

# Barefooting – a sport for everyone

*By Paul Macdonald, demonstrated by Sarah Molepske*

We have all heard the stories about how tough and crazy you have to be in order to learn to barefoot. But one thing that the last three years working at Ron Scarpa Watersports has taught me, is that everyone can learn to barefoot – young, old, male, female, and disabled. The idea that only tough men can learn because the falls are too punishing is simply not true. Many first time footers learn at ski school without experiencing even one hard fall.

The trick to learning to barefoot is to progress slowly from step to step, and to make sure the skier is mentally and physically ready to learn. Kids are very quick to pick this sport up (a little quicker than their parents usually), however it is important to minimize the number of falls that they take, as your day will usually end as soon as a fall is experienced. Keep it fun, no matter who is learning, and they will progress quickly.

## **Step 1**

You will want to take the bindings off your wakeboard and sit slightly ahead of the center of the board. Place your feet beside the tip of the wakeboard and lean back slightly as the boat gently accelerates. The boat will want to pull you forward until you plane on the board, so resist the pull of the boat.



## **Step 2**

The boat speed should be very slow at this point. Place your feet on top of the wakeboard and ‘scoot’ your rear forward a few more inches. Now place your feet lightly on the water beside the wakeboard – this is your plant. You will need to lean back slightly to keep your feet from diving under the water when planting your feet.



### **Step 3**

Once you have established a solid plant, have the boat driver accelerate gently to 30-35mph. **Do not try to stand up** - the added water resistance on your feet will take care of that. Keep your knees well bent, and maintain forward pressure on your feet.



### **Step 4**

Once on your feet – RELAX!! The wakeboard will be swept behind you without any help. Keep your eyes focused in front of you – you go where you look. Keep your knees bent, arms straight and relaxed, and hips forward.



## **Step 5**

Smile – You can now walk on water!!!

### ***Driver's Ed***

#### **The Wakeboard**

A gentle idle will allow the skier to use the pull of the boat to straighten the wakeboard out prior to acceleration. The initial pull for the wakeboard start should be slow and steady to 8-10mph. If the wakeboard begins to bounce, you are going too fast; if the skier is finding it very hard to hold on, you are going too slowly. Once the skier has planted his/her feet, gently accelerate to 30-35mph, depending on the size of the skier.

#### **“Speed Kills”**

Just because your skier is learning to barefoot, doesn't mean that you have to go Mach 3. The faster the boat speed, the harder the water becomes when you fall. A good formula to figure out a skier's maximum boat speed is: skier's weight/10 + 20.

*Paul Macdonald is Chairman of Water Ski Canada's Barefoot Committee, and works at Ron Scarpa's Watersports in Winter Haven, Florida throughout the winter. Paul and Ron can be contacted at (800) 292-FOOT, or at [www.ronscarpa.com](http://www.ronscarpa.com) to answer any and all of your barefooting questions.*