

# To Fly or Not to Fly... The Wakes That Is

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**O**ver the past couple of years I have been asked numerous times about whether I think it is better to fly the wakes as much as I do, or if it is better to emulate Jaret Llewellyn or Ryan Dodd, who simply “step through” the wakes. My response is always the same – you need to do whatever makes you the most comfortable and aggressive into the bottom of the ramp.

In understanding the differences in what it takes to step through the wakes versus flying them, and what the advantages or disadvantages may be, the first thing I think you have to be aware of is that the distance a jumper has to fly the wakes to clear the “dip” off the second wake depends greatly on the speed of the jumper and the amount of angle or direction they take across the wakes. For someone such as myself who flies the wakes a lot, it really doesn’t matter how slow the boat is going, I tend to still fly the wakes because of my attack angle across the wakes. If you jump at a slower speed or take less of an angle across the wakes, you will have to evaluate what is best for you.

The main difference between someone like myself who completely flies the wakes versus someone who “steps through” or even “tops” the second wake is how aggressive you are edging into the first wake. Simply put, the reason I fly the wakes as far as I do is because my strongest edge, or when I’m pushing on my skis the hardest, is right as I am approaching the wakes. The fact that I’m pushing so hard on the skis when I hit the wake means that something has to give, and my ski is what gets moved rather than the water in the wake. When I’m doing it right you will actually see my upper body

mass, move very little, but my legs will hit the wakes and create a lift, then bend and move up toward me until I clear the wakes and set back down on the water. The advantage to this technique is that you can continue to power through the wakes continuing to increase your direction and



load. The disadvantage is that you have to land after flying a given distance to clear the wakes and might have to do so in wind or rollers.

To “step through” the wakes or “top the second wake,” a jumper has to let off of their cut just slightly to be able to absorb the first wake, and then just as quickly push again on that right leg so that the ski stays in close contact with the water and they “top the second wake” and clear the dip on the far side of the wakes. The timing of this “softening” of the cut to the first wake can be difficult to learn, but does have its benefits. If you can learn to cross the wakes in this manner you can be better in challenging conditions as well as “control” your timing a bit more, allowing for a more aggressive finish through the



bottom of the jump even if your early. The hardest part of crossing the wakes this way is understanding that as you approach the wakes and let up on your intensity, the boat is continuing to increase its aggressiveness. It is quite possible that your right ski will want to get stuck under you and when you land off the second wake your ski will be under you too much to get a good solid edge to the bottom. The key to Jaret and Ryan's success is their ability to soften their right leg without falling onto their left ski and not allowing the right ski to move under them where



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they can't regain their aggressive edge.

Whether you currently fly the wakes or slice through them, it is a good idea to understand and play with the other method just to see if you can improve your understanding of your current wake-crossing method and improve your jumping. There really is no right or wrong way to cross the wakes as long as the end result is that you are getting through the wakes consistently and with an aggressive edge into the bottom of the ramp.

*Freddy Krueger is sponsored by MasterCraft Boats, Zero Off Cruise Controls, D3 Skis, OJ Props, Body Glove Wetsuits and Masterline Ropes.*

