

What to do when Over-powered!

Beginners and experienced people may get over-powered when the wind conditions exceed our ability to cope.

There are 3 contributors to consider: The Wind, The Equipment and Our Stance.

1. The Wind

The wind may be building from a manageable level to a 'too high' level.

The wind may be gusty and or shifty. Off-shore winds are usually very gusty near the shore and don't become more steady until we are far enough out. While the use of a harness is recommended in heavy winds, it may be better not to hook in too soon, after launching in an off-shore wind from the beach. Note: on-shore winds can be just as tricky, but to a lesser degree.

2. The Equipment

We always try to choose our equipment for the conditions on hand. Heavy **boards** that are slow in moving, will transfer more wind pressure onto the sailor than do lighter boards which plane easily. The latter will readily absorb the increasing wind and remove pressure from the sailor. Remember, the wind drives the sail, the mast foot and the sailor's front foot drive the board. If the board does not move, all that power goes to your arms and legs.

Modern **sails**, when sufficiently down-hauled have a lot of twist in the top of the sail. This will allow the sail to bend away in high winds and move the centre of effort downward, while spilling excess wind. This is especially effective in gusting winds. Older sails do not enjoy this feature and are more 'off-on' thus demanding more effort from the sailor.

The selection of **sail size** is always critical. Read the **weather forecast**, to be prepared for changes.

Always check the wind strength before you go out. Check what sail size others are already using.

Watch the sky to be ready for sudden changes. Watch the water to see the gusts approaching. Pick a size that is large enough to allow you to water-start, but small enough that you can handle it. Most beginners pick their sail too small. Most more experienced sailors, too big ☺.

3. Body Stance

We already learned to keep our weight on our back foot and to drive the board with our front foot. We need to keep our knees flexible, not locked, but our front knee almost straight to put as much driving pressure on as possible. Our back knee is more bent.

In a steady wind, our arms are stretched-out because bent arms get tired too quickly.

We need to lean our shoulders back and keep our butt in to maximize our strength.

In a gusty wind, the arms may have to do some work!

When the wind picks up, our first line of defense is to let out the power (back hand) for just an instant, enough to allow us to bring the mast to windward before we power up again. That will bring the rig more over the wind, while we are hanging off the boom with our harness. It will effectively reduce the area exposed to the wind and funnel the wind under the sail to forward, thus driving us more, with less power.

As we are hanging on the boom, our harness lines should be close to perpendicular to the mast while pulling the rig **down**, but **not** parallel to the mast. Thus, don't sit down in your harness.

Perpendicular will have the greatest pulling-power, parallel to the mast will have little or no pulling power. Depending on your harness height, the actual angle may be somewhere in between.

When the wind lets go, we need to come in before we fall back into the water (broach).

You need to bend your knees, and your arms and let your sail come up. Be ready for the next gust though! If you keep an eye on the water, you can often anticipate when this will happen.

As ever, wind variations are part of the windsurfing excitement and our challenge!

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