

which they evolved. Because of this basic design and the waves that suit it best, Hawaiian wave-riding itself is still similar in many ways to earlier practice; in other ways it is considerably advanced. While paddling to catch a wave, for instance, or while pushing back to the breaking place, surfers now paddle only with their arms. Early Hawaiians sometimes used arms and legs. Modern boards are so much lighter and more buoyant that the surfer need not kick for forward motion. Prone paddling, moreover, was the traditional means, whereas now many surfers kneel while paddling, a habit which probably originated in California to keep drier and warmer in cold water.

During the ride itself the technique of *lala*, angling, is still the most skillful, and standing is of course the only acceptable way to ride. Although sitting, kneeling and prone riding positions were all popular formerly, such postures are now used only for novelty, amusement or by those who cannot stand. From nineteenth century reports, early surfers seemed content to paddle, catch the wave, stand up and then speed ahead in one direction. New boards and modern imagination have changed this. As it rises ready to break, every wave is a fresh challenge, and even if, through long experience, a surfer is familiar with one break, he never knows exactly what will happen until it happens. At the same time, waves that break in the same place are similar enough to give the rider something he can count on. An experienced surfer can thus play the wave as he rides it—speed up, slow down, turn, swerve, change direction, ride in the trough or shoot along its thin crest. He can turn to the left by shifting right foot behind left. He can swerve to the right by placing his foot on the board's right edge and lean in that direction. He can stall by stepping back on the board, or speed forward by walking to the nose. Like a young boy taunting a policeman, a surfer tempts the edge of rolling water until it nearly devours him, then suddenly, with quick footwork, the board shoots across the watery wall, momentarily out of danger—unless the gleeful surfer cuts deftly back to tempt again.



23 "The Hawaiian Sport of Surf Playing" at modern Waikiki Beach. Always a surfing center, this famous beach grows more crowded each year as new surfers are attracted to the sport.