

The



Learn  
TO Barefoot  
water ski



*Basic skills to help you become a barefoot skier*



## Learning to Barefoot

*"Barefoot skiing is a delicate balance between the pull of the rope (on your arms) and the push of the water (against your feet)."*

Learning to barefoot is easiest using a three-step progression: holding on to the boom, using a handle with 5-foot extension attached to the boom and using a "long line" or full length ski rope. Other methods include standing up off a kneeboard or wakeboard and the method of "stepping off" of a single ski, which can be used by beginning barefooters who have already learned to slalom water ski and feel comfortable skiing on a single ski at high speeds. For non-skiers and for most others, the boom-extension-long line progression is the easiest and surest method of learning to barefoot water ski.

### Level 1 – LAND PRACTICE

On land, practice the basic body positions you will use when starting on the boom.



At the start, keep the handle to the hips, your back arched, and bend slightly forward at the waist.

**Helpful Tip**



Riding on your butt, keep knees together, feet slightly wider than the knees, arms straight and back arched.

**Helpful Tip**



Barefooting "chair" position – feet under the knees, knees and waist bent at 90 degrees, back arched, head up.

**Helpful Tip**



The water should "break" right at the ball of your foot, which will then glide nearly flat on the water.

If you are a non-skier before starting, you should learn and demonstrate the seven skier hand signals and five of the 15 Skier Safety Codes found in the "Learn To Slalom" brochure.

## Level 2 – Boom Step 1 – Deep-Water Start

Holding on to the boom, put your feet on the boom cables and lay back so your body is straight as a board (parallel to the water surface). When the boat takes off, slowly sit up and ride on your butt for 10 seconds.



## Boom Step 2 – Placing the feet

Holding on to the boom and after riding on your butt, place your feet on the water and maintain proper barefoot body position for three seconds.



Knees together, feet slightly wider than the butt. Without pushing against the water, place feet in gently.



## Boom Step 3 – Starting to Stand

Perform a deep-water start, place feet on the water and begin to transfer weight to your feet by raising your butt off the water. Remember to stay in the “chair” position as you start to stand.

## Boom Step 4 – “Footin”

Perform a deep-water start holding on to the boom as outlined in steps 1, 2, and 3, and maintain proper barefoot body position for 10 seconds.



A helpful aid to learning the transition to barefoot skiing is the use of “shoe-skis,” which decrease the amount of pressure from the water and let your feet glide easier.





## Level 3 – Boom with 5-foot Extension – Deep-Water Start

The handle with extension will feel “loose” and wobbly to you at first, but it is important to do everything the same as you did when holding on to the boom. Wrap your feet over the line, come up to your butt, pull your knees in, and then place your feet on the water gently directly under your butt. To begin the process of standing, slowly transfer more weight to your feet and rise up to the sitting “chair” position.



**Helpful  
Tip**

At the start, keep the handle to the hips, arms slightly bent, your back arched, and become stiff like a board or ski. Ride the three-point position with arms straight, knees together, feet slightly wider than the knees and back arched.



## Level 4 – LONG LINE START

Behind the boat, perform a deep-water start, plane on your butt for 10 seconds, and then stand on your feet.

### Helpful Tip

If you have a tower on the boat attach the towrope to the top of the tower. A higher pulling point will help ease the transition from extension to long line. A 75-foot line should be used behind barefoot boats and a 90-foot line used if you are skiing behind a non ski boat.



The barefoot “chair” position,

- feet under the knees,
- upper legs parallel to the water
- shoulders over the hips

## Level 5 – START OFF OF A WAKEBOARD OR KNEEBOARD

Behind the boat, perform a deep-water sitting on the board for 10 seconds, and then as boat speed increases rise up to stand on your feet.



Start by getting your balance while floating in the water as you straddle the wakeboard. The key is to relax and let your feet just float on each side. Next, have the boat slowly idle forward, and as you start to move, place both feet on the nose of the board.



As the boat picks up speed, the board will begin to plane. Make sure to keep your feet on the nose of the board for stability at this stage and let the board flatten out. If the board starts to bounce, ask the boat driver to slow down.



As the board stabilizes, you want to slowly bring your feet down evenly in front of you to meet the water, allowing your feet to glide along on top of the surface.



At this point the driver will start to increase the speed again. As this happens you want to smoothly shift weight onto your feet, keeping them flat and on top of the water. If you start to get spray in your face at this point, remember – relax! Resist all urges to tense up and/or let go of the boom. Flatten your feet and just let them wash back underneath you.



As the boat speed increases, you can put more weight onto your feet. You should begin to feel the wakeboard slide out behind you. Be sure to support your own weight at this point – stand on top of your feet and keep your arms straight out in front of you.



Now that you are standing, push your hips forward and have both your chin and back perpendicular to the water. By now you should have the perfect stance, with a straight back, straight arms, and knees bent at a 90-degree angle with your feet directly under your knees.



## Level 6 – STEPPING OFF A SINGLE SKI

Using just the boom, boom with a short extension or long-line, perform the one ski step-off and barefoot ski for 10 seconds.

Helpful  
Tip

Use a ski with a very loose binder or use a special “step-off” ski with only the toe-piece of the binder.



The step-off method allows you to be on top of the water, skiing at barefoot speed. As you start to place your free foot on the water it must be done slowly and gently. If the foot is placed too abruptly, the friction of the water will push it behind you.



Once you have your free foot placed and riding on the water, slowly transfer your weight to that foot. When you have most of your weight on that foot, lift the other foot up and off the ski and place it alongside the foot that is already “barefooting.” Don’t worry about the ski, it will leave your foot quickly as soon as you take weight off that foot. Remember to bring the foot “stepping off” the ski forward before placing it on the water because it will naturally be behind the barefooting foot as you lift it out of the ski.



***Congratulations!***  
***You are now a Barefoot Skier!***



Keep practicing and before you know it you will be doing toe-holds too!



Photos & Instruction with the help of Keith St. Onge  
[www.worldbarefootcenter.com](http://www.worldbarefootcenter.com)

For additional information, go to  
[usawaterskiandwakesports.org](http://usawaterskiandwakesports.org) or contact us at:  
USA Water Ski  
1251 Holy Cow Road  
Polk City, Fla. 33868  
Phone: (863) 324-4341  
E-mail: [usawaterski@usawaterskiandwakesports.org](mailto:usawaterski@usawaterskiandwakesports.org)