



Boarding pass

Why be bored this summer when you can grab a board and ride your way to fun, fitness and freedom?

Words CAROLINE ROBERTSON

There's something superhuman about someone soaring in the sky, gliding on the ground or walking on water. The majestic mastery of surfing the perfect wave, landing a snowboard jump or skimming across the sea is awe-inspiring and enlivening. As board riders dance with danger there's a blend of adrenalin and serenity. Teetering on a vast ocean, snowcapped mountain or undulating earth, board riders are alive with the acute awareness necessary for survival and success. It's intoxicating and all-consuming. As the late actor Paul Walker said, "Surfing soothes me. It's always been a kind of Zen experience for me. The ocean is so magnificent, peaceful and awesome. The rest of the world disappears for me when I'm on a wave."

Board sports test your balance, posture, co-ordination, strength, endurance and adaptability. They help you to engage with the elements and be mindful in the moment. Veteran board expert John Messenger explains, "It's the time and place that I truly let go and hold on at the same time. Riding drives me to perform while at the same time allowing me to fully relax."

The broad range of board sports means there's one to suit all ages, abilities and environments. The skills gained in one board sport can be applied to other sports across the board. Gee Cormack, owner and founder of Sydney's Chix Surf School, is an enthusiastic advocate of board sports: "Whether it was a surfboard, snowboard or skateboard I've always had a board under my feet. It always makes me feel free and happy."

Become a board member

The beauty of board sports is that you can enjoy an array of options to suit all aptitudes, seasons and circumstances. Water board sports are ideal in warmer months, sail sports in windy weather, snowboarding in winter and skateboarding all year round. The smorgasbord of board sports is ever-expanding. Whether you like the land, snow or sea, there's a blissful board sport for you. Come aboard with more than 100 million people worldwide enjoying the following board games (see breakout box to the right).

Board sport	What is it?
Bodyboarding	Riding waves on a small rectangular foam board.
Flowboarding	Surfing artificial waves on a flowboard or bodyboard.
Hydrofoiling	You have to see hydrofoiling to believe it as participants fly above the water on special foil fins at unsurpassed speeds due to zero drag. Veteran board expert John Messenger has foil fever: "The feeling is nothing short of amazing once you learn to tame the foil. Smaller waves or light winds are no longer an issue."
Kneeboarding	Add a harnessed kite to a surfboard and you're soaring on the seas.
Kiteboarding	Surfing on one's knees on a special kneeboard.
Land windsurfing	Windsurfing on land as opposed to using a four-wheeled deck, mast and sail.
Riverboarding	Lying on a board with fins on one's feet for propulsion and steering.
Sandboarding	Snowboarding on sand dunes.
Skateboarding	Pro skater Tony Hawk says, "I consider skateboarding an art form, a lifestyle and a sport." This board with wheels is perhaps the most popular board sport. There are many types of boards, including a snakeboard, which has two separate platforms, a carveboard with a tilting deck and big wheels, a two-deck castorboard on two centralised wheels and a broad freeboard with six wheels.
Skimboarding	Skimming across the water's edge on a slim, small board.
Skurfing	Riding a surfboard being pulled by a boat.
Skysurfing	Skydiving with a ski similar to a snowboard and landing with a parachute.
Snowboarding	Evolving in the 1960s, snowboarding involves sliding down snow on a board similar to a very short, wide ski.
Snowkiting	Snowboarding with a kite.
Stand-up paddleboarding	Standing on a big board with a single fin paddle to propel yourself.
Surfing	In Tahiti, 1778, Captain Cook said he "could not help concluding that this man felt the most supreme pleasure while he was driven on so fast and so smoothly by the sea". Originating more than a thousand years ago in Polynesia, surfing has created a whole counter culture. Surfboards vary in length, width and shape. There are small shortboards or thrusters, round-nosed fish, long narrow guns, large longboards, slightly smaller Malibus and funboards or foamboards, which are ideal for beginners.
Wakeboarding	Riding a small board being pulled by a boat.
Windsurfing	Add a sail to a surfboard and you have windsurfing.

Photography Chix Surf School





Board sport benefits

It's exhilarating to expand your horizons with new experiences. Endorphins ease stress, appease pain and arouse an ecstatic mood called the "stoke" by surfers. Board sports create a connection with nature and forge friendships through a shared interest. Board sports can give boundless mind and body benefits. Messenger explains, "Board sports give back two-fold. On one side you get an amazing workout, with explosive reps at immeasurable intensity. Then on the other side you get the natural calming recovery of being unplugged and out in nature."

Operation Surf supports traumatised war veterans finding solace in surfing. The positive impact is documented in the Netflix documentary *Resurface*. The veterans' interaction with the ocean helps wash away their past, bringing fresh waves of wonder. Water board sports have an added mental impact from the negative ions. Seasoned waveskier Dr Joseph Montuoro, who is also a chiropractor and osteopath at Carlton Chiropractic & Osteopathy Centre, loves to start the day in the surf: "Being in this incredible and inspiring medium, which we

ourselves are predominantly composed of, is enriching and inspiring." People commonly comment on how water board sports have helped their mental states.

Cormack says students from Chix Surf School emerge more confident in their surfing ability and in themselves. They feel empowered and positive, motivated to keep going with their surfing and to try new things. Board sports have helped Cormack through trying times herself. "They have given me a much greater understanding of who I am and what I'm capable of. I believe in myself as a woman, a mother, a business owner and a partner. It has enabled me to be able to focus on what I want to achieve. It's also my outlet when I can't express how I feel."

Any new skill requires increased courage, concentration, patience and perseverance. Jerry Seinfeld spoke of skaters' resilience: "I'll tell you one of the great activities is skateboarding. To learn to do a skateboard trick, how many times do you gotta get something wrong till you get it right? And you hurt yourself, and you learn to do that trick. Now you got a life lesson. Every time I see those skateboard kids, I think, 'Those kids'll be all right.'"

Dr Kelli Rickard, a chiropractor at Balgowlah's Bodymind Wellness Centre, highlights the physical perks of board sports. "Board sports offer the perfect balance to offset stressful, sedentary work life. Improving cardiovascular function, core stability, balance, flexibility, co-ordination and especially an increase in upper body strength are some boons of board sports." Rickard likens the benefits of surfing to those of yoga. "Surfing also requires controlled breathing. For efficient paddling and duck diving, surfers need to consciously take big even breaths ... this assists with stress and anxiety."

If you want improved balance, co-ordination, endurance, flexibility, fitness, stability and strength, board sports are a great whole-body activity. They can reduce or eliminate the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity. To gently rehabilitate from injuries, stand-up paddleboarding is a safe, low-impact option. Messenger, who is also a distributor of Naish products for stand-up paddleboarding, kite and windsurfing says, "The low impact of boarding is a big positive. Yes, you can do jumps, airs and a high-impact version of any sport, but boarding also generally has a soothing, smooth, carving side to it. Gliding through epic turns

Avoid going overboard

All sports have possible setbacks. Optimise the fun factor and minimise miseries by sidestepping the bad side of board sports. Montuoro shares his simple rules: "Avoid surfing in conditions beyond your capabilities, never surf if you're bleeding from an injury, avoid surfing in murky water and during dusk/dawn periods if possible." It's best to board sport with a buddy and research your region's climate, tides, waves, marine life, nearest assistance and codes of conduct.

Other observances are to stretch before your activity, always wear sun protection for the eyes and skin, wear pads where applicable, wax your surfboard, use a leg rope with water board sports, learn to fall safely, tend to injuries promptly, maintain correct posture and practise at your aptitude level.

By the same token, board sports are about getting out of your comfort zone and getting on board for a life-expanding experience. See falls and false starts not as failures but attempts until you succeed. Believe in your board sport ability and with time you will triumph. As pro surfer Layne Beachley encouraged, "There are so many people out there who will tell you that you can't. What you've got to do is turn around and say 'Watch me!'"



Wave skier Joseph Montuoro



and riding on edge with speed is a feeling of freedom, and usually low in impact, making it an ideal exercise for anyone.”

Empowering preparation

Beginning board sports requires courage, humility and hope. Humility to fall and flop but enough hope to keep getting up until you find your feet. Preparing with exercises, proper equipment, a patient instructor and appropriate conditions will enhance your experience. Launching into new moves with cold muscles can end your board sports endeavours abruptly. Warm up your body with functional training exercises. There’s a plethora of free online videos to prepare, improve and recover from board sports.

Stand-up paddleboarding pioneer Nikki Gregg offers four easy exercises for satisfying stand-up paddleboarding at [youtube.com/watch?v=zJcDUQt4Q0A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJcDUQt4Q0A). For rookie skaters, personal trainer Zach Moore offers excellent practice exercises at [youtube.com/watch?v=n1FXfiTXKuM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1FXfiTXKuM). Skater Manuel (Mogely) Herrera suggests pre-skateboard stretches at [youtube.com/watch?v=qpdhLAlkhTA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpdhLAlkhTA). A three-part functional training series to prepare for snowboarding and skiing can be viewed at [youtube.com/watch?v=vNyHiVb_ycE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNyHiVb_ycE).

Chix Surf School offers an eight-week program to teach you how to be controlled, flexible and body aware when moving in the water on a surfboard. Using a SmoothStar skateboard, they simulate the experience

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of surfing on land, which allows a seamless transition from land to water. In board sports it’s essential to learn how to connect your upper and lower body, isolate different body parts and gain a feel for rotation and board control. Chix Surf School teaches correct standing techniques, powerful paddling, timing, reading the sea, catching waves, turning, generating speed and understanding weather patterns. Pro surfer Kelly Slater attributes his success to this skill: “Learn to read the ocean better. A big part of my success has been wave knowledge.”

Chix Surf School also employs pool training and video analysis to enable students to ride waves with grace and joy. Before investing in expensive gear, ask experts what the most suitable equipment is for you. Waveskier Joseph Montuoro emphasises, “It’s best to start with less manoeuvrable and more stable equipment in small surf conditions and with practice you are able to get into larger swells with safety.”

Assembling and maintaining equipment properly is also a priority. Messenger reiterates this about surf foiling: “If you don’t put your foil together properly, it’s not going to perform properly. This means making sure all hardware is fully tightened, all components are oriented correctly and your foil is mounted in the proper position on the track (all the way back for beginners). Maintenance of your foil, especially if you’re in saltwater, can’t be understated. Rinse it well after each use, disassemble and lube the hardware and connection points regularly.”

Another very important aspect of surfing especially is etiquette. Avoid making waves by giving the surfer closest to the peak right of way. Don’t paddle straight through the heart of the line-up where people are surfing or paddle in front of someone riding a wave unless you’re far in front of them. Don’t ditch your board by maintaining control and contact with your board. Avoid “snaking”, which is when a surfer paddles around another surfer in order to position themselves to get the right of way for a wave. 🌊

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