



Flag Slalom

Water Skiing

By

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What Is Slalom Skiing?

Water skiing is great fun, and is a great hobby enjoyed by millions of people around the world on all sorts of stretches of water.

But, water-skiing can also be a wonderful sport, as well as a hobby... but all sports need some way of measuring a competitors performance against others', and that's why slalom skiing was invented.

Competitors make a "pass" through a course of buoys anchored, in a zig-zag formation, to the bed of whatever stretch of water they're using. On completing a pass successfully, the level of difficulty is increased, initially by increasing boat speed and then by shortening the skier's rope.

It's great fun... but, there are drawbacks, here are a few...

- You can only do it where there is a slalom course set up
- Slalom courses are expensive and need a lot of maintenance
- Slalom courses don't really work in deep or tidal waters
- The boat driver needs to keep the speed spot-on - sometimes needing technology to help
- It's very physically demanding... hard to learn... and those buoys come up so darn fast.
- Learners can't go through the course slowly without sinking!

So, that's why I came up with Flag Slalom, it's not intended to replace normal slalom skiing, but it's great fun as an alternative to free skiing, is inspired by real slalom and certainly provides a similar challenge that is very accessible.

Read on...

(oh and by the way... I am probably going to refer to the skiers as "he" in this booklet. I know I should put "he/her" or "his/her"... but...you see, I am lazy... please forgive me... but Flag Slalom works for all!

What is Flag Slalom?

Flag Slalom gives skiers an easy method of competing against other skiers, without the need for any sort of slalom course or technology. In fact you don't need anything at all in the water, so you could do this in the mid Atlantic, if the whim took you. Mind you, this would beg the question, "What are you doing in the middle of the Atlantic in a ski boat?"

Also, Flag Slalom offers many variations on slalom skiing.

Anyone who can ski (on 1 ski or 2), knee-board, wake-board or even steer a Ringo can have a go at Flag Slalom.

You don't need to be mega-fit (although it will help to get you fit), and you can have a go almost as soon as you have learned to get up out of the water.

It's easy to drive for, and involves no technology more sophisticated than a stopwatch.

How it works is very simple.

There are 2 flags on short poles fixed to the deck of the boat (1 on each side)... like this picture...



When the skier is up and away, they ski away from the centre-line of the boat's wake until the rope touches a flag pole to earn a score of 1 buoy. In a fixed period of time the skier must try to score 6 buoys. A judge in the boat keeps score and, just like in real slalom, a pass can be made harder - first by allowing less time for a pass, and then by shortening the rope.

It's all down to angles and timings you see! Don't go cross-eyed... it's easy... trust me... keep reading!

What do you need to do Flag Slalom?

Well, that's easy;

First you need a tournament type ski boat...not only because they are the best thing to ski behind in terms of wake shape and power, and the easiest boats to drive, but also because they have a mid mounted ski pole. This is important to Flag Slalom.

You also need...

- A safe stretch of water
- A good, responsible boat driver.
- A judge and time keeper in the boat. This can be the same person... or 2 people if you prefer.
- Your choice of weapon (Mono ski, Combo skis, etc etc...)
- Buoyancy vests all round... of course.
- 2 flags (separate Appendix shows how to make these)
- Flag Slalom protractor to locate the flags correctly (downloadable for free from www.flagslalom.com) - mounted to some stiff card.
- 2 lengths of stretchy elastic about 5mm diameter and about 4m long
- Some PVC insulation tape to mark the flag positions.
- A stopwatch (or stopwatch app your phone)
- An air horn - or the boat's own horn (optional)

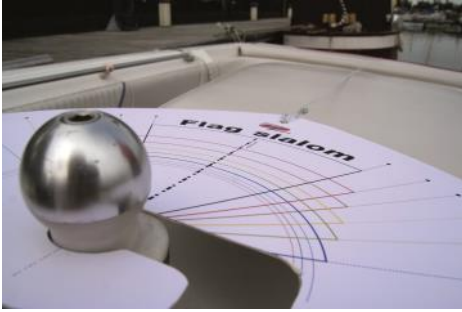


Fig 1 - Fitting the protractor



Fig 2 –centring the protractor

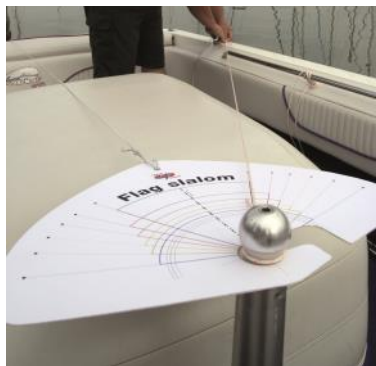


Fig 3 - measure the angles

Set-up

First you need to set the boat up for Flag Slalom... using these simple steps...

Mark up your boat

This is one-time only procedure and can be done on the trailer or afloat.

- 1) Take the Flag Slalom protractor and place it around the ski pole as shown. (Fig. 1)
- 2) Stretch the elastic fixed to the protractor out to make a straight line to the stern. Tie it to the boat's transom ski tow eye in the centre of the transom - or get a friend to hold it in the centre of the transom.
- 3) Now, get the other length of elastic, put the loop over the ski pole.
- 4) Place the other end on the boat deck, lined up with the black "23 metre" line of the protractor and stretch it to ensure the elastic is unobstructed and straight. (Fig. 3)
- 5) Stick a piece of PVC insulation tape where the elastic crosses the deck - and write "23m / 75ft" on it. This is your first deck marker.
- 6) Repeat the above technique on the opposite side of the boat.

Now, do the same for as many of the other rope lengths as you feel like. Up to 12 m (40') – We figure that anyone skiing below 12 m should get themselves to a buoyed course pretty quick as they're likely to win some trophies!

If you are push you could use different coloured tape for corresponding with the standard colour of a slalom ski rope's shortenings - from the back of the boat going forward...white, red, orange, yellow, green and blue.

Fix your flags

Flags can be secured to the deck with suction cups, or some boats have a hand rail which allows for hose clips to be used... more information coming soon.

That's it. You're set up!!

The first pass...

Lets do a tournament pass, at a “virtual” 40 km/h / 24mph on the long line (23m/75')

1) The skier informs the driver of his preferred boat speed. Alternatively, your competition rules could require the boat to go at the correct speed for that pass... to give the proper wake and dynamics. A handheld GPS or speed app. can be used to calibrate the speedos.

2) The skier gets up and away. When comfortable, he “cuts out” to either side until the rope is in contact with the flag pole.

3) He then returns across the wake, and when the tow rope passes through the wakes the judge/ time-keeper starts the stopwatch (and blows the horn once). This is the start of the pass.

4) When the ski rope touches the flag on the opposite side of the boat and returns to the centre of the boat wake, 1 full flag is scored.

5) The skier virages over the wakes to touch the flags on alternate sides, scoring 1 full flag each time the rope touches a flag and returns to the centre of the wake. If the skier's touches the rope but does not get back to the wake then 1/2 flag is scored.

6) The time keeper blows the horn after 24 seconds have passed on the stopwatch.

The pass is over when...

The set time has elapsed,

or... the skier falls or releases the rope,

or... the skier crosses the wake twice without making contact with a flag.

The judges' decision is final!!

If the skier managed 6 “flags” and then got back to the centre of the wake then that pass shall be deemed successful and the skier progresses to the next level.

If he did not manage 6 “flags” in the time and get back to the wakes, total up his score. (if the rope was not back within the wakes when the horn blew, then a ½ flag is scored.)

Scoring

Okay, so your skier started and finished a pass in the middle of the wake and touched 6 flags placed on the further aft deck markers - all within 24 seconds.

This scores a complete pass and entitles the skier to move to the next level of difficulty.

Repeat the pass, but this time allowing only 22 seconds to hit 6 flags.

This simulates the conditions of a 43 km/h / 26 mph run.

Use the chart at the back of this booklet to determine the timings for the different course speeds.

If the skier is still managing 6 flags and the “gates” in 16 seconds (equivalent to 58kph / 36mph in a proper course)... they are ready to try “shortenings”.

Simply move the flags forward to the 18.25 m (60ft) markers on the deck, shorten the rope to the red shortening and give the skier 16 seconds to make the pass.

Keep moving to the next Deck Marker and adjusting the rope length at the end of each successful pass until he falls or misses a flag.

Time based scores

The skier’s score is expressed as the number of flags hit and the time allowed for that pass - with half a flag being awarded if the skier does not make it back to the wake after hitting a flag.

A skier using an un-shortened rope to hit 4 flags and returning to the wake within 18 seconds will score 4 @ 18 seconds.

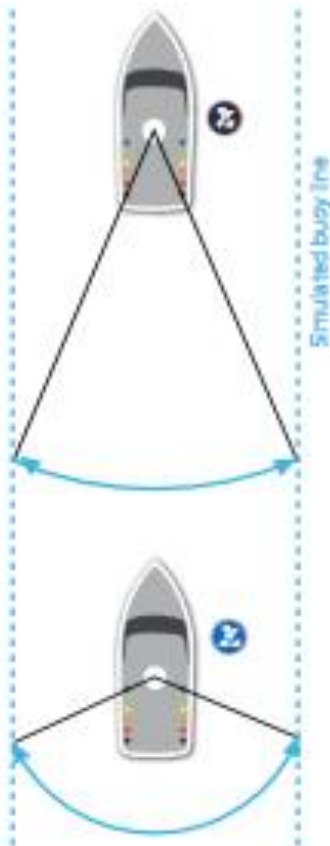
Scores based on rope shortenings

More proficient skiers might be scoring 6 flags in 16 seconds consistently, and will progress to shorter rope lengths (wider flag angles) and express their score based on the flags hit at that rope length. At the highest level, all passes must be made in 16 seconds. In tournament skiing some divisions will go into shortenings at 55 kph / 34mph boat speed - this is an 18 second pass in Flag Slalom.

A skier hitting 3 flags positioned on the 16m markers would score 3 @ 16m or, as it’s sometimes expressed, “3 @15 off” (3 flags with 15’ feet taken OFF the standard rope).

Of course, just like in real slalom, the tournament “officials” may allow the skiers to start at a higher level than the 40 kph / 24 mph long line pass.

Only the last pass in which a skier scores points is considered for the final score.



Variations

One of the beauties of Flag Slalom, is that there are loads of different ways that you can play the game.

Here are some notes;

Boat Speed does not matter!... the skier can ski at a comfortable speed for him/her, so for kids 24 km/h is OK... or combo skiers might prefer 38 km/h.

What matters is that everyone competes on the same time... heck... do a ten minute pass if you like... you must be able to get 6 flags in 10 minutes!!

For a bit of fun, and if you want to further simulate the full experience of a slalom course, the boat can travel at normal competition speed to achieve realistic dynamics of the pull and the wakes etc., but the important thing is the stopwatch... not the boat speedos!

“Hello Buoys...”

Now, I know I have been saying that the beauty of Flag Slalom is that you don't need any buoys to do it... and that's true... but you can also have fun with a very simple course of buoys and eliminate the need to use a stopwatch.

Basically set up an ENTRY GATE and an EXIT GATE consisting of 2 buoys 2.3 metres (about 7'6") apart, and 259 metres (849') from each other. This gives you the distance of a full slalom course, within which you can go through the usual tournament boat speed increments to shorten the time in which to complete 6 flags.

“Count ‘em up” ...

A simpler variation is to simply see how many flags you can score in an allotted time period... this is a great way to introduce novices to some sort of competitive skiing. (For example...“Okay....so the winner is the one with most flags in a minute...any”

And....saving the best until last.... “Time Trial” ...

And last, but not least, and perhaps my favourite version of Flag Slalom of them all.

The winner is the skier who touches 6 flags and gets back to the centre of the wake in the fastest time. As always, to make it harder you go up through the shortenings. Simple as that. This version is so easy to judge...and makes for a very quick and easy mini-competition with your friends.

So, there you go... .Flag Slalom.

Appendix 1 – Standard “Flag Slalom” Tournament Timings (these are NOT to be used in a buoyed slalom course)

A standard course is a fixed length, so a boat travelling from start to finish takes less time the faster it goes (stop me if this gets too technical!)

To simulate this increasing speed without having to rely on speedos or measured courses Flag Slalom allows the skier less time to complete each successive pass.

The actual boat speed is selected by each skier, and can vary from skier to skier within the same competition.

In a slalom course a boat travelling at 58kph (36.0 mph) takes around 16 seconds to travel the full length of the course, so at it's hardest level, Flag Slalom gives the skier just 16 seconds to make their pass.

| Time | Virtual Boat Speed |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| 37 seconds | 25 km/h pass (15 mph) |
| 33 seconds | 28 km/h pass (17 mph) |
| 30 seconds | 31 km/h pass (19 mph) |
| 27 seconds | 34 km/h pass (20 mph) |
| 25 seconds | 37 km/h pass (22 mph) |
| 24 seconds | 40 km/h pass (24 mph) |
| 22 seconds | 43 km/h pass (26 mph) |
| 20 seconds | 46 km/h pass (28 mph) |
| 19 seconds | 49 km/h pass (30 mph) |
| 18 seconds | 52 km/h pass (32 mph) |
| 17 seconds | 55 km/h pass (34 mph) |
| 16 seconds | 58 km/h pass (36 mph) |

Flag Slalom Competition Passes

| Pass no | Time allowed | Rope shortening | Deck Marker |
|---------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | 24 sec | None | Furthest aft (75ft /23m) |
| 2 | 22 sec | None | Furthest aft (75ft /23m) |
| 3 | 20 sec | None | Furthest aft (75ft /23m) |
| 4 | 18 sec | None | Furthest aft (75ft /23m) |
| 5 | 16 sec | None | Furthest aft (75ft /23m) |
| 6 | 16 sec | Red | 2nd forward (60ft / 18.25m) |
| 7 | 16 sec | Orange | 3rd forward (52ft / 16m) |
| 8 | 16 sec | Yellow | 4th forward (46ft /14.25m) |
| 9 | 16 sec | Green | 5th forward (42ft / 13m) |
| 10 | 16 sec | Blue | 6th forward (39ft / 12m) |

If you finish all 10 passes successfully - turn Pro!

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Waterskiing can be dangerous - do not ski at speeds that exceed the skier's ability. Skier's should always be aware of their surroundings. An appropriate buoyancy aid should always be worn by participants of all watersports. Always observe "THE CODE OF PRACTICE" for waterskiing published by BRITISH WATER SKI or your local Water Ski governing body.

www.flagslalom.com