

# Surface Turns: Back-to-Front

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**F**or any barefoot water skier, surface turns are a major milestone on the road to becoming a serious skier. Surface turns can elevate a skier's versatility more than any other trick. The most important thing before learning turns, however, is to be able to perform all of the basic tricks like toeholds, both forward and backward, solidly and consistently. There must always be a good foundation on which to build your skiing the correct way. Once a skier is ready for turns, the first one to be tackled is usually the back-to-front.

When starting the back-to-front, you first need to set up into a good backward position. This is identified by standing with

opposite of the way you want to turn. Stay on top of your feet trusting only the pivot foot, allowing the other foot to leave

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your feet a bit closer than shoulder-width, the handle glued to the top of your butt, arms bent, soft knees, an arched back, and the head up. From this position, the only thing to move during the turn should be your arm, as the handle pulls you to the front. The fewer moving parts you have, the simpler the trick is, making you more solid and consistent. Your backward position is your forward position. Load up the pivot foot (the one in the opposite direction that you are turning) with about 70 percent of your body weight and get centered over it. Let go of the hand

the water, and resist the turn. You want to force the boat to do all of the work. Make the turn with your hips and push them to the handle. Lock the rest of your body in place, squeezing the knees and feet together, and expect to end in a clean forward position. It is very important to keep your handle in, your knees bent, and to turn slowly. If your shoulders engage the turn, you will either twist and get tangled, causing a nasty spill, or you will be forced to hop the turn, a precursor of butting-out or plowing in the front. You should end standing generally tall with soft knees, bent

arms, and a proud chest with your feet directly underneath the knees.

The back-to-front is a trick that will probably require a lot of preparation. Start off using a boom and shoe-skis to keep the boat speeds slow and get the motion and muscle-memory figured out. It is also helpful to use a video camera to study your technique and correct any small details. Be sure not to neglect the reverse side. Learning the basic and reverse together will help you become a better skier. As you get better, move yourself to the long-line and try turning at slower speeds to simulate the friction that you will feel on your feet. When you are ready to start trying the turn on your feet, remember that nothing changes from the technique on the shoes. Do not beat yourself up, but try a few, see what you need to fix, and then get back to the shoes to work it out. Keep repeating this process until you have a nice, clean, slow back-to-front with few moving parts and a feet-to-feet landing.

After you are able to perform the back-to-front, it can be used in trick runs for three-event tournaments, in ski shows to "wow" the crowd, or just on your home lake during a fun ski. Eventually, this trick can lead to multiple turns, and is a great base for more advanced tricks such as toe-turns or line-turns. Whatever your purpose, the back-to-front is a great trick to learn and master.

*The World Barefoot Center is a ski school located in Winter Haven, Fla. Whether you are a serious tournament skier or you just 'foot for fun, all levels are welcome. For more information, visit [worldbarefootcenter.com](http://worldbarefootcenter.com).*

