

Boofing

Boofing is probably the most widely known and used of all creeking technique. Ironically, it is the move that is probably least refined by creek boaters. The purpose of the boof is to stay on the surface. This allows paddlers to avoid potential rocks, wood, and other nasties that may lurk beneath the surface while allowing for immediate maneuvering after a drop, ledge, or hole. It's also a great way to maintain momentum through a rapid. The boof is often thought of as a move where the paddler takes a big stroke and leans back to lift the bow up over a drop or ledge, a huge misconception! Ideally, leaning back in creeking is almost always bad news. It's an unstable and potentially dangerous mistake when river running. It does have its place, but it should be avoided whenever possible. Good posture is very important for balance and maneuverability. Boofing while leaning back causes paddlers to land out of balance and even out of control. Leaning back can also put more stress on the back upon landing.

Aside from the obvious need for good posture, the boof can be broken down into 3 basic parts: the approach, the stroke, and the timing. Most paddlers tend to boof too early. This is a problem because this only lifts the bow up for a moment, if at all, causing the paddler to pencil, pittoning onto the rocks on the bottom or spending some quality time in a hole they were trying to avoid. It is also common for paddlers trying to boof into the main jet of current, called the grain, to start the boof from that same jet of current, or for them to try to avoid downstream obstacles too early by moving away too soon, too far upstream. Both cause paddlers to lose their own personal momentum before finishing the boof, making them subject to the push and force of the main flow, regardless of where it goes. This isn't usually what you want. There are a few different variations in boofing technique, but I'm going to focus on the two I feel are the most effective, the least taught, and the least used by creekers in general: the Cross-Grain Boof and the Off-Angle Boof, basically the same.



Step 1: It is best to catch an eddy about the same distance upstream from the drop as the width of the grain, or main flow of the current, and on the opposite side. If you can't use an eddy, it can also work to start from a ferry angle or just from beside the grain you're going to cross over. Either way, you need just enough room to build some lateral momentum to cross the grain at about 35 or 45 degrees.



Step 2: The grain will catch your bow and try to turn you downstream at an arc. This is where the move really comes in. Immediately lean forward and reach with your paddle on the opposite side from where you want to go.



Step 3: Plant your paddle right where the curtain (white falling water) meets the lip (Green water directly at the top) and grab the full force of the Grain. The most common mistake is where paddlers try to grab the lip (green water). Another mistake paddlers make is waiting to late, and planting their paddle where the water has already scattered. Both will typically cause a failed boof and a fall in the direction of the grain, not always what you want.



Step 4: Now you want to pull yourself across the grain as your hips cross the lip of the drop in a smooth, strong sweeping motion. Really focus on pulling yourself over the grain and out in the direction you want to go. When lifting your bow, lift your boat in sit up motion, pulling your knees up to your chest. It's best to keep your head forward and in the direction you want to go. Where the head leads, the body will follow.



Step 5: As you fall, focus on lifting your knees to your head. Remember to use your abs! Don't throw your weight back to lift the bow, unless you waited too late on the boof and have no other choice. It's also good to immediately spot your landing.



Step 6: Obviously your goal is to land flat, but you need to land flat to your momentum, safely, and in control. So if you're not just falling vertically, you may need to tilt your boat slightly towards the lip by shifting your weight into your upstream butt cheek. Also, land leaning forward a bit. This provides immediate stability for quick maneuvering and instant control. This also allows your abs to absorb the shock from the landing, preventing strain on your back.

With this boof technique, you've maintained the lateral momentum upon landing, by crossing the current at the last possible moment. This is perfect for avoiding obstacles immediately following a boof, where the grain of the current pushes you directly where you don't want to go. It's also perfect for lining up for the next drop, catching eddies, and entry moves. The only real difference with the Off-Angle Boof, which is basically the same, is that on the approach you slide towards the lip a bit sideways, off-angle. The boof stroke then becomes a correction stroke that launches your bow up and back into the direction you want to go. So, for example, you would start angled a bit left to boof right with a left side boof stroke. The Off-Angle Boof is basically the best option for shallow lips on drops that would be difficult to boof otherwise, when momentum isn't required to avoid an obstacle. It's also useful when you want to use Cross Grain technique, but don't have the room to actually move across it. With these two techniques, you'll be boofing everything with no problem! Just get out there and practice where it's safe, before going out and boofing where it counts!

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