

Improving your surfing abilities is a task that requires time, commitment and mental focus. You will need to be able to judge what you are doing and compare it to others. Unlike many practices this is very difficult as waves are not easily duplicated. This guide was designed to help you avoid mistakes that many surfers make so that you can focus on tasks that will help you improve.

TEN SURFING MISTAKES YOU CAN AVOID!

A guide for surfers that want to improve the way they surf, perform at the top of their potential and have more fun in the water.

TOP TEN

Best things you can do for your surfing!

Presented by:



SurfScience.com

“This guide came together with help from professional surfers, surfboard shapers and surf coaches from around the world. We hope it helps you in your surfing journey.”

- Greg Kroleski, Editor - SurfScience.com

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How To Improve Your Surfing

Improving your surfing abilities is a task that requires time, commitment and mental focus. You will need to be able to judge what you are doing and compare it to others. Unlike many practices this is very difficult as waves are not easily duplicated. While a basketball player can shoot 1,000 free throws or a musician practice a song for hours, a surfer cannot easily surf the same wave in the same conditions day after day.

Because of this, the time you are able to spend in the water is extremely valuable. To make improvements in your level of surfing, you will need to make the most of every minute. This guide was designed to help you get past a few of the major mistakes that surfers make so that you can focus on tasks that will help you improve.

Over the past few years of interviewing surfing experts at SurfScience.com we have had a chance to ask a lot of great questions. These are some of the top tips given to us by professional surfers, shapers and surf coaches.

Without further delay, here are the 10 most common mistakes surfers make:

1. Riding The Wrong Surfboard
2. Not Surfing The Right Waves
3. Not Spending Time Watching The Conditions
4. Not Popping Up Properly
5. Not Taking Off At The Peak
6. Not Putting Their Whole Body Into Maneuvers
7. Wasting Energy
8. Not Surfing Enough
9. Not Asking For Help
10. Not Getting Someone To Video Their Surfing

Throughout this guide we will describe why making this mistake will hinder your surfing and how you can avoid it. Whether you're just learning to surf or you're a local standout, there will be something good you can take away.



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1. Riding The Wrong Surfboard

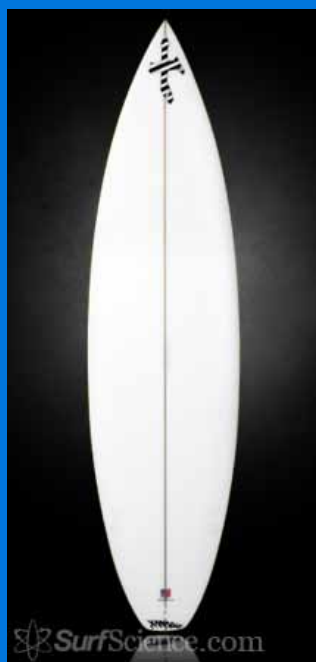
The surfboard is the most important part of surfing. It is what connects you to the energy of the wave. By riding a surfboard that is not a good fit for you, the wave or the current conditions, you are greatly limiting your ability to perform.

Most surfers want to ride the same boards that they see professionals riding. That is great! It's something to strive for in the future but not something you should rush. You need to be honest with yourself about what type of board you should be riding.

Beginners should start on larger boards like longboards or funboards. As your surfing ability progresses you will have the option to drop down to a smaller board shape or to continue riding longboards.

If you want to find a good board for your ability you can start by asking at your local surf shop. You might also try riding a few different boards your friends own to get a feel for different shapes. Finally, the Surfboard Match at SurfScience.com (<http://www.surfsience.com/surfboard-match>) is a great way to see what types of boards are a good fit for you.

Once you have reached an advanced level of surfing you might want to advance past the standard shapes you get at surf shops. At this point contacting a local shaper to make you a custom board is a great option. They can fine tune the board for your surfing, making minor adjustments to the outline, thickness, concave, fin placement and more.



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2. Not Surfing The Right Waves



Every wave is different. After you've been surfing for a while you will better understand the personality of a few different breaks. Some waves are a better fit for certain types of surfboards than others.

Beginner surfers should start on softer, gentle, waves while intermediate surfers will surf something with a little bit more kick. Once you have reached advanced levels you can surf much steeper and even hollow waves.

An easy way to identify whether a surf spot is a good fit for your level of surfing is to look at what other surfers are riding. You will want to surf a spot where most of the surfers are riding similar boards to what you're comfortable with.

Be careful not to get in over your head. Surfing waves that are more advanced than your abilities can lead to injuries or discourage you. Focus on having fun with waves that you can handle. Keep practicing and perfecting your techniques and step up to bigger more hairy surf spots one spot at a time.

Know your surf spots well. You will want to become familiar with a few different spots around your area. Learn the safe and danger zones. Find the channels that will help you paddle out efficiently. Know how different seasons can affect swell direction and wave formations. The more you surf in familiar spots, the easier it will be to score good waves.



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3. Not Spending Time Watching The Conditions



Standing on the beach watching the conditions can actually make a huge difference in the way your surf session goes. Many surfers want to run straight into the water without looking but this will prevent you from getting a bigger overall view that you can't see from the water.

By watching the conditions you will be able to identify a number of factors that can improve your session. The first would be hazards that can interfere with your surfing such as rocks, currents or overcrowded areas.

Next you will be able to see what each peak is doing and identify one that is a good fit for how you plan on surfing. Some peaks are more pitchy and hollow for more advanced surfers and some are more gradual.

Finally you will see how conditions are changing. If the tide is dropping a peak that was going off 10 minutes ago might shut down for the afternoon. Perhaps just watching where the peaks are consistent will give you a better idea on where to position yourself to catch more waves. Often times, beginning surfers stay further away from crowds but find themselves outside the wave's peak.



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4. Not Popping Up Properly



This is one aspect of surfing that many surfers do not spend enough time on. When they first learn to surf they might not have proper pop up form but because they are on a large beginner board, they can get away with it. As they progress this becomes more and more of an issue.

By skipping over this process when you first learn to surf, you are setting yourself up to have to re-learn it eventually. When you eventually reach the point where you are surfing steep and hollow waves you will have to be able to get to your feet quickly. Proper pop up technique should be emphasized from day one.

To execute a proper popup you will want to be quick, smooth and committed. The motion should be fluid as you drag your leg up under your body and plant your foot on the board.

One thing that many surfers don't think about is where their weight is centered throughout the pop up maneuver. If your weight shifts too much either forward or backwards it will shift how the board is sitting. This might cause you to slow down and fall behind the wave or to nose dive into the water. Sometimes you want to shift your weight so it is best to always pay attention to how your board is sitting on the wave during your pop up.



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5. Not Taking Off At The Peak

When catching a wave, the point at which you take off plays a major factor in how your ride will end up. The ideal place to take off is right at the peak. Taking off too far on the shoulder will produce a poor first turn, while taking off too deep or taking off on closeouts will cause you to miss the first turn entirely.

You should be on or behind the peak at take off. This will result in a quality first turn and set up the rest of the wave for ideal performance. Not to mention that if you try and catch a wave on the shoulder there will likely be other surfers closer to the peak who have right of way over you. This will result in you having to pull out of the wave.

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6. Not Putting Their Whole Body Into Maneuvers



Another common mistake is made when a surfer does not use their entire body to perform a maneuver. Surfers that make this mistake cannot generate the same amount of power and speed that would be possible if they did. By not doing this they have a much harder time making sections, gaining speed, throwing spray and controlling their placement on a wave.

Surfing requires your whole body to be engaged in a move. During a turn your body should shift at the hips, shoulders and head with your arms generating power as well.

Many surfers underestimate the power of throwing their arms. To see how important this can be stand up where you are and place your arms to your side. Throw them up towards the sky as hard as you can and feel how you can almost completely lift your body without using your legs.

Whether you are making a turn, charging down the line or boosting an air, you maximize your ability to perform by putting your whole body into the maneuver.

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7. Wasting Energy



The amount of energy you have going into a session is limited. By being efficient with your energy use you can catch more waves and surf them with more powerfully. If you waste energy paddling around too much or paddling for waves that are uncatchable, you will not have anything left in the tank when a good wave comes.

The first step to conserving energy is to paddle harder when going for a wave. This is counterintuitive, but by paddling harder, you increase your chances of catching the wave and decrease the chance that you will miss it and have to paddle back out and try for another. When you decide to go for a wave, commit and paddle hard.

The second way to save energy is to paddle back out through the path of least resistance. Most commonly this is found in a channel. You will use less energy paddling back through a channel because water is being sucked out and less waves are breaking and pushing you back towards shore.

Finally, to save energy, dress appropriately. Wearing surfing gear that is either too thick or too thin is not good for the longevity of your session. If it is too thick you will sweat and waste energy. If it is too thin you will get cold, your muscles will tighten and you will waste energy shivering.

Do your best to dress appropriately for the temperature where you are. You can achieve this easily without spending a ton by having a rash guard, 3mm vest, spring suit & full suit. If you live somewhere really cold you might need booties, gloves or a hood as well.



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8. Not Surfing Enough



Consistency is one of the keys to improvement. It is difficult to improve when your surfing habits become irregular.

To stay in surfing shape the average surfer will need to paddle out once or twice a week. It is easy to get out of shape during a flat spell and much harder to get back in shape when the surf picks up. When a surfer loses arm strength they run the risk of not being able to surf for as long during a good swell which will limit the amount of waves they can catch.

In order to improve at surfing, you need to make a commitment to do it regularly. The conditions will not always be perfect, but developing a habit will help you maintain your fitness.

By surfing frequently you will also learn to surf well in a variety of less than perfect conditions. This will greatly improve your ability to perform when the waves improve.



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9. Not Asking For Help



Asking for help is one of the best ways to learn. Many surfers have difficulty asking others for pointers. They get worried about their image and don't want others to think they don't know what they are doing.

We all started somewhere though and can always learn something new about surfing. Asking for tips or pointers isn't a sign of weakness, its a sign of growth.

There are many options when it comes to getting tips from others.

Your surf buddies are a great first step because you already know them.

Local experienced surfers are also a great source of information. Most surfers are happy to help others if they are approached respectfully by another surfer.

Finally there are many surf coaches available that will give private lessons. By taking one private session per week and practicing a few other times, you will be able to ensure your surfing continues to progress.



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10. Not Getting Someone To Video Their Surfing



The absolute best thing you can do to improve your surfing is to watch video footage of you surfing. It is amazing what you will spot immediately. If you have not had someone film you surfing, you are making a mistake.

It is hard to relate what you are doing to what you see others do. Sometimes it feels like you just made a Kelly Slater size cutback but the video might look a bit different. When you have actual footage of your surfing, you can compare it to videos of other surfers to see what areas you can improve.

You certainly don't need to film every surf session, but by getting a few waves on camera every couple of months, you will have a great way to measure your improvement and current level of performance.

You can get a friend to film you or hire a videographer. Many coaches offer this as a standard service because of the benefits.

A video camera on a tripod at the shore is the easiest setup, but if you have access to a waterproof camera, you can footage from a few different angles.



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Conclusion

Learning about these common surfing mistakes and how you can avoid them will help accelerate the learning process. We offered a number of technical solutions for some of the problems, but there might be other options that work well for you. Keep your eyes out for new ways to improve the process of surfing.

Please feel free to share this guide with any surfers you know. You can email them a copy or print it and give it to them. Our goal at SurfScience.com is to help educate surfers. We take pride in bringing together knowledge from experts in all areas of surfing to help you perform better.

We hope you enjoyed this read, thanks for checking out SurfScience.com and best of luck in your surfing!

If you have any questions about surfing, email us at:
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