

A-Z of Surfing Vocabulary

Surfing has a language all of its own. It is very similar to that of skateboarding and snowboarding, which are two sports that have both originated from surfing.

A

Aerial - A manoeuvre where the rider is able to launch the board off the wave and into the air.

Air - Where the surfer achieves an aerial.

B

Barrel - Where the wave comes over you and you're surfing inside of the wave.

Backhand - Surfing with your back towards the wave.

Blank - A rectangular piece of hard foam material that is cut to create the shape of a surfboard.

Blown out - Where an onshore wind blows the surf to mush.

Bottom Turn - The turn made at the bottom of a wave to initiate the ride. Bottom turns will most often be sweeping powerful moves that enable the surfer to establish direction for the ride.

Break - 1. The point where the peak of a green water wave starts to topple over and turn into a breaker. 2. A beach where you can surf or a place on a beach where a wave forms.

Breaker - A wave of white water.

C

Carve, Carving - A manoeuvre or series of manoeuvres where a surfer makes wide, graceful turns on the face of the wave.

Channels - Grooves cut into the underside of a surfboard to help its performance.

Closeout - Where a wave breaks along its entire length at the same time.

Cut-back - carving or snapping motion that changes the surfboard's direction toward the part of the wave from which the surfer has come. Cutbacks are used to reposition the surfer onto the shoulder or face of the wave.

D

Deck - The top side of a surfboard. Usually decorated with a manufacturer's logo and a surf picture or other design.

Ding - A damaged area on a surfboard. Can usually be repaired.

Down the line - What the surfer sees as he or she looks down the side of a wave after completing the bottom turn. Down the line surfing is fast and exciting.

Drop-in - When a surfer takes-off on a wave in front of another surfer who is already riding the wave.

Duck-dive - A method of getting through a breaking wave by taking your board underwater while paddling out.

F

Fin - Surfboards have fins to provide stability and to allow the board to be turned.

Floater - When the surfer rides the top part of the wave that is breaking.

Foam - 1. The material used to form the interior of a surfboard. 2. White water of a breaking wave.

G

Glass - 1. The material (fibreglass) used to form the hard exterior of a surfboard. 2. A smooth face of a wave in offshore winds.

Gnarly - A big, nasty looking set of waves or a scary ride.

Goofy, Goofy-foot - A surfer who surfs with his/her right foot forward on the board.

Grabbing air - A name for when a surfer achieves an aerial.

Grem - A nickname for a young or inexperienced surfer.

Grom/Grommet - A young boy surfer or a young girl surfer.

H

Hang-five - To ride with one foot at the nose of the board.

Hang-ten - To ride with both foot at the nose of the board. Usually only possible on longboards.

Hot-dogging - Where a surfer performs lots of tricks on a wave.

I

Inter-tidal zone - The area of the shore between the high and low water marks. Also called the foreshore.

K

Kick-out - A manoeuvre where the surfer exits a wave by kicking the tail of the board out of the water.

L

Layback - Where a surfer literally lays back on the wave

Leash - A strong plastic cord that is attached to a surfboard and which the surfer then attaches to his ankle so that they cannot lose the board if they fall off.

Line-up - The point in the sea just beyond the breakers where surfers gather to catch waves.

Lip - The crest of the wave as it starts to break.

Longboard - Any board over 2.5m long.

M

Malibu board - The correct name for a surfboard with a fin.

Meander - A bend in a river, usually in the middle or lower course of its length.

Meanders continually change shape as the flowing current of water erodes the outside bank of the bend and deposition occurs in the slack water on the inside of the bend. On the Severn, the most notable meander is the Great Horseshoe Bend at Arlingham.

N

Navigable - The word used to describe a safe river or estuary channel for shipping.

Nose - The front of a surfboard.

O

One-eighty - A manoeuvre where the surfer makes a half-turn, i.e. 180 degrees.

Offshore - Winds that blow onto the sea and which hold up the waves to create smooth or 'glassy' waves.

Onshore - Winds that blow toward the shore, affecting the back of breaking waves. Usually onshore winds do not offer good surfing conditions.

Off-the-lip - Where the surfer bounces the surfboard off the breaking part of the waves and into the face of the wave. Also known as 'off-the-tops' and 'snaps'.

Overhead - A wave that is taller than the surfer.

P

Peak - The central point on the wave where the wave pitches forward and breaks in both directions. Most rides start from the peak.

Pill - A local term for an inlet on the banks of the river.

R

Radical - Adjective applied to extreme maneuvers made by a surfer on a wave.

Rails - The edges of a surfboard.

Re-entry - A complete direction change on a wave, where a surfer rides to the wave's breaking point, then turns the board back into the wave and continues his ride. Similar to off-the-lips, but a more vertical ascent up the face of the wave.

Rip-current - A shallow, strong current that flows outwards from a beach.

Rip, Ripping - The name for a series of fast, rapid manoeuvres on a wave.

Rocker - The lengthways curve of a surfboard's deck which makes the nose stand higher than the centre.

S

Section - When the wave breaks into two or more segments separated by white water. Surfers will either maneuver through the sections, perform 'floaters' or end their rides.

Set - a natural pattern of waves followed by a lull.

Shortboard - Any board 2m or under in length.

Single-fin - A surfboard with one fin.

Switch-foot - A surfer who can switch his leading foot, i.e. surf with his right or left foot leading.

Swell - Long unbroken waves caused by an ocean disturbance, such as major storm or hurricane, thousands of miles from the location of the break.

T

Tail - The end of a surfboard.

Take-off - The point where a surfer stands up on his board as he catches a wave.

Three-sixty - A manoeuvre where the surfer spins the board around in a full-circle or 360 degrees.

Thruster - A surfboard with 3-fins.

Twin, Twin-fin - A surfboard with 2 fins.

Tube - Where the lip of the breaking wave is thrown outwards to form a hollow.

Tubed, tube ride - When the surfer rides inside the pocket or the tube of a wave. From the shore, the surfer is completely obscured, only to emerge from the barrel of cascading water. For the surfer it is like being covered by a tunnel of water with the light of day present at the other end.

W

Wax - A mildly sticky substance applied to the deck of a surfboard to help prevent a surfer's feet from slipping off.

Wipe-out - When a surfer falls off a wave or is knocked off by a wave.