors that would prefer we just retire and go away. But hey, surfing should be for everyone. Anyone who can still have fun on a SUP board as they grow older deserves all they can get. Not only does this section describes several warm-up and regular training drills that will ensure flexibility and prevent injury when students get ready to surf, but also presents serious soreness prevention drills when the “old guy” finally tries to get out there and do it.

### Flexibility

Joint stiffness and less muscle tone comes with age. By their late 40s to early 50s, nearly everyone will begin to have problems just getting out of bed in the morning. Even worse, their back and lower thighs will hurt after paddling for waves and sitting on a board during a session, their arms will start to feel like jelly a lot sooner then they did when they were 15-20 years younger.

Using the same muscle stretching techniques developed for older athletes, there are a couple of drills that help eliminate or prevent much soreness from surfing. Below are a few techniques that work well. There are many drills and these few are suggestions only. They can be quickly and easily performed right on the beach for a few minutes before going out. Many instructors have their students stretch out while they are checking in.



### Shoulder Pull

This is a quick way to stretch out shoulders. Lock your hands and pull down behind your head on each shoulder as shown. Three times through on each side, holding the pressure as long as it is comfortable for about 20 seconds each time will loosen shoulder muscles for easier paddling.



## Back and Groin Stretch

This exercise quickly loosens the groin plus also helps loosen lower back muscles. Sit on the floor or sand with your feet together as shown. Each hand should hold a foot at the toes. As you pull the toes towards your body while bending over as far as you can, push your elbows out into your thigh just below your knees. You will feel the stretching as you pull toes and push thighs harder.



## Groin Stretch

This exercise is similar to what sprinters do to loosen their calf muscles but with a slight variation to stretch your groin. Place your hand over your foot with the thumb in your insteps shown. As you stretch forward, also push your elbow into your knee. The more you push the elbow out, the more you will feel your groin muscle loosen up. Stretch as far as you can for about 30 seconds on each side. When you have finished stretching, walk around for a minute or so and shake you muscles.

## Weight Room Exercises

As an instructor or coach you might be asked what a person can do to get into shape before surfing, even competitive surfing. As a coach, you are concerned with conditioning for athletic competitions, including developing the right muscle groups and aerobic conditioning.

Effective athlete fitness includes:

- Muscles specific to the sport should be emphasized.
- Good flexibility enhances muscular fitness.
- Training should be determined by the unique demands of the sport.
- Muscular training should address techniques involved in the sport.

Two principals are involved with muscle development. The overload principle is best summarized as maximum stress is needed for maximum benefits. The principle of progression suggests that the body a. can improve as longer, more frequent, and greater-resistance workouts are performed. The American Coaching and Education Program (ACEP) recommends the following weight training activity as most likely to increase an

athlete's muscular strength: 3 sets of 10 lifts of 75% maximum weight. The following is recommended for an athlete when lifting weights:

- Exhale during the lifting phase
- Warm-up prior to each different type of lift
- Inhale during the lowering phase.
- Vary the lifting sequence from one group of muscles to another.

As a non-team competition surfer, probably the best weight room type exercise for surfing is a rowing machine. Rowing helps develop arm and shoulder muscles, increase back strength, plus it drastically helps conditioning.

If a student does have a back problem, there is one weight room exercise that you might recommend they try. It has worked for a number of more recent professional surfers and is also sometimes recommended by trainers for professional athletes in other sports. Just remember, as an instructor you can't formally recommend therapy, but you can offer that this has worked for others. Have the student look for a gym where they can hang from their knees, head down. With a trainer, have them take a weight, maybe 5-10 lb, and hold it behind their head, then arch back up and down for three sets. Hopefully, their chronic back problem will go away after a few sessions.

### **Conditioning**

For some reason, conditioning for surfing seems to be a hot topic. To understand what conditioning it takes to compete in surfing, you really need to understand what the unique things surfing demands of your body. Simply put, you need to be flexible and have rhythm to surf well. Overbuilding muscles might lead to reduced flexibility, and this condition would definitely be a disadvantage.

To build your athletes' aerobic foundation, your early-season work-outs should emphasize endurance instead of intensity. Interval training is an effective anaerobic conditioning approach because it involves brief, vigorous bouts of exercise. A surf coach should help build aerobic fitness in their athletes since it:

- It helps athletes recover faster between anaerobic bursts
- It helps prevent fatigue.

Running is the most often used method to build endurance. The following running guidance is generally recommended

- Increase distance, decrease intensity
- Decrease distance, increase intensity

### **Jumping Rope**

Besides lots of time in the water, running and jump roping seem to be the most effective conditioning drills. Running builds endurance. Jump roping builds both endurance and quick responses. You absolutely need very quick responses if you are going to be able to react to the quick changing conditions of a high performance wave. Jump roping didn't really catch on with world-class athletes in all sports until Olympian Buddy Lee came along. He developed a series of drills that have now been incorporated into the majority of Olympic team training programs for all sports.

## Roller Skates for Balance

Roller-skating is more of a "special" training activity. Roller-skating (or even roller blading) will develop balance faster than just about anything. Get yourself a pair of rollerblades and use them on a regular basis. If you can't afford blades, go workout at a roller rink once a week. Serious outdoor roller-blading can also take the place of running to build up your conditioning.

## Skateboarding for Power

Racing on a skateboard is similar to a giant slalom in skiing, and will help the power aspect of a surfer's individual style. Longer and heavier type skateboards, just like surfboards, are best suited for this type of training. The idea is to shift your balance over longer flowing turns rather than short, jerky movements. By adding speed, you can learn to adjust your balance evenly when you turn.

## Dancing

As a last comment, a number of top surfers, both years back and currently do considerable nightclub dancing. Maybe dancing helps their surfing or maybe surfing helps their dancing. At least the rhythm must help as some level.

## Safety

Specific safety techniques are covered in the Ocean or Flatwater modules of this course. The figure below, from the 2019 Paddle Sport Report, describes general conditions that can create safety hazards.

