

# Wakeboard “POP” what is it?

Spring is finally here and we cannot be more thrilled to start riding, coaching, and helping people enjoy the water more! I’ve had enough time to prepare for this year’s AF Wake events, our upcoming summer camps program, and to write some instructional articles to be used throughout the upcoming year.



Here is a deeper look into the fundamental principles of wakeboarding. What they are, how they work, and what they create. Read further to take a deeper look into how you get air on a wakeboard.

The article below was written by me and was featured on Wake World’s website. For other wakeboard articles visit <http://www.wakeworld.com/default.php>.

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I hear riders talking about it all the time. “My board pops great!” or “I like the pop behind that Centurion boat!” or “What board is gonna pop the best when I ride?”

Perhaps we’ve been deceived by the advertisements and lingo. Perhaps there is just a simple misconception. Either way, “pop” needs to be clarified.

Pop is not something inside your board that makes you go huge. Pop is not something your wake does because it is the biggest on the lake. Pop is an EFFECT created by a combination of variables. It is a burst of energy that blasts you through the air!

When all the elements don’t come together properly and at the right time, you miss the pop. It happens to the best of ‘em. What makes the difference is technique, water time, balance and physical strength. The more you ride, the better your timing gets. Get with a coach to safely learn as fast as you can. Balance builds rapidly with fundamental training and time on the trampoline. And, well, wakeboarding is tough, so being strong and tough helps.

## SO, HOW DO YOU CREATE POP?

Pop doesn’t work without the rope. It can work without a wake though! For example, take Shaun Murray’s tweetybird, air tricks at a cable park, professional trick skiing and the air tricks of the 90’s behind the boat. We can create a snappy type pop that gives us leverage to catapult through a trick.

The best riders can get huge air without a big wake. How do they do that? Well, it has to do with pop, of course.

*Pop is an EFFECT from:*

## 1. Rope tension and pressure building against the boat

“Loading the line” or “progressive edging” work to give you pull from the boat while in the air. The pull from the boat keeps you up (if there’s a tower, the higher the better) and pulls you down course. Having a tight line pulling you up means more hang time and softer landings.

## 2. Speed Control and Timing. Speeding up vs. Slowing down

Think about it. Would you rather snap up or across? This is why you don’t turn and burn, wally-style into the wake. You want to accelerate while riding up the wake for many tricks. So, the less speed you have before the wake, the more you can accelerate while near and through the wake, so as to shoot UP into the air. Thus, the more up and down your jumps can feel (like how it is on the trampoline). Try to time when you build your speed so you can increase speed at the right time.

## 3. Balance and how hard you push/absorb

This has to do with how strong your legs are (how well you can physically jump), your body position and how much energy you use. One can absorb the wave or try really hard to spring. If you spring hard at the wrong time, catastrophe can erupt. We teach people not to overdo the push. Instead, we want them to focus on balance over power. Naturally, as your timing improves, so does your confidence to extend high before starting the trick.

## 4. Size of the wake/strength of the water

Some boats have strong, hard wakes. Some boats have soft mushy wakes. Some are steep and some are mellow. This affects how hard the force of the wake hits your body. Some smaller wakes can be steep and punchy, giving you a lot of kick. Some massive wakes can lack power. Ride behind different boats to get a feel for what you like the best. I like the wake made by many boats. Sometimes a mellow wake is better for a trick. Sometimes a steeper wake makes a trick easier. The [Centurion](#) boats we use at [AF Wake](#) do a great job for all levels of riders.

## 5. Board Design

Board shape and design definitely affects how much pop you get, but you have to have good technique to feel what your board can really do. As far as the shape goes, the more continuous, the more smoothly and consistently the board builds speed, slows down and releases from the wake. These boards are the easiest to ride but may lack the explosiveness of a three-stage or otherwise aggressive rocker pattern. The more rocker and, specifically with 3-stage, the more abrupt the rocker, the more exact it has to be ridden. With this type of board you have to be more on point with your timing and body weight distribution over the board. When you get it

right though, you'll feel a more abrupt up and down style lift. It's less predictable for the beginner rider, but more exciting. Higher risk, more return. With wakeboarding, I like predictability and soft landings and I find that in the [Liquid Force Fusion](#).

Over time, as the wakes have gotten bigger, the style has changed and riders can get away with using less pop and more wake size to get the air they need. Some riders even accidentally lose their pop as their wake gets bigger because the giant wake has helped the rider go big without needing great technique. This is a danger and overkill that we talk about frequently at my school. If you are going big without getting pop, you are in danger of much more intense, high-impact landings.

So whether someone is riding behind Rusty's X Star, my loaded FX22 or a small direct-drive, you can see whether someone is really getting pop. I challenge you to keep approaching the wake smoother, focusing on your relationship with the boat and how you can use the line tension and good speed control to gain height, hang time and softer landings. Good luck and happy shredding!

*Adam Fields*