

BODYWISE

shifting & switching

Simon Bornhoff reveals how our body mechanics determine if we can or can't move our feet for tacks and gybes.

Everything's fine until I move my feet!

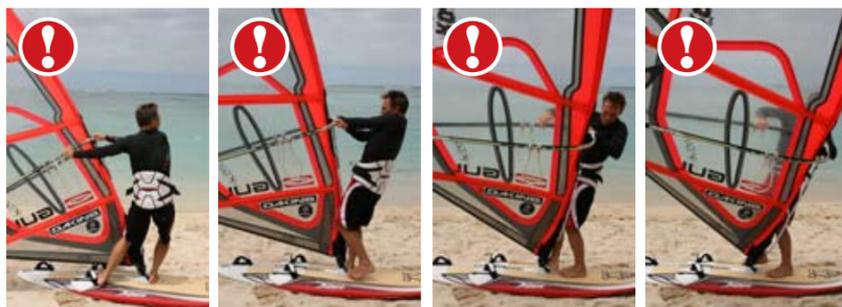
This is a refrain that has echoed around windsurfing technique's hallowed halls since the first tentative tacker's toe crept in front of the mastfoot, and it can also be heard before and after moving the feet in a gybe. On smaller boards moving the feet can be the hardest, most disruptive make-or-break moment. If you've found you keep falling off the front in your tacks or you're unsettled moving the feet in gybes, there's a very good reason... You could be trying something that's not actually humanly possible. No matter how many times you try it, it will never, ever work. In so many cases our body just doesn't bend, move or flex the way we hope it will. So this feature is simple – and judging from the thousands I've coached, it's hugely influential.

SHIFT & SWITCH TO TACK

How do I move from one side of the board to the other while minimising nose sink and reducing the chances of excessively pulling the rig forward?

You've no doubt been advised to wrap your front foot around the mastbase, but it is also vital to **position your hips so that they face down the board before and during the moment you try to move from one side of the board to the other.**

Most people have a pretty good idea of how to tack – it's just much harder on a smaller board because you can't step in front of the mastbase and pull the rig forward at the same time. Yet in many cases our body mechanics can mean this will always happen.



LEARN HOW TO MOVE THOSE FEET AND REDUCE PULLING THE RIG FORWARD!

Put a board and rig on the beach or in the garden and try this...

Most people have difficulty tacking because they move their back foot when the hips are still parallel to the board and sail (i.e. side-on to the board). If you do this, it isn't humanly possible to switch the feet without moving the forward hip over the front foot. If the hips are parallel to the board when you move the back foot, the forward momentum pushing off the back foot massively increases the chances of pulling the rig forward. This reduces your opposition, sending body and rig forward and heavily sinking the nose. It's not impossible to recover from – but it's very, very difficult until you've completely mastered tacking!

Now see if you can spot, and most importantly, feel the difference?



1.



2.



3.



4.

happy feet

- Heading upwind the rig is raked back and the body moves forward as the front foot starts to wrap around the mastbase, just like in the first sequence.
- Note how, crucially, I turn the hips and feet to face **more down the board towards the tail the second BEFORE I make my move.** Also, see how the front foot is fully wrapped around the mastbase. So now, just like before, the forward hip has to shift over the front foot in order to move the back foot. But if the hips are more at right angles to the board before moving the back foot, you're far more inclined to shift your weight sideways across the board to windward rather than forwards. Just trying to get the 'hips across the board' before moving the back foot gets you halfway round the tack before you make your move. Also it enhances the chances of forcibly sweeping the mast across the board to leeward with the old front hand (which can be on the mast or boom, by the way).

SIMON SAYS: "If you're finding this tricky, make sure you bring the back foot forward of the footstrap."

- 3&4.** The opposition theme continues. Look at how the mast is pushed across to leeward and kept raked back as the body moves to windward. Then, the rear foot plants itself towards the tail before sheeting in fully. This 'wrapped foot and hips board skill' is well worth getting dialled on land so that it becomes a natural action on the water.

more tacking tips...

VISION: Keep your head up and look out of the tack in the direction you want to go!

TRIM: If you pull the mast forward before you're on the new windward side and you sheet in before you have your new back foot well down the board, the nose will sink! Keep that rig back and to leeward for as long as possible!

BALANCE / OPPOSITION:

Entry – rig back, body forward heading into the tack. Extend arms for better counterbalance. Mid-tack – body moves across the board to windward. The rig moves **across** the board to leeward. End – make that big step back into a super-7 drop-&-push stance **before** sheeting in and forcing the rig forward!

POWER: Pull down on the boom in any tricky situation.

STANCE: Wide foot spread for a super-7 drop-&-push stance to ensure extra leverage over the board.



QUESTION?

Why does the mast still come forward mid tack?

Push the mast away from you and downwind for stability. Pulling kills tacks!

I've seen people jump from one side to the other! They don't seem to have their hips facing down the board?

It might only be for a nanosecond, but the moment they pass across the mast their hips are facing down the board and the rig is raked back. It's just hard to spot.

Is nose sinking a problem?

You can be two feet under water, but as long as the rig's raked back to oppose the body you can recover from the deepest dives!



get down right now!

NARROW FOOT SPREAD

Stand with your feet about hip-width apart. This is very often how people end up at the end of a tack or after changing the feet in a gybe. Now try and get low! You'll find that if you bend your knees and ankles, you stick your backside right out and break at the waist. Not very flattering or dynamic... Agreed?

WIDE FOOT SPREAD

Now widen your foot spread. Note how much easier it is to extend the front leg, flex the rear leg and **GET LOW** into that super-7 drop, and push!

This wide foot spread is paramount after you've changed your feet at the end of the gybe, before sheeting in on the new side after tacking, or perhaps just steering the board at lower speeds, maybe after a waterstart.

SIMPLE PRACTICAL SUMMARY

These simple points are often the determining skills that can transform years of dropping moves into making them happen. There is no reason why you can't make great steps forward! So, to prove you've been paying attention, fill in the gaps below...

TO ENHANCE YOUR TACKS:

- a) Turn your hips and feet _____ the board _____ making your move around the mastbase.
- b) Push the mast _____ the board and to _____ rather than pull the mast forward.

TO ENHANCE YOUR GYBE AND TACK EXITS:

- c) Massively widen the _____ spread before trying to get low into a super-7 drop-&-push stance.



1.



2.



3.



4.

shift & switch to gybe

1. Shift the hips sideways **across the board** to carve and unweight the front foot.
2. Switch the feet heel to toe next to the rail. The feet don't have to be parallel to each other, a v-shape like this is fine.
3. Weight the new back foot and immediately step well forward with the new front foot.
4. Crucially, make a small step back with the newly placed rear foot to help **widen the foot spread** and make sure the new rear foot is on the rail next to the back strap.

next month – We look at when body mechanics rules are sometimes broken, and also suggest a few ways to cheat!

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