

All I Ever Needed To Learn in Life, I Learned From Surf Etiquette

Life is a journey, and much like surfing, sticking to a few basic rules or courtesies can make the ride a lot smoother. The rules of surfing are universal codes. Let's see how surfing etiquette can so easily apply to us all in our every day life.

1. No Dropping In. "Dropping in" on another surfer is one of the worst surfing crimes you can commit. Dropping in is where there is a surfer on a wave already and you hop up on the wave in front of them. If there is a surfer on a wave already, the wave is theirs, unless they fall off their surfboard or pull out of the wave. This surf etiquette rule reminds us that in life we should respect and honor other people's choices in their life's purpose. As long as others are safe and not harming others, we should not get in front of them and take their dream (wave). Allow each person to choose their life's path and enjoy their ride. Everyone deserves the passage of a smooth journey to arrive at his or her dream destination.
2. Wait your Turn. Everyone is waiting for the waves, not just you. You need to be able to share the waves with everyone else. Being selfish will not win you any respect out in the ocean, or anywhere else for that matter. Being aware of your place in the queue in your journey for anything is a great life skill. Don't jump in front of others and snatch what is rightfully theirs.
3. Don't get out of your Depth. You should know and accept your own limitations. If you are not fit enough or experienced enough to surf 15-foot waves, don't go out there. If the waves are too big for you, watch from the shore. Much the same in the real world, we all need to realize our limitations. Some of these we can work on, and over time become more accomplished. As in surfing, it is smart to start off small and work your way up to the bigger stuff.
4. Respect the Locals. If you are surfing someplace new, take a few minutes to observe the scene before paddling straight out. The locals are entitled to surf their local break, as are visitors. We all know the saying "When in Rome..". Respect for local customs is important in all walks of life. Traveling the world shows everyone the huge differences there can be in various local traditions. Visitors should always be mindful that locals might have vastly differing viewpoints to your own. Be tolerant of other's beliefs and customs, we are all entitled to our own views. Respecting others will garner respect for yourself.
5. Keep Control. Your surfboard can be a potential lethal weapon when out of control. No one wants to wear a surfboard in the head or face. Your surfboard is very heavy and usually has a sharp point. Combine this with a powerful surge of water and you get the picture. In life's journey you need to be responsible for yourself and your well being. Take control of your emotions and health for a smoother, longer ride. It goes without saying, the healthier you are in all aspects of your life, the more enjoyable your life will be.
6. No Discrimination. People should be entitled to surf regardless of their gender or race. No one likes to be judged on their rights just because of the way they look, or whether they are a male or female. Opening up your mind to others regardless of gender, race or religion can be great for expanding your soul.
7. Look out for others. If you see someone needing assistance, help them. The ocean can be very unforgiving, as can many other situations. What goes around comes around. Assisting others in their moment of need doesn't take long, but could be the difference between someone having their journey cut off prematurely or reaching their destination safely.
8. No Rage. Don't get violent with the other surfers when things go wrong. Breathe in with love and out with love. Count to ten and walk (or paddle) away. Save your energy for something else. These three points can be used in any life situation.
9. Right of Way. The surfer closest to the edge of the breaking wave always has the right of way. This means that the wave is theirs. Much like anything else in this life, head on collisions should be avoided. Give way when you need to. Unnecessary confrontations in life just take up energy that is best used for more positive activities. Take a separate path (or direction or wave). Parallel paths are beneficial.
10. Respect the Environment. The ocean is a powerful playground. You need to respect the waves. We all need to respect the fact that it should be clean and pristine. This can be easily achieved with the basics, like taking your trash with you. The ocean is not a dumping ground, and neither is the sand. Leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but photos or memories. How different would the world be if we all carried the surf etiquette rules into our day-to-day lives? Respecting the rights of others, and treating all others the way we would like to be treated ourselves. Being responsible for ourselves. Taking the time out to assist others. Cleaning up after ourselves. Sharing, waiting our turn, and not being greedy. Realizing our limitations. Accepting that Mother Nature is all-powerful, and should be treated with respect. Life's journey will always be an adventure. Enjoy the ride of the wave. Smooth waves are the best, but not knowing what the next set of waves will bring always adds to the excitement of life.

About the Author

Me-Shell Mijangos left the corporate world of NYC to follow her bliss in Maui, Hawaii. She is the founder of an all inclusive women's surf camp called SwellWomen (<http://www.swellwomen.com>). Two years ago, she started SwellCo-ed, a Surf and Yoga Experience for women, men and couples.

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