



Wind Awareness - Deliberate Practice

Spend a day looking upwind on any boat, a motorboat, a keelboat, a canoe or standup paddleboard. You can even look at a swimming pool on a windy day and notice the ripples. Polarized sunglasses will help you see water texture differences more easily. This skill can be refined using remote control sailboats as well.

Drill 1: Spot a gust upwind and count down how long until it hits you

Drill 2: Consider what you think might be an “average wind direction” then determine each gust as it comes to you as either a “left shift” or a “right shift”.

Drill 3: Guess the windspeed

Drill 4: Guess how long you think you’ll be inside the gust for before the gust hits you. You should have 2 counters:

- How long until it arrives
- How long until it’s gone

Continue this method until you’ve got it down

Drill 4: Guess what actions you’d need to take in the boat

- Keep in mind shorter and less intense gusts may not require much change to the sail and only a change in body weight. Simulate the body weight change in your mind as the gust hits
- As the gust approaches and you think it may require a sail setup change, say inside your head:
 1. “Vang on”
 2. “Cunningham on”
 3. “Hike out”

And try to time the “Hike out” with the moment the gust hits. This is fantastic practice for anticipation and will help you a lot in the boat next time you’re sailing.