

How to Unhooked Front Roll

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Today we're going to break down another must-have basic for progressing your unhooked riding: the front roll. Of all the basic moves, this might be the best looking and will give you the most bang for your buck as far as style. This is usually learned after the back roll and, while it's not difficult, it can be harder to learn if you don't have the right technique. Speaking of technique, there are two ways to initiate the front roll.

Two variations

While learning, I struggled to get this right and it always felt a bit off. In this video, I'm going to cover two different techniques for you to try while learning. Chances are, one will feel more natural and help you learn faster. At the very least, these two variations will help you develop your own style and build your air awareness.

This is a fun move, not only because it's the best looking of the basic tricks, but also because it's going to unlock all the tricks that require this initial rotation, like the Front to Revert, the S-Bend or the Front to Blind. Personally I think that's the best-looking trick in kiteboarding. The main goal of this playlist is to show you that all the advanced moves in kiteboarding are fundamental moves combined. The best way to progress is to practice the basics until they are natural. From there, you can start combining the fundamentals for more advanced progressions. Get these on lock and you are on your way to some advanced riding.

Prerequisites

Being a fundamental, the only prerequisites for this trick are the pop and riding upwind. Like all the videos in our fundamentals series, it could be the first trick you try. I think it helps to learn the back roll and the Raley first. Front rolls are easy, but the takeoff is a bit less natural. This is because, for a back roll or a Raley, the scoop will throw you into the rotation. For the front roll, you'll have to pop first and redirect yourself in the air. This counter-rotation is part of what makes the front roll look so good. Any redirection or counter-rotation will make tricks look more powerful and bigger than they really are.

Make it your own

The front roll is at the heart of many other more advanced tricks. Just like the back roll or the Raley, it's easy to change up how this trick looks depending

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what you do with your head and shoulders and hips in the air. People often confuse this trick with the S-Bend as they do look similar. An S bend is combining the Raley with a late front roll. As long as your legs are tucked, I would consider it a front roll.

The key difference is that your legs should be over your head in the Raley position when you initiate the roll for the S-Bend. The basic front roll is much easier. You just pop off the water, look under your back armpit and throw your hips forward. While it's not quite as easy as a back roll, it's still not too hard to learn in a session or two. The hardest part is overcoming the odd-feeling takeoff. After that, it's a piece of cake. On the scale of 1 to 10, the front roll is more like a 2.5

We'll break this trick down into 4 steps:

- Trick overview - The redirect
- Body position, or air awareness
- Variations - look though or back
- Common mistakes

Step One - Trick Overview

Keep the kite at 1 or 11 and come in with moderate speed. Ride downwind, unhook and carve back upwind. Pop off the water hard. Make sure you really stomp down your back foot. This is where the front roll trips a lot of people up. Unlike the back roll, you'll need to reverse the momentum of your scope and pop. It's important to get a good powered pop before you initiate the roll. Otherwise, it's easy to land on your back with this one.

The redirect

As soon as you pop off the water, you'll want to do a couple of things consecutively. First, allow yourself to get off the water. This is the most important step. Only after that is it time to change your momentum. Don't do this too early or you won't get any height and you'll crash on your back.

Some people will tell you to duck your head down and look under your back armpit. Personally, I find it much easier to turn my front ear down into my front shoulder and look over my back shoulder. This will open you up and make the rotation more natural. At the same time, you'll want to bring your front knee

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to your forehead. This will swing your hips and body in the direction of travel. As you come around you'll spot your landing.

While you're rolling around, you will feel somewhat blind until you've almost completed the rotation. Make sure you keep that front knee tucked in hard and keep looking behind you until your body unwraps from the roll. If you stop looking or let up on your knee, you'll stop the roll and come down on your back.

The trick is to keep looking, and your body will follow your head. Make sure you bring the nose of your board back around and aim it at the kite for your landing. As you come around, pull hard on your front hand and bring the bar into your lead hip or front knee. Fall into the landing, riding downwind at the kite. Absorb the landing with your body.

I know I'm being repetitive on these videos, but a powerful pop is very important on this trick. Make sure you have good speed and treat your body as a unit while loading and popping. Keep locked at the hips, dig your heels deep and point your toes. Keep your hips and chest up towards the sky. Lean back like you are on the back two legs of a chair. Let the energy build up in your lines and transfer through your body. Release that energy with your scoop.

Like always, land flat riding downwind so you can hook back in and ride away.

Step Two - Body Positioning, Air Awareness & the Redirect

The release

Let's talk about the release for this trick. It's a bit odd feeling, as when you release you'll have to resist some of that momentum and roll the opposite way. The scoop will naturally want to toss you into a back roll. Follow this momentum and release from the water first. Make sure you get a good scoop and pop. A good cue is to dig your toes. Do not point them while loading!

After you scoop and pop off the water, the trick changes; you need to redirect. You can do this by tucking your front knee hard into your chest. Imagine that you're trying to hit yourself in the head with your knee. Bring your front ear to your shoulder and look back. Open up the back shoulder and swing your hips. Keep looking over that back shoulder. This is the first step to initiate the front rotation.

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Arms

Let's talk about your arms. While loading, keep the bar close with a slight bend in your arms, almost like you never unhooked. As you pop, keep them somewhere between your chest and your hips, almost like you never unhooked. As you start the rotation and open up your back shoulder, you will want to pull hard on your front hand. You should feel the kite pull you forward into the rotation. This will also prevent the kite from pulling you up.

Body & legs

Keep your front leg tucked and poke out your back leg with a slight bend in the knee. Stay in a semi-tucked position in the air and focus on swinging your hips around with the rotation.

Imagine you are drawing a circle around your body with your lead knee. It sounds funny, but it will keep you in position as you complete the rotation. I like to imagine my front elbow is connected to my front knee as I'm rolling around. It's good to visualize the trick like this so you can feel yourself landing it first since you'll feel blind during your first couple of awkward rotations.

Commit to a full roll. You'll want to imagine that you are still hooked in. Keep a slight bend in your elbows and keep the bar closer to your chest with your front knee tucked in hard.

Leading with your head and being aware of what you're doing with your knees and elbows will keep you in the correct position for landing and make everything more fluid as you develop body awareness on this basic roll. As you come around, you can open your body up a little to slow down the rotation. Keep a slight bend in your knees.

Landing

As you come down for the landing, it might even be a good idea to let go with your back hand. It's really easy to send the kite up with your back hand on this one. This might stop the rotation, causing you to fall on your back. Land in a semi-tucked position. As you spot your landing, you can untuck a bit to stop the rotation. I like to touch down with my back leg first. Land flat and riding downwind at the kite to control the power and slow down. Now hook back in and ride upwind.

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Step Three - Variations

The main variations are the axis of your rotation. If you watch other tutorials, some people recommend that you look through and under your armpit. Alternatively, you can throw your head back and arch your back. This is a really important step. When learning, I was taught to look under my armpit to initiate the Front Roll. I actually found this almost impossible and I would always end up on my back. For me, tucking my ear into my shoulder and throwing my head back into the roll opened up my body and made everything easier. You should try both techniques to see what feels more natural for you. Chances are one will make the trick easier.

Axis of Rotation

The speed you bring into the trick, the way you turn your head, and how you swing your hips are going to change this trick up dramatically. Chris and I both use the technique I covered for this tutorial. You can see it's more of an off-axis 360 for us. While our buddy Blake Olsen likes to throw his head back and swing his hips way above his head on his front rolls, he also rotates his upper body first. His legs rotate slightly after his torso. This delay makes for an extremely stylish roll. This inverted late hip swing variation looks awesome with an indy grab. Well, it just looks awesome no matter what. Start experimenting and find what works for you. Pretty much every variation of this trick looks awesome, so as long as you bring speed and power it's going to look good.

You can see our friend Steve Lee likes to look under his shoulder and poke his legs out. This variation has elements of the S-Bend, but is still technically a roll. He also rotates his torso before his legs, making the roll look more critical and stylish. As you progress, start thinking about what you are doing with your body and experiment with your timing. You can see that small tweaks make a big difference in how the trick looks. Bring this air awareness mentality into every trick you do.

Step Four - Mistakes

Sending the kite

Like the back roll, the number one mistake is sending the kite up to noon while spinning. Keep your hands close to the center of the bar. Focus on pulling on your front hand as you spin. The kite will pull you into the rotation.

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The other mistake is not redirecting after you pop. The scoop will naturally want to throw you backwards. You'll have to execute a bit of faith and follow the steps for the body position. After you pop into the air, bring that front knee to your chest and look over your back shoulder. Bring your front ear into your shoulder and commit to the roll. This trick comes down to commitment. If you try to bail, you'll fall on your back. If you keep your legs up and send the kite high, it's not bad at all. I don't know about you, but I'd rather stomp a roll than land on my back.

Bad loading & pop

- Don't stretch your arms when loading
- Keep your heels down for a power load
- Don't bend at your hips like a hinge

Remember to treat your body as a unit. Load power into your lines and release it with your scoop. Treat your body as a unit. Stay locked at the hips, keep the bar close like you never unhooked. Dig your heels and do not point your toes. Maintain a strong edge with a large spray as you scoop into a release.

This is a fun one and by far my favorite fundamental trick. Get this one dialed and you'll get some cheers from the beach too. Everyone loves a stylish powered front roll!

What to try next...

Now that you've learned the front roll, hopefully you've mastered the Raley and the Back Roll.

Now's the time to focus on combining some of these fundamental videos. You can pair this video with the surface pass and take it to toeside or to blind. When you're really comfortable with the front roll and the Raley, put them together and try an S-bend.