

EPISODE 4 - OUTHAUL ABUSE: IT MAY BE HAPPENING TO YOUR KIT!

The application of outhaul to our rigs has, over time, become slightly warped and resulted in a massive amount of diversity in techniques and general confusion in what should be, and is, a very simple thing! This has occurred due to the general misinterpretation of manufacturers' instructions, or through classic 'Chinese Whispers' and urban myths that we constantly come in contact with when chatting to fellow windsurfers.



As such, Jim Collis offers up some simple home truths about outhauling and, as always, is keen to leave us with some straightforward simple gems to take away.

OUTHAIL IS:

- Extremely important for making your rig work properly as it stabilises the foil, or 'wing', shape of your sail (See Fig 1).
- Linked intrinsically to your downhaul - more downhaul, more outhaul. Less downhaul, less outhaul.
- Applied relatively delicately in comparison with downhaul (which requires more 'bullish enthusiasm'...or a mechanical device!)

OUTHAIL IS NOT:

- Meant to be applied forcefully. If you ever find yourself sitting down with your foot on the end of the boom, cranking on the outhaul with your eyes almost popping out of your head - STOP! (See Fig 2).
- Designed to pull the battens away from the mast. That is the job of the downhaul, the outhaul helping to stabilise the foil shape created in the sail by efficient downhauling.
- Something to yank on excessively when we feel overpowered. Remember, downhaul and outhaul go hand in hand. If you are overpowered then come in and apply more downhaul so as to flatten off (de-power) the sail more and create more floppiness in the leech (and hence exhaust). Then apply more outhaul to take up the excess material at the clew, which will in turn stabilise the new flatter foil shape in the rig. If you just apply shed

loads of outhaul then the sail loses its shape, feels gutless in lulls (even in a force six!) and develops tell-tale horizontal creases, especially in gusts, that cause the drive in the sail to move all over the place and feel exceptionally unstable.

- Applied until the clew eyelet touches the end of the boom that your dear Uncle Bob gave you last year that is stuck on one extension setting only.

EASY TIPS ON HOW TO OUTHAUL CORRECTLY:

1. 'DOWNHAUL'

Always remember to correctly downhaul your sail according to the conditions before trying to set your outhaul. (Wait for Jimbo's Gems - Episode 5 for correctly downhauling a rig!)

2. 'MEASUREMENTS'

Set the boom on the extension measurements recommended by the manufacturer (usually found printed on the sail bag or the foot of the sail). Nine times out of ten these measurements are accurate, but be prepared that they might be a few centimetres out, due to various reasons...such as your boom not actually being the length it says it is!

3. 'CLEW PRESS'

Standing by the clew, stretch one arm down the sail towards the mast until the clew is firmly wedged into your armpit. Then press down on the sail material with the palm

of your extended arm. (See Fig 3).

You shouldn't be able to apply huge pressure on the sail as your arm is fully extended and you are not trying to apply direct pressure onto the sail. You are simply trying to simulate the pressure that the sail will experience from the wind as it makes its journey down the foil of the sail from mast to clew. You are NOT doing a display of human grunt! When you press down on the sail you should be just off the boom with your hand. If you are able to touch the boom arm then you have not got enough outhaul and need to apply more. If the sail is tight like a drum and you can't even get close to the boom then you've got far too much outhaul on and should let some off.

4. 'VISUAL'

Standing by the clew, have a look down the sail towards the mast. It should look like a beautiful 'wing' shape. (See Fig 4). Some 'wing' or foil shapes will obviously be deeper than others according to the discipline that the sail is designed for - deeper for low-end grunt and speed; shallower for manoeuvrability and top end performance - BUT all sails will have some shape in them.

Jimbo's Gems is written by Jim Collis - Pro Coach, Instructor Trainer and Tester for Windsurf magazine. If you'd like any more information on coaching, or training to be an instructor with Jim, please contact him on jimcollis@windsurfevolution.co.uk or visit www.windsurfevolution.co.uk