

SECTION 3 SAFE SURFING

It takes skill and ability to be a good surfer, it also takes a lot of skill to be a safe surfer and to remain injury free.

Weather

One of the keys to scoring good surfing conditions and surfing safely is knowing how to combine knowledge of the weather and being able to read the conditions at a specific beach.

Before going surfing you should know the following weather conditions:

- Wind strength and direction (Eg. 30 knots SE)
- Time of high and low tide (Eg. high at 1300 hrs)
- Predicted size and direction of swell (Eg. SE 3-4 m)

This knowledge combined with an assessment of the conditions upon arrival at the beach, should give the surfer a good idea about the best spot to surf on that day.

What's on the bottom?

This is an important question to ask before surfing any location. Generally what you see on the shore line will be what's on the bottom under the waves. For example, if there are rocks or reefs along the shoreline you need to be aware that you could expect to find them under the waves.



Figure 13.1 Type of reef that can be found under some breaking waves

Entering and exiting the surf zone

Once you have assessed the conditions and have decided on a location to surf, it is important to determine two things before paddling out:

- Where you will enter the surf zone
- Where you will exit the surf zone

You must also take consideration of the sweep and what's on the shoreline. Many surfing locations require entry over rocks which can be a dangerous situation with slippery rocks sharp barnacles/oysters and breaking waves can make entry difficult. Where to enter the surf zone should be determined by your surfing ability level.

Figure 13.2 shows three different entry points into the surf zone for three different levels of surfer.

Entry point A – Beach break entry, suitable for beginner to advanced surfers.

Entry point B – Rip entry, suitable only for experienced surfers.

Entry point C – Between the flags, only suitable for swimmers and body boards. No surfboards allowed.

Safety Tip

Surfing rock break locations or entering the surf zone through rocky entry points is recommended only for experienced surfers. Beginner to intermediate surfers should stick to beach break sand entries.



Figure 13.3 Jumping off the rocks requires great skill and timing

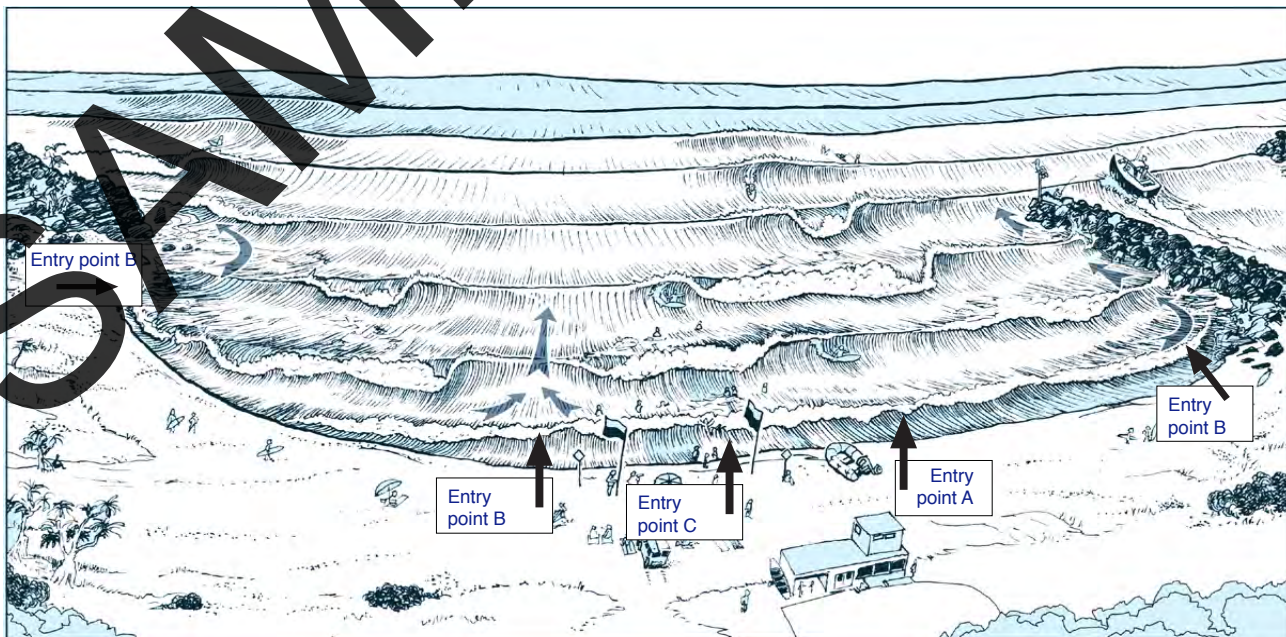


Figure 13.2 Entry points at a typical beach

Wiping out

Wiping out or falling off, is part of surfing. Whether it be world champion Kelly Slater or the learner grommet, all surfers wipe out at some time or another. While wiping out is inevitable, there are several techniques you can use which can reduce the risk of injury to yourself and other surfers.

Cover up

The standard and safest way to protect your head during a wipeout is the 'cover up' technique (Figure 14.2) for all types of wipe outs from the learner surfer to experienced big wave riding. All level of surfers utilise the cover up.

Board control is an important skill when surfing. Don't shoot your board out when you dismount. Always try and dismount under control.



Figure 14.2 The cover up technique.

Which way to fall?

If a wipe out is unavoidable, always try to come off the back of the surfboard and into the face or the back of the wave.

Never fall in front of your board. Figure 14.3 shows a surfer pulling out through the back of the wave.

The star fish

When wiping out over shallow rocks or reefs, a surfer can utilise a technique called the starfish (Figure 14.4). To perform this, the surfer goes off the board into the back of the wave, and spreads arms out flat in the form of a starfish to avoid damage from the rocks or reef.

If at all possible hold onto some part of your board. If you can grab the leagne close to the tail or the rails this stops your board from hitting other surfers.

Above all NEVER throw your board as this can really hurt other surfers.

Wipeout check list

- Fall to the back of the board
- Don't panic or struggle
- Do cover up technique
- Never throw your board



Figure 14.1 A heavy wipeout



Figure 14.3 Surfer pulling out through back of wave

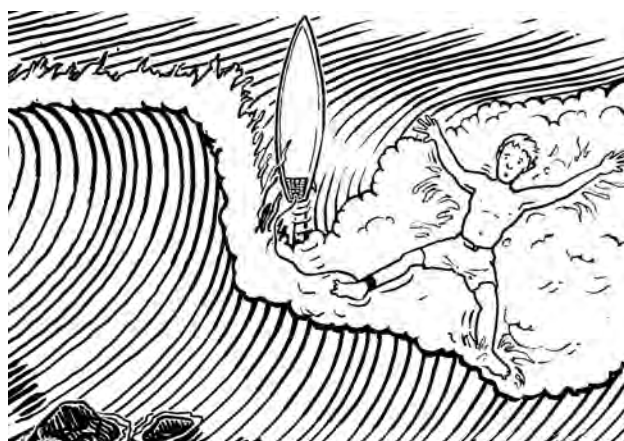


Figure 14.4 The starfish

Surfing Tip

You can check the weather conditions the night before surfing by watching the news report, reading the paper or checking the internet sites such as www.coastalwatch.com



WORKSHEET 3 SAFE SURFING

1. Before going surfing you should know which of the following weather conditions?

- a. Wind direction and strength
- b. Tide times
- c. Size of swell
- d. All of the above

Give a reason for your answer.

Safety Tip



You can protect your head by wearing a helmet designed for surfing.

2. List two ways of checking the weather before going surfing.

3. If there were reef exposed on the shoreline, you would expect to find reef under the waves.

- a. True
- b. False

4. Complete the following sentence: Before going into the surf you should know two things.

Where you will : _____ and _____

5. Complete the sentences - The safest way to protect your head in a wipe out is to _____.

When surfing and a wipeout is unavoidable you should fall to the _____ of the surfboard.

6. The photograph below shows a popular surf break. Draw arrows to show where you could enter the surf. Give reasons for your answer.



Wet Paper