

# Barefoot Slalom: PERFECTING YOUR TECHNIQUE

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**BAREFOOT SLALOM CAN BE VERY TECHNICAL. HERE ARE A FEW POINTERS THAT COULD PERHAPS HELP YOU IMPROVE YOUR SCORE IN A TOURNAMENT.**

Hopefully you are at the point of saying goodbye to two foot crosses because they're only worth half the points of a one foot wake cross. It's time to take the next step.

Body position is very important in barefoot slalom. The idea is to keep more foot in the water at all times while crossing the wake.

In the forward position, you must keep your back straight and relax your arms. Your wake crossing speed comes from leg strength and keeping your foot under your body. Pulling your arms slows you down, changes your body position and increases your chances of catching a toe and buying the farm.

The pull must come from the shoulders because you can resist the pull of the boat with your body which is much stronger. Think of it like a tug of war, you resist with your body not your arms. If you're on your heels too much then you're plowing, you're going slower and your foot will chatter. Back straight, push with your legs, relax the arms and resist with your shoulders.

In backwards slalom the idea is to get your foot in the water on edge as much as possible. If you lean away too much you'll be on your toes and have less control. Keep your body upright, don't pull your arms and keep your head up.

Looking down will change your entire body position so look up at the horizon. Pulling your arms will pull you off balance and slow down your crossing.

Again like in the forward position, use your legs to get speed and not your arms. An important tip with the leg that you are lifting is to keep it bent and not reach with it. In other words, don't point your toe and get it ready for a quick transition outside the wake.

These little tips will make it easier for the judges to see your clean crosses.

Tournament conditions will not always be glass calm and a good rule to follow is to do your backward wakes against the wind. Your heels are rounded and you're probably more likely to catch a toe skiing forward into the wind. You will be more stable running your back wakes facing the wind in rough water.

Boat speed is another factor. Now this gets tricky because not everybody has the same foot shape. For example, someone with a high arch in their foot can slalom at a faster speed than someone with a flat foot.

Let's just say if you were to run your front slalom at the maximum boat speed which could be close to 50 mph with some boats, the wake will be narrower and after a fifteen second pass you could squeeze in one or two extra crosses without changing your technique.

The problem here is that someone with a flat foot will have a hard time making edge changes as their foot will just slide because the water is much harder at 50 mph than 44. An arched foot can dig in and slice across the wake like a slalom ski on edge. It is very difficult to stay in control while barefooting backwards at high speed because your toes are wider than your heels and more of your toes are in contact with the water.

Experiment and get comfortable at higher speeds if you can because the boat wake is smaller when the speed is faster. Keep in mind that the falls also hurt much more.

Edge changes are vital in barefoot slalom and one important tip is to keep your feet together even though you're only skiing on one leg while crossing the wake. You can make quicker transitions if you plant your lifted leg close to the supporting leg once you're in the curl.

It is the little details that will make you faster and improve your barefoot slalom score. Focus on getting every wake cross clean and fast even during a practice. We're all creatures of habit and good habits during a training set are a must.

Been there, done that:  
Training Tips from  
Canadian Pros

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