

## Be The Champion Of Your Lake

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**N**o matter if you ride your wakeboard only weekends in the summer or throughout the year in warm climates, you can be the champion of your lake by simply focusing on three key elements. It doesn't matter if you just started riding for fun on the weekends or you want to make it as a pro rider; understanding and implementing the three keys will set your learning on a continuous upward path.

Wake jumps, spins, and inverts are at the core of becoming a great rider. It's just not about doing a spin or an invert; it's about how well you do these basics. For example, you will go a lot further by doing a perfect 180-degree turn than a sloppy 360. The same is true with inverts. If you are just barely landing a back roll, and you end up in a squatted position with your eyes closed, your progress will be inconsistent and limited.

### Key 1: Wake Jumps

The most important basic key for any rider is the wake jump. Wakeboarding is about getting air. The more time you can spend in the air, the more time you will have to do a spin or invert. You also will have plenty of time to spot your landing and to land upright, standing over the board.

Because of the sideways stance of wakeboarding, the heel-side jump is easier than the toe-side jump, so most riders spend too much time on the heel side and neglect the toe side. That is not the not way to go if you want to be the champion of your lake.

If you favor the heel side too much, or if you are just learning to ride, make it a point to ride your toe-side jumps as much as your heel side jumps. Rope length matters when you are learning. I use a low-stretch line with handle that in total is 80 feet. But to make clearing both wakes easier, you might attach the line on a take-off loop to make it 5-feet shorter.

You can do plenty of little drills to get stronger, especially on your toe side. For example, make carving turns inside the wake and then go way outside the wake

and cut in, both on toe side and heel side toward the wake. Then stop before you hit the wake. Another example: start inside the wake and cut either heel side or toe side. Then pop the wake from in-to-out and then out-to-in.

Remember, the goal is to be able to clear both wakes easily from either heel side or toe side. Slowly start your turn-in and keep your edge consistent through the top of the wake. These little drills will get you more comfortable with your heel side as well as your toe side. But it is not just your regular stance that you should practice. Be versatile and expand your fun by turning the board around and riding switch stance. Try your heel-side and toe-side jumps in this direction, too.

Honing your wake-jumping skills should be an integral part of your sets. Challenge yourself equally on heel side and toe side as well as regular stance and switch stance. It will take time to get comfortable in both regular stance and switch stance. But when you challenge yourself to go out and make gradual improvements, you can get to the point where you won't even think about what direction you are riding. Once you achieve that, you can then start any trick from any direction

or land any trick in any direction. It's a great place to be.

### Key 2: Spins

Next on the building blocks of learning is the spin. One of the first tricks you will do is to pop the wake and do a 180-degree turn, landing in switch stance.

When you do a spin from the wake, even if it is a 180, learning the right time to begin the spin is really important. Most riders start too soon, beginning the turn at the base of the wake. I call that the "Now" moment, the right time to begin the rotation. It takes a little patience and discipline to wait the extra fraction to use the entire wake; however, you get a lot more air by using the whole wake before you start rotation to get added height. When you have plenty of air time, the spin tricks are so much easier and cleaner.

The key to a perfect spin is to rotate with your hips while keeping the upper body quiet and eyes level (ready to spot the landing). Staying close to the handle during any rotation is important if you

### Spins



want to keep the rotation quick, precise and consistent. Start with a basic 180, but remember to work both heel and toe to the wake and both directions of the board. It is a lot more fun being able to do tricks from either side of the wake.

**Key 3: Inverts**

Doing an invert on a board is a blast. This is really where your groundwork in becoming a strong wake jumper will pay off. That's because the wake jump – knowing how to easily jump the wakes – is the core of the invert.

Let's take the back roll as an example. Here again, the "Now" moment is really important. For example, most riders begin a back roll too early – at the base of the wake. This causes the board not to flip up and over completely. Sometimes the board just barely makes it, but the rider doesn't. He or she ends up in a squatting position with no time to spot the landing.

Be extra patient and keep the board under you as you ride up the wake on the approach to the top for an invert. Once you're off the wake, you are at the "Now" moment. That's your signal to finish the invert by having the board come up and over fully with plenty of time to spot the landing. You land upright over the board.

Above all, start working on your toe-side and switch-stance inverts instead of waiting to make one side really strong before trying the other side.

Remember, your goal is not to try a lot or to be inconsistent at a lot of tricks, but rather to master the three key elements of wakeboarding. Always continue to hone them, no matter how good you get. Do this, and for sure you will be the champion of your lake.

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**Cutting the Wake**



**Wake Jumps**



**Inverts**

