

# ***Teaching Surf Instructors to Teach***



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



### **SUP Ocean Instructional Techniques Part 5B**

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## Effectiveness as a SUP Surf Instructor

To develop an understanding of learning principles and to be able to facilitate such learning in a SUP surfing 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 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 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

When teaching ocean SUP, most SUP students likely have either had some sort of introduction in flatwater SUP 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. It is assumed the instructor has already completed the general SUP background module and the surf instructor's module.

### Boards

Ocean SUP requires specific equipment that is best suited for the immediate conditions of the lesson and the specific needs of each student. For example, if the surf is 3 feet and windblown, a bigger and thicker flat water SUP might be used. If the waves are hollow, fast breaking and the same size, a wave riding SUP model would probably work better. Size and shape of the student's board depends on wave heights, the paddle out difficulty factor, the ability level of the student, and the height and weight of the student. The same applies for the paddle that is used. Height and shape of the paddle is crucial to the success of the student's wave catching progress for ocean SUP. Note also that for students 7 years and younger, instructors need to stay very close or even consider using a larger board for tandem paddling with the student.

Providing boards that are large and have high volume in comparison to the student's size ensure a more stable experience. While a student is first learning, the subtle nuances of the board are less evident, but falling in the water is a striking moment. Therefore, by providing large and stable boards for students to learn on, they can feel the success of standing immediately. When a student is confident and stable on the board they are able

to relax and respond to instructions. Body position on the board, paddling techniques, body relaxation, vision points in the distance - all of these subtle instructional opportunities can be capitalized on, improved on, when the student is confident and stable. In short, begin with a large board, in relation to the student, and start strong with success.

### **General Ocean SUP Board Control**

While the basic SUP safety and legal safety rules for all schools still apply, there are a couple of additional safety related items that need to be explained before you go into the actual positions for SUP surfing. One important item is how to safely go through waves. Show your students on the beach about duck diving, turning turtle and pushing up through the soup or turning your back towards it. Also explain about:

- Shuffling their feet when walking in the water to avoid stepping on sharp objects, rocks, or nasty ocean critters.
- Not getting their board sideways in front on an oncoming wave.
- Never falling off in front of their board but rather jumping backwards with their arms covering their head. This protects against having the board hit them,
- Explain about falling flat rather than stepping off or diving off. Falling flat on the surface avoids stepping directly on something sharp such as coral, a fish hook, or a sting ray, plus it prevents head injuries.

### **Going Over the Equipment**

The next step in the actual lesson is a thorough education of the equipment on the beach, before paddling out. There should also be a discussion on how to handle the paddle out conditions and keep control of both the paddle and board. This will include entering the water and mounting the board in the surf.



### **Sand Drawings**

A common instructor technique on the beach is the sand drawing. Sand drawings are simple and easily show how your students should position themselves away from each other and also their angles in relation to oncoming waves.

Another important point to cover with a sand drawing is how you expect the students to arrange themselves for safety when they do enter the water. The drawing helps explain how students should distribute themselves after each wave so as not to hit or get in the way of each other. You can also show what happens when one student crosses in front of another on a wave, or what happens when a student paddles out behind another when a wave hits. In both cases, make sure to emphasize the damage that can occur.

## Wave and Position Sand Drawings/Sculptures

For ocean SUP, the instructor creates a wave from sand as shown. Using either small Popsicle sticks (one of the surfer's or instructors most important tools) or a small shell from the beach, describe positioning for the advancing peak and how to point the nose during various takeoffs.



The sand can be also used to show the student angles that the waves come in so that they will better understand that waves don't come straight into the beach, but each wave has a little different direction and should always be paddled through perpendicular to the wave, not straight out to the ocean. You can do this by immolating a hurricane spiraling towards shore with the lines coming off of it to represent the swells approaching the coast. A straight line drawn in the sand separating the water and the land represents the coast.

Next form some sand bars right off the shore and form one of the hurricane lines into building swell. Show the student how when the swell hits something shallow on the bottom (approx..1/3 the depth of the wave) it will make the swell jump up and form into a breaking wave. Watching the sand will help the student understand how waves form and break, and also help them note where the foam will reform (shallow) and recede (deep). This helps their understanding of how depth will affect the wave.



You can have them look way out to sea where there are no waves

breaking to prove your point. You may wish to mention that the slope of the sand causes the swell to drag and slow down. Just say the more drastic the change from deep to shallow, the more drastic the change from deep to shallow, the bigger and more powerful the wave.

With a little practice, you can even roll the sand “wave” over with the Popsicle showing how the wave breaks and the board’s rocker pulls it out of their turn. This not only helps students learn when and when not to attempt a take off, but also keeps them from paddling over the falls when the first wave builds in the line-up.

## **Teaching SUP surf riding WAVE AND PADDLE SKILLS (Surf or Race Board)**

### Orientation in the Surf Lineup

1. Most SUP paddlers do not come from a surf background OR learn to SUP and then SUP Surf using conventional SUP thinking; which is being outside on a big board and paddling into a swell way before it’s a breaking wave.
2. Surfers hang inside the surfline and wait for a wave to stand up before it breaks.
3. Conventional SUP surfing is looking IN and traditional surfing is looking OUT.
4. We want to align in the break looking OUT to the oncoming waves.

### Stance on the Board

1. Conventional SUP paddlers stand in a parallel stance and this has become the defacto norm in SUP paddling; Race, Touring or Surf.
2. In the surf, in relaxed situations, the common stance is Parallel Surf stance, with the back foot (right foot for a regular and left foot for a Goofy) further back, staggered about 12 inches. The balance in this stance is still side-to-side, but the back foot back will give you better balance fore and aft.
3. When the best SUP Surfers get into the surf lineup, they switch into full surf stance and this is a shift of the front foot across the stringer, but still angled about 45 degrees forward, the back foot is about 90 degrees across the stinger and the stance has been widened quite a bit. This stance is for two reasons;
  - a. Because it provides a more stable and powerful paddling platform on a small SUP Surfboard.
  - b. Because it allows for an immediate launch into the wave without a stance change at the point of takeoff. Ruin the takeoff, ruin the wave.
4. Small SUP Surf boards have a very small balance point side to side and front to back and this surf stance allows the SUP surfer to balance over the center-line of the board with the most weight on the back foot, maintaining balance in the following way;
  - a. Front to rear balance is constantly maintained by subtle weight shifting from back foot to front foot.
  - b. Side to side balance is maintained by the back foot, placed across the board, and by subtle side-ways heel/toe weight shifts for balance.
5. Weight on the back foot to pivot the board, switching to weight on the front foot to launch into a wave. This powers up the takeoff and launches you into the wave.

### The Approach to the Wave

1. Most SUP surfers paddle up towards a breaking peak, pivot and go.

2. Surfers paddle deep and takeoff oriented down the line of the breaking wave, getting a huge pump at the point of takeoff.
3. Positioning in the lineup to allow for this deep takeoff is 100% KEY to high-level SUP surfing.
4. This means that a deep understanding of the Wave Strategy section (above) is absolutely KEY to high-level SUP surfing.
5. The Four Ways to Catch a Wave
  - a. Frontside
    - i. Paddling towards a peaking/breaking wave - you will paddle towards the wave with your paddle on the heel side, pivot as you approach the planned takeoff point, with your back to the wave, turn the board to go and then switch the paddle to the toe side for the bottom turn. BAD – as you cannot watch the wave develop and you are changing paddle sides at the critical point on the wave.
    - ii. Paddling from deep down the line – you can keep the paddle on the toe side as you paddle along the wave, always facing the wave and then choose the optimum takeoff point to pivot and launch into the wave. GOOD – this method enables you to watch the wave constantly as it develops and gives you more control over the takeoff and first turn.
  - b. Backside
    - i. Paddling towards a peaking/breaking wave - you will paddle on toe side and pivot the board down the face of the wave for takeoff, without seeing how the wave is developing down the line and as you take off, switch paddles to the heel side for the bottom turn, then orienting your body down the line of the wave. BAD – this means that you cannot see how the wave is developing down the line and almost certainly means you will drop straight down to the bottom of the wave on takeoff which may mean you miss future sections of the wave.
    - ii. Paddling from deep down the line – you keep the paddle on the heel side as you paddle along the wave, with your upper body rotated down the line for good vision of the developing wave, choosing when to pivot into the wave at the optimum takeoff point, keeping the paddle on the heel side for your first turn. GOOD – this gives you great vision of the developing wave and the choice of dropping to the bottom or driving along the face at the takeoff.

#### Pivot, Wait....and GO!

1. Using the concept of deep positioning on waves and paddling down the line gives you the option of choosing the optimum takeoff point on the wave. Sometimes the wave may be slow in developing, so, because you are facing the wave, you can

slow your paddle stroke to adjust to the wave, or even wait for the wave to catch up.

2. At exactly the best time, you can super-charge the power of the takeoff by first going back foot weight to pivot the board and then shifting to front foot weight; on toes for frontside and heels for backside to rock the board on the inside edge and then using maximum force in your face-side paddle stroke to launch into the wave. By going to toes or heels makes the board lean slightly onto rail and this means that it will not rotate further and gives you more drive at the takeoff.
3. This entry stroke is coupled with a move back on the board to place weight over the fins, and a huge pump at the point of takeoff to accelerate the board into a first mid-face turn to set up the wave.
4. This technique gives you more power at the point of takeoff, makes late drops much easier and gives you more ability to drive down the line to make waves.

### Paddle Use on the Wave

1. It is mandated in the competition rules that a turn should be assisted by a paddle plant/stroke and in fact this element of SUP surfing is still in constant development.
2. Generally, the purpose of the paddle plant is to provide a pivot point for the turn, balance through the turn and added power to add speed to make sections.
3. Switching of the paddle from side to side to assist in power/rotation in the turns is an optional skill and in general, the surfers with a longboard background (Colin McPhillips and Leco Salazar) shift the paddle side-to-side less than the shortboard style surfers (Sean Poynter and Zane Schweitzer). This is because the longboard surfers are more used to the technique of driving high volume, longer boards through turns.
4. This is an advanced skill that develops over time and can be used to add power to moves and to shorten the arcs of turns, especially cutbacks. Watching videos will help to visualize the motions of paddle-side switching and it will take time to learn to do this seamlessly.

### Paddling Back Out

It is certainly one of the ultimate skills of SUP surfing, to be proficient in paddling out through the breaking waves, into the surf lineup, either on the initial way out or after riding each wave. There are some skills differences in this that I want to teach.

1. In all instances in the surf, regardless of equipment (surfboards or race boards), be
2. It is ALWAYS faster and better controlled to paddle out standing up, rather than laying down or paddling on knees through the surf, so mastering this skill is a very high priority when learning.
3. Always, if there is a chance of busting through the oncoming wave or whitewater keep the board only slightly nose-high and paddle aggressively towards the wave and burst through the mid-point to  $\frac{3}{4}$  point of the wave, keeping the board as flat as possible, to enable the flattest exit of wave as possible. The rocker and

buoyancy will naturally ride you up the wave/whitewater and over the back and with the paddle in the water, you have stability as you exit the wave and are ready for another power stroke.

4. Only in rare circumstances is it necessary to raise the nose up to ride up whitewater and this is more important on a race board than on a surfboard,
5. If you are fully busted by an overhead set, step back, raise the nose and launch the board up and towards the oncoming wave, with the intent that the board rides over the breaking wave and is waiting for you on the backside of the wave, not washed over the falls.
6. Do everything possible to keep control of the board, because a free SUP board in the grasp of a breaking wave is potentially lethal to you, other surfers in the lineup and exposes the board to a very high risk of breaking.

### **Advanced SUP Ocean techniques - The Major Rule**

***Ride the best wave. Surf it well. Ride it to the end. Paddle Out. Repeat.***

### **STRATEGY in the Lineup**

Selecting and Surfing Wave #1, Wave #2 and Wave #3

1. Check Swell, Tides, Wind, Current; ALL CONDITIONS that affect the surf.
2. DEFINE WAVE locations 1, 2 & 3 and clearly map their location in the break.
3. Decide on the style of surfing and maneuvers BEFORE you hit the water.
4. As the wave comes decide on the direction to ride BEFORE you paddle.
5. As you paddle decide on the FINAL DESTINATION of the ride and pre-select the moves to get you there. Always make the wave and never fall.

### **Wave-Count**

Choose a wave-count that is relative to the size/length of the waves but still FORCES YOU to constantly move between Waves 1, 2 & 3 in the lineup.

### **Paddle Strategy**

Constantly move around the break to surf Waves 1, 2 & 3. Make sure you ride a wave inside EVERY 4 MINUTES - maximum. Do not get stuck sitting in one wave location.

### **SKILLS in riding waves**

#### Raise Your Game with Radical Surfing

Create new PERFORMANCE LEVELS beyond everything you have ever done, but remember that you must make every wave. These ideas are opposites but trying to achieve this will dramatically improve your surfing.

#### Signature Move

Decide on your SIGNATURE MOVE that is radical, carving, throws spray and links cleanly to the rest of your surfing. This must be on both your forehand AND backhand.

## Energy

Paddling aggressively for every wave, constantly paddling in the lineup, moving through Waves 1-3 will result in generating more ENERGY IN YOUR SURFING.

## Fitness

You must be STRONGER and have more STAMINA than anyone in the water and be able to paddle for THREE CONSECUTIVE 30 minute sessions at a 100% sprint paddle pace. If you can't do this you are not fit enough.

## **WINNING ATTITUDE in the water**

### Go for it!

Learn how to LOVE BEING BEATEN by hell waves and come up laughing. It is very important that you attack the takeoff on waves as fear and hesitation results in wipeouts.

### Focus

When out surfing, have a SINGLE PASSIONATE desire to win. Leave all your troubles on the beach and stay 100% focused on the goals of getting the best waves and ripping.

### Agro Attitude in Heats (tone this down for recreational SUP surfing)

1. ALWAYS PADDLE PAST other competitors and constantly be moving between Waves 1-3. This will be viewed as aggressive and will upset the other surfers.
2. CONTEST EVERY WAVE and try to get the inside from opponents.
3. DON'T TALK, look angry, have fire in your eyes and NEVER SIT.
4. Use RATIONAL thought to manage your heat and EMOTIONAL creativity to ride the waves. NEVER let your emotions determine your strategy.
5. NEVER QUIT in a heat, on a season, in anything. Always fight back.

## **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 wooden 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.

### **Etiquette for SUP Surfing**

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

#### Find a peak with the fewest surfers out

Always spend time on the beach surveying the surf and selecting the waves you want to ride. Peaks 1,2 & 3. This gives you the chance to find a wave with the fewest surfers on it, so that, from the get-go, you are reducing the potential for conflict.

#### Paddle out around the break

Because you have been watching, you have seen that there are sets and lulls and that there are channels that run out around the breaking peaks. Paddle out in the channel during a lull. If there are constant sets of waves and the paddle out is too hard, find an easier wave to ride.

#### Do not get in the way of a rider on the wave

When you're paddling out always look for a rider on a wave. He has right of way, so try to let him surf past you rather than paddling into his path. Getting run over is not fun, can cause injury, damage to your board and is a major no-no in surfing.

#### Do not bail your board

If you're caught inside of a set of waves, you need to learn to kick your board over the wave, rather than bailing out. Bailing sends your board over the falls and it may hit someone behind you. Kicking it over probably means the board will be next to you, as you come up. If there are further set waves, turn the board to the beach, look for people that you may hit if you get pushed to the beach and hang on the tail of the board to control your equipment without letting it go. Another idea is to hold the leash as close to the tail of the board as possible and pull the board through the whitewater.

#### Check who's in the lineup

As you paddle out, survey the lineup to see who is out already. These guys are in front of you, in line for the next waves, so be cool and remember them. Make sure that you identify the alpha dog in the pack. He is the one you may have problems with, so you need to be ultra respectful and surprise him with kindness.

#### Wait your turn

Because you know who is out and who needs waves before you, you can easily figure out when your turn in the rotation for waves is about to come up. You get one try at this. If

you screw up this wave, you're done for good, so make sure you make the wave and surf it good.

#### Give waves away

Sometimes, even if it's really your turn, give a good wave to someone else who looks hungry. Often they will paddle just to test you, so back off and generously let them go, but make sure you both know that you're just being cool and generous. It's a rare occurrence and will build goodwill.

#### Call sets

Because you're standing, you can see the set waves coming before anyone, so tell the surf crew that a set is coming and which wave is better. In this way, you dish up some good waves to the crew and they start to think you're not so stupid, not cool yet, but not so bad.

#### Sit down and talk

Constant paddling through a crew in the lineup is seen as threatening to the surfers, so chill out, sit down and wait for your turn. This makes you human and not an eyesore and you may actually start up a conversation with some of the guys out there. There is a lot of interest in Sup, but it's not cool yet, so don't be offended if no one wants to know all about how awesome your board is etc. Just be sociable.

#### Be aware of your wave count

As you get a few waves, be really aware if you're getting too many of the really good waves. It's easy to do and you start to look like a wave hog, which is exactly the opposite of our intention. Get a few good ones and move along to another peak. That will make you some friends for next time you're out there.

#### Do NOT drop in

If someone is already riding the wave, don't even paddle for it, don't hover on the top of the wave, don't take off in front of someone and flick out and certainly don't ride a whole wave and stuff someone in the whitewater. If you do this you're back in the doghouse and may be asked to leave.

#### Do NOT back-paddle

Be super aware of who is out, where they are and whose turn it is for the next ride. Do not paddle around someone sitting and waiting for a wave. It is considered very aggressive in regular surfing. You're on probation and this will get you serious heat and a trip to the beach.

#### Be aware of surfers paddling out when you're riding

As you're paddling for a wave, scope the length of the wave for any surfer who's paddling out, who may potentially paddle in front of you. Although the surfer riding the wave has priority, you're on a Sup and will be in the wrong if there's a mix up, simply because you're on a Sup. So, be vigilant to avoid any impacts or close calls with surfers.

#### Always control your equipment

Bailing your board is bad form. Try to paddle over waves, or launch your board over the whitewater, but do not dive and let the Sup wash in on the whitewater to the end of your

leash. Every surfer sees a Sup as a dangerous object and thinks of us as kooks bailing their boards. This adds fuel to the fire. Learn how to hold onto your leash near the tail of the board to pull it through waves. Be really careful of others in the lineup if you fall riding a wave. Hitting another surfer in the lineup is instant dismissal and adds fuel to the surfer debate that Sup boards should not be out there.

#### Increase wave count by catching wide waves

If you're smart about your paddling and really scope a lineup, you may find that there are good wide or deep waves that are not readily available to the surfers in the primary lineup and this is the way you can increase your wave-count considerably, riding waves that before had gone un-ridden. This is consistent with the idea of selecting peaks 1,2 & 3 as alternative waves to ride. To do this you will really need to sharpen your spin and go skills, but once you get this dialed, you're on your way to getting way more waves, without every impacting the established lineup and the surfers out there.

#### Move around to other peaks

Do not wear out your welcome. Get a few waves and move on. There are usually many other waves in a surf area, so get a few and move to another peak and practice your magic on this new crew of surfers. This is a sign of respect and will be recognized and rewarded with future bonus waves.

#### The lineup is a close-knit community

Most surfers go to the same spot over and over and they become "locals" out there and make friends and acquaintances with the other surfers who frequent the break. You can be part of this local crew if you're cool, friendly, don't hog waves, generally understand and respect the locals and don't act like the average Sup kook. Have fun out there!

#### **Final Comments**

Learning to surf with a standup paddleboard is more difficult than learning to surf on a traditional surfboard. You have more components to deal with....specifically the paddle, and you have much larger and thicker watercraft to control. There is also more chance of injuring another rider in the water, if the student loses control of the board and paddle. Keep these factors in mind when giving a standup paddleboard lesson in the surf.

As far as necessary accessories are concerned, the use of a leash, water shoes, and wetsuits are up to the discretion of the instructor, based on the size of the surf and surf break conditions.