

LEARN TO BODY SURF

You don't need a surfboard to catch a wave. Your own body can do the trick. Ideal bodysurfing waves are anywhere from 1 to 4 feet, breaking on a gently sloping beach that allows would-be surfers to wade in comfortably. Avoid the crashing surf that you'll find on beaches with a sharp drop-off. Here's how to get started:

1. Start in about chest-deep water, watching seaward as the waves come in. Spend a few moments getting a feel for the waves' timing, figuring out where they break. You want to be waiting just outside that point, so that as you start swimming, the wave reaches you just before it breaks.
2. When you're ready to go, push off with your feet in the direction of the wave, using a swimmer's crawl to gain momentum. In deeper water, try swim fins; they'll give you that added burst of speed required to get into position.
3. Once the wave begins to propel you forward, stop stroking and extend your arms forward, continuing to kick with your feet.

That "Yes!" moment comes when you actually surf the wave, rather than simply flounder your way through the movements. Aim downward. This changes your center of balance and allows gravity to push you down the wave face. Once you're skimming down the face, your head and shoulders will naturally rise, and you'll begin to plane on your chest like a human surfboard.

Avoid heading straight at the beach. Think like a real surfer and angle across the wave's face in the direction it breaks, extending your inside arm, palm down, so that it glides across the surface of the water.

