

Windsurfing



Windsurfing is a surface water sport that combines elements of surfing and sailing. It consists of a board usually two to four meters long, powered by the orthogonal effect of the wind on a sail. The rig is connected to the board by a free-rotating universal joint and comprises a mast, wishbone boom and sail.

Windsurfers can perform jumps, inverted loops, spinning maneuvers, and other "freestyle" moves that cannot be matched by any sailboat. Windsurfers were the first to ride the world's largest wave.

Beginners must develop their balance and core stability, acquire a basic understanding of sailing theory, and learn a few techniques before they can progress from board sailing to windsurfing.



Initial lessons can be taken with a windsurfing school, which exist in reasonable numbers in most countries. With coaching and favorable conditions, the basic skills of sailing, steering, and turning can be learned within a few hours. Competence in the sport and mastery of more advanced maneuvers such as planing, carve gybing (turning downwind at speed), water starting, jumping, and more advanced moves can require more practice. Training DVDs exist which are useful in a sport where it is difficult for a coach to be close to a pupil particularly when learning the more advanced maneuvers.



Nevertheless, windsurfing is a sport which, once mastered, can be enjoyed, even at an advanced level, well into retirement and then at a more sedate level for considerably longer still. This is partly due to the fact that windsurfing crashes tend to cause less injury than those sports which take place on harder surfaces (although being reckless whilst windsurfing in advanced conditions can still cause serious injury or death due to the speeds and altitudes involved). The average age of the windsurfer is around 45.

Windsurfing is predominately undertaken on a non-competitive basis. Organised competition does take place at all levels across the world and typical formats for competitive windsurfing include speed sailing, slalom, course racing, wave sailing, superX, and freestyle. These events are exciting to watch as sailors push the limits both physically and creatively with moves that look as impossible as thinking them up in the first place.



The boom of the 1980s led windsurfing to be recognized as an Olympic sport in 1984. However, windsurfing's popularity saw a sharp decline in the mid-1990s, thanks to licensing battles, and equipment became more specialized, requiring more expertise to sail.

