

kitegusta

Grab it,
tweak it,
own it

A HANDS ON GUIDE TO GRABBING

The grab. A fundamental part of all board sports but an action that given the time we are able to spend in the air, is a fundamental step in the display of style and control in kiteboarding. Let's not make any mistake here, a grab is not simply placing your hands on a certain part of the board, it is more than that, it is a demonstration that you the rider have attained a certain level of stability and control over your chosen manoeuvre that you are capable of removing one (or both) hands from the bar and making sustained contact with an

object attached to your feet. That was quite a wordy introduction so we hope we didn't lose you there, but as we have so often spoken of the importance of individual expression in the sport, the grab is one of the vital ways in which to impose your style on the water. That said whilst there is a large portion of personal expression which we have inherited from our snowboarding and wakeboarding ancestors, there is also an unwritten set of rules as to what makes a grab legit, along with the disputed and often ignored concept of illegal grabs.

JUST BECAUSE IT FEELS GOOD, DOESN'T MAKE IT RIGHT

Does this all sound just a bit too serious for you? In which case let's take it back to the basics. Grabbing the board feels good. Real good. So good that such favourites as Roast Beef, Chicken Salad, Melon, Crail and Canadian Bacon make up some of the often bizarre and food orientated names given to grabs, although ladies (and gents) there is no chocolate grabs that we know of, so clearly these names were likely thought up by men.

"I LOVE TO WATCH RIDERS THROW DOWN GOOD METHODS OR NUCLEAR! I TEND TO DO A LOT OF TAIL, INDY OR STALEFISH GRABS BECAUSE THEY ARE EASIER - BUT WANT TO UP MY GRABBING GAME!" -MALIN AMLE

Rider: Malin Amle, Photographer: Iris Straume

There is a definite sense of satisfaction when placing ones fingers on the underside pressed against the opposing thumb on the topside of the board and keeping it there allowing the pride to fill your body with each second longer you hold on. Which brings us right onto our next very important point. Holding on. Let us be quite frank and clear about this, stabbing at your board with your hand and making momentary fingertip contact with you binding, topside or fin does not count as a grab, and in the case of the fin might even cause you some

unexpected pain. We are sorry to say this because we know there are many riders that savour the clank of nail against board but if we told you it was acceptable then you would not push on to bigger and better things.

GETTING A BIT SHIFTY

So where to start on the road to grab perfection. Funnily enough, without grabbing the board at all. You see one all too common mistake is to try and add a grab to a move before you have complete control over your body during the trick. Balance and control are everything, it is the difference between grabbing whatever part of the board happens to be available and actually deciding that you are going to go for something specific. In fact we would go as far as to say this goes way beyond grabs, get balance and control of your tricks and progression will be your friend. So with that in mind, before you try to grab, go shifty.

What is shifty we hear you asking... A shifty is simply a counter-rotation with your body while you, *À*re in the air. You turn your upper body one way and your lower body turns the other way. In order to do this however you must first be in the air and in control of your body. You can't do it as you take off, it comes after this as a second stage to your jump. This is very important to getting it right and it can be practiced on anything from little kickers without sending your kite to big boosted airs.

The shifty is also very similar to the all important tweak that we will talk about later, so getting comfortable with it from the beginning will help you later on down the line.

BRING YOUR BOARD TO YOUR HANDS

In order to grab you need to reach down and get your hands on your board. Wrong. That is the biggest initial mistake you can make. We realise that a fair proportion of the readers of this article might even have trouble touching their toes, so what makes you think it is going to be any easier when flying through the air. It isn't. The solution is really rather simple, focus on your legs first, then your hands. This makes it easier to grab because it means your board is already within reach of your hands when you go to grab. Once you, *À*re in the air, make your body smaller by lifting your legs in towards your body, then engage the grab.

Of course depending on where you want to grab the board will depend which leg you bend more or at all, for instance for a tail grab you will lift up your back leg and straighten your front leg, but this is something to be played with once you realise and embrace the limitless potential.

TWEAKING NOT TWERKING

Tweaking has been around a hell of a lot longer than the booty shaking dance fad popularised by Miley Cyrus and we assure you is a infinitely cooler on all levels. Break dancers, skaters, snowboarders and wakeboarders have been tweaking since before Miss Cyrus was even born. The tweak is the cherry on top of the icing on the cake of any grab, the finishing touch so to speak. It is the moment when you have complete control of your body, you have your hand firmly on your board in the desired position and you simply accentuate your body positioning by either rotating your hips (as we did in the shifty) or poking your straight leg out as far as it will go.

People on the beach and your friends on the water will instantly recognise the moment your everyday grab becomes a perfected, tweaked grab and provided you stick the landing, you will have the right to ride away with a very big smile on your face knowing you just owned that trick.

THE WHERE AND THE WHAT OF IT ALL

We thought long and hard about this and have decided that it is better not to publish an image of grab names and where on the board they are. This is because we 'borrowed' most of them from wakeboarding and snowboarding and then added and changed some names and there is no way we are going to get away without some grab geek hitting up our inbox to inform us that our 'Tai Pan' is in fact a 'Canadian Bacon' or that we missed out a 'Seatbelt Rocket' ...so we will leave you to either do your own research on the internet, or better still, experiment and see what feels good and then once you are comfortable with a grab, get it on camera and find out if it looks as good in reality as it does in your head.

"THE GOOD THING ABOUT GRABS IS THAT YOU CAN GRAB ANYWHERE YOU WANT, YOU CAN DO SO MANY DIFFERENT GRABS AND VARIATIONS... IT'S JUST ENDLESS FUN AND ALWAYS A NEW CHALLENGE." - JULIA CASTRO

Rider: Malin Amle, Photographer: Vincent Bergeron

"START WITH THE EASY ONES, AND WORK YOUR WAY UP" -THERESE TAABEL

Rider: Therese Taabel
Photographer: Simon Wittrup



**"I GRAB TINDY QUITE OFTEN...
BUT IT'S PART OF LEARNING!"
- JULIA CASTRO**

Rider: Julia Castro

DID SOMEONE SAY CAMERA?

Yes we did. Nothing makes for a stylish photo like a grab. As the images that adorn the pages of this article go to prove, add in a grab for instant style and *instagram (*other social networks are also available) gold. Of course don't forget that not every grab looks good from every angle. We say this from experience after having been through many photos from a recent shoot where the riders were throwing down some very stylish grabs for the camera only to realise that the captured reality was just a collection of buttock and the even less flattering buttock plus 'open legged bikini' shots which of course to preserve the dignity of the riders were quickly deleted and will not be making it onto these pages.

The word and stigma associated with this grab have its roots firmly imprinted in snowboarding and although it has a clever name the tindy grab is often frowned upon by the establishment (we didn't make the rules, we are just keeping you informed). The tindy grab naturally occurs during the learning and developmental stages of grabbing. It originates from being the easiest place to reach on your board, which is also its downfall. The 'no grab zones' on a board are anywhere from the outside of your foot to the nose or tail of the board. This of course excludes legitimate nose grabs and tail grabs.

**"MY FAVOURITE GRAB IS A INDY BACK-ROLL. IT'S NOT A HARD GRAB, BUT IT SURE LOOKS REALLY STYLISH ON PHOTOS. AND I ASSURE YOU, THAT YOU WILL GET A KILLER PICTURE. IT'S EASY TO DO AND LEARN, AND IT FEELS GREAT IN THE AIR. THEREFORE IT'S A SMOOTH GRAB TO LEARN FOR EVERYONE!"
-THERESE TAABELL**

WHAT ABOUT THE POLITICS?

No article on grabs would be complete without mentioning the 'no grab zones' or 'illegal grabs'. What on earth are we talking about, it is neatly summed up in one dreaded word, 'tindy'.



Rider: Colleen Carroll



"I RECENTLY GOT INTO ALL DIFFERENT GRABS AND LEARNED THEIR NAMES, BEFORE I WAS JUST GRABBING WHEREVER I COULD AND A LOT OF THE TIME THAT TURNED OUT TO BE A TINDY. SHAME ON ME, BUT I HAVE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT THE VARIETY OF GRABS OUT THERE NOW!" - MALIN AMLE

Rider: Malin Amle, Photographer: David Grahm

The indy grab on the other hand is a real grab and a very stylish and accessible grab too. Indy grabs or frontside grabs, are reaching with your back hand between your feet on your toe edge. Of course we have all grabbed indy from time to time, sometimes by accident and sometimes on purpose but as Therese Taabbel told us "When you are learning to grab your tricks, it does not matter where you grab the board. What matters is that you are trying, and you deserve credit for that".

INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSION AND FUN

It so often comes down to this but grabs are another example. Kiteboarding is supposed to be fun and you are supposed to add your own style to your riding, so play, experiment and push yourself to include an authentic piece of you in all that you do whilst at the same time watching, learning and being inspired by those around you.