

The 3 -2 -1 + Tennis Save Method of Teaching Basic Windsurfing

by Ned Crossley

Normally a windsurfer is taught to do the following in this order on land preparing for the on the water experience:

1. Uphaul the sail
2. Basic or secure position with mast steering
3. Balance and sailing position

As opposed to teaching it on land in reverse order, 3-2-1, and then letting the student do 1-2-3 for the water experience:

3. Balance and sailing position
2. Basic or secure position with mast steering
1. Uphaul the sail

The 3-2-1 is taught on dry land first with no wind or light wind on fin-less board with appropriate sized "first timer" rig attached. Teach sailing position first (the actual windsurfing target) rather than uphauling first and basic position second.

Minimal hand and foot movements is a definite desired outcome the 3-2-1 beginning windsurfer progression.

First teach the balance and sailing position #3, then secondly, teach the basic or secure position #2 and go back and forth from #3 to #2 and back to #3. Then from #2, do a controlled drop (see below) and place the sail into the uphauling position so that the wind, body, board, sail are lined up. Then do #1, #2, and #3 and reverse it, steps 3-2-1. Add-in the "tennis save" during uphauling, basic position, front hand on the mast sailing, and sailing with two hands on the boom.

Specifically, what are the details of the above method?

#3 The Balance and Sailing Position: This is the first maneuver a learning windsurfer does with a sail. The instructor demonstrates the #3 position whilst student (s) stand up and mimic the demo. The instructor shows the proper rig balancing and sailing posture/stance while on the finless board with upright rig. The front hand is on the mast whilst the back hand (only 2 fingers) is just behind harness lines or opposite the sail's center of effort. The body is in a basic 7 posture with bent back leg, straight front leg, with hips, shoulders and front foot toes facing the front of the board. The back foot is right angle to the centerline. The boom is level. The boom clamp is over the windward side of the board which is aligned perpendicular to the wind. The student(s) mimic the instructor's demonstration, so few very selected words are needed from the instructors.

Then the instructor presents the rig upright to the student. Progressively, the students copy the body posture, rig balancing.

The instructor demonstrates that they can release and clap the hands then re-grasp the rig. By luffing and balancing the rig, one quickly discovers there is room for the body and rig over the centerline. And one does not have to support the rig much. Of course, this is tested and verified by the claps and re-grasping of the rig challenge with the instructor holding the uphaul as backup.

Then whilst balancing the rig instructor demonstrates sheet in/sheet out with independent arms and only 2 fingers on the boom. They also release the power by letting go with the boom two fingered grip and balance the rig with the mast hand.

The students practice #3 first.

The idea is that if a beginning windsurfer can get to #3 somehow on the water, they have a chance for success.

Tips: If too much wind, head up wind a bit in whole sequence. If the wind is super light, keep the rig weight to leeward so you have rig weight to balance against when windsurfing.

#2 The Basic or Secure Position: After doing #3 correctly, then add #2, the basic position. The basic position is merely, sliding the back index and middle fingers up to the boom clamp “arm pit” (as close to the boom clamp as possible) and turning the front foot into the "basic " position aka as "secure position" or "neutral position" with front hand on the mast. Only the back hand slides and the front foot twists around the UJ as opposed to actual steps or changing of hand placement. The feet, hips and shoulders turn and face leeward. The basic position is with straight arms with elbows close, bent knees, back upright and straight with front hand on mast, and back hand fingers in the “arm pit” of the boom. The eyes are “laser beamed” on the front nose of the board. One can simulate mast steering (flagging) the rig here. Practice going from #3 to #2 and #2 to #3 position until quite good and natural.

#1 The Uphaul: From the basic position, #2, lower the rig downwind to the ground using the controlled drop. One does this sliding the mast hand down the mast and whilst squatting the body, grab the foot of the sail with the back hand. Slowly lower the sail down to the ground or water. A "T" is formed with the tip of the mast downwind and board at 90 degrees to the wind. Then reverse the process. Do #1, uphaul the sail and aim to do this with the eyes “laser beamed” at the nose. Uphauling is placing both hands on the uphaul and squatting with a straight back and straight arms. Using body weight against the uphaul, drain the water off the sail, wait, then continue uphauling until the clew is almost out the water staring at the nose of the board the entire time. Try to uphaul the sail with no elbow bend or minimum bend by twisting the torso and shoulders. Once the rig gets up, assume the #2 basic position with straight arm and eyes on the nose. And then continue to #3.

Do #'s 3-2-1 and then 1-2-3 and repeat. Minimum foot and hand changes are needed.

Additional parts within the 3-2-1 land drill:

A. Whilst in #2 basic position, add the **"tennis save" by letting go with back hand (boom hand) and "waving at the crowd behind you and attempting to see them."** The mast hand below the boom clamp holds on. This gets the student ready for when they are out of balance or overpowered by the rig.

Later, when two hands are on the boom, the back hand releases and the front hand slides completely up to the "arm pit" of the boom clamp into the tennis save. The tennis save can be used when both hands are on the uphaul as well. There are other uses like a resting and survey the scene. One advantage of the tennis save is the windsurfer gets into more arched and twisted body posture as opposed to the basic position.

B. Use the "controlled drop" to go from #2 to #1 position. Slide front mast hand down whilst grabbing the foot of the sail with the back hand as assume full squat. Then lower the sail with straight arms. This is good for the light wind self-rescue where one puts the boom of the rig across the tail of the board and then lies down and paddles to where they want to go. The controlled drop is also used for lowering rigs upon return to docks or land.

C. One handed drill to start from #3. Have students raise the rig off the ground "one handed" to get into practicing "one handedness". Grasp the top on the mast with palm up grip. Stand rig up on its clew and then walk it up to upright and assume the balance #3 position all one handed. Then continue the 3-2-1 + various tennis saves land drill.

The author has seen this done with 8 students who all have their own sail or rig on land.

If the 3-2-1 is done right on land, the instructor and student have a chance on the water. However, it is best to do some land, then water, then land, then water, etc.