

River Technique *by* Steve Fisher



An edge to edge transition is most often referred to in freestyle kayaking when on a wave, but it is all-important in creek boating also. Switching edges in the water is how you change and hold lines, while switching edges in the air is often the only way to stick a line off a drop – big or small.

Edge-to-Edge Transitions

In 2005, my friend Pat Keller was voted best creek boater by a group of pro paddlers. I took it upon myself to look at his paddling and see what it is he does so well. I realized that his ability to roll his boat from edge to edge in the air is one of his keys to success. After asking him about it, he passed on some of his father's words of wisdom. As a kid, Pat's dad told him to do every boof he could, on every run, small or big, whether necessary or not. As a result he became really good at boofing and keeping his bow high and dry. What he learned and what we're talking about here is essentially a special boofing technique.

PHOTO SEQUENCE

Take a look at how I start off leaning right on a right stroke and end up leaning left on a left stroke. It's pretty simple to see that if I stayed leaning right I'd just crash big time. I needed to land leaning left but couldn't start off leaning left because my hull would have hung up on the rock in the takeoff zone. So that made this into a fairly challenging drop.

WHAT TO DO

Mindset: You first need to convince yourself to actually lean towards the place where you don't want to fall or land. This is usually so that your boat runs shallow and doesn't catch its edge on the rock next to you (as was the case in the photo sequence). The trick to making that happen is to look in that direction while planting your boof stroke on the same side.

Switch Edges: Here I look as soon as I've taken off. When you look in a certain direction your center of gravity and your body lean follows. To really get on edge from here, like with an Eskimo roll, you're left with the hip movement – lift your outside knee and butt cheek.

Counteract: At this point you'll have roll momentum, so you need to put in a stroke to prevent the boat rolling too far. If the drop is small, you will put the stroke in upon landing but if it's bigger you will need to put the stroke in before you land

BONUS TIP:

Boat outfitting is key. Make sure that your hip pads are snug. I also glue a foam wedge on the outside of my knees so that instead of just pulling up with one knee I can also push down with the other knee. This is my most important piece of outfitting.

Go out and start boofing every pour-over on the next river you run. Practice taking off on one edge and landing on the other, and feel how much more fluid your boofs become.



Steve Fisher is sponsored by Riot Kayaks, Seven 2 Paddles, Stohlquist, Snapdragon Designs, Teva, and Red Bull.

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