

Mastering The Tumble Up Start

For young barefooters, the tumble up is the start of choice to help build confidence

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The tumble up start is one of the most common methods of getting up on the boom. The reason so many young skiers enjoy and utilize this start is for the sake of keeping water out of their face and nose. Many young skiers under the age of 10 start with the tumble up because it is more consistent compared to the traditional deep-water start and it results in fewer falls. When first learning the deep-water start, water can enter the nose or face region. Hardly any water will enter the face region once the deep-water start is perfected, but until that day comes, tumble ups will be the first start choice for many young barefooters.

For kids under the age of 10, the tumble up is a perfect stepping stone to help build confidence. Place the boom extremely high with a five-foot handle wrapped up. To determine a good height, the water should be level with the skier's torso when hanging from the rope. Twisting the handle around the end of the boom can also shorten the rope.

The tumble up also allows for no proper set-up procedure. As the boat approaches the skier and the skier grips the handle, it is "go time." This allows for more skiing and less prep time. One down side to the tumble up is that performing many in one set it can become extremely tiresome and result in wasted energy. When I have students that are skiing many sets during the day, I have them perform deep-water starts to conserve well-needed energy.

Photo 1 shows the start in the superman position. As the boat accelerates, you can relax your arms to full length or have a slight bend in the elbows.

Photo 2 shows the boat gaining speed while the body is now on plain. Keep your head



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up and eyes looking down the lake. Legs should be extended out comfortably with a slight bend in the knees to stop from porpoising. There's no need to press your feet into the water because severe bouncing can occur. Since all boat drivers accelerate differently, it will be strictly up to the skier when to roll over to their back.

Photo 3 shows me riding on my back preparing to turn to the front. While riding on the back, keep your chin tucked into your chest for safety. You do not want your head to catch in this position. If it does, let go immediately. Again, my arms are slightly bent, yet it is O.K.





to extend them all the way if it is more comfortable. I like to bend my arms so my elbows can act as small shock absorbers, which allows for a smoother ride. Many first time students turn to their backs too late or too early. Turning late is fine, but the skier cannot stay in this position for more than a second or two. You will know when it is too late because you will start to purpose out of control. Turning too early will result in extremely soft water and much more drag for the next step. If you do turn over early, be patient and let the boat gain speed. It will take several attempts to learn the firmness of the water. This trick is mostly based on timing.

Photo 4 shows the beginning of the 180-degree tumble to the front. The handle begins to be pulled in and the target is the hip. My knees and feet are being squeezed together to hold a tight and compact position. This will allow for a smooth and safe turn to the front.

Photo 5 shows the handle continuing to be pulled into the waist. My knees and feet are still being squeezed together and I am leaning slightly in the opposite direction of the pull of the boat. If you do not lean in the opposite direction, the boat will pull you over and you will be involved in what I call the "log roll." The spin should be

completed on the small of the back and not on the butt.

Photo 6 shows the three-quarter mark on the tumble. At this point more of the pull should be going to the left hand. That will help finish the tumble to the front. If the pull were on the right hand the boat would most likely pull you over into the log roll.

Photo 7 shows the complete 180-degree tumble to the front and ends in what I call the "lazy boy." The lazy boy is balancing on the tailbone in a laid back position with the

knees slightly bent. The ankles and knees are still squeezed tightly and the handle is midway being used as a balancing tool, just as a tight-rope walker uses a balancing pole. If the handle is out too far, you will tilt forward. If the handle is in too close, you will feel like you are falling or slipping backward – similar to someone pulling the carpet out from under you.

Keith St. Onge is the owner of Keith St. Onge's Barefoot Ski School. Sponsors are: BarefootCentral.com, MasterCraft, Eagle Wetsuits, US Gear Handles and Gopal's Health Foods. Visit ksobarefoot.com for more information.

