

Snake River BASE Academy

Higher Education for Lower Freefall

BASE Ethics

By Tom Begic

BASE is being made difficult mainly by uninformed authorities. However it is the irresponsible jumper that has had the greatest affect on giving BASE a negative image. Remember that El Capitan was once a legal site which was ruined by irresponsible jumpers and uninformed authorities.

There will never be a time when all potential BASE sites are legal. Therefore each jumper must minimise negative opinion / reaction to the sport by behaving in a professional manner. This means following a few simple principles:

- Only do jumps you are capable of. Thinking you are capable is not sufficient. Prove yourself by mastering one skill at a time under a controlled instructional situation. Learning too much at once and teaching yourself will invariably lead to accidents and death. If you're very keen to learn BASE jumping right now, then pay for proper intensive instruction. If you don't want to pay then be prepared to spend time learning with experienced jumpers.
- Minimise your visibility to the public by jumping at appropriate times (i.e bridges when there is no traffic, buildings at night). You minimise the chance of accidents, injury, and court cases if there are no other people around. For those jumpers who like public attention, remember that there is a good chance that the person you are trying to impress will have a mobile phone and they will call the police.
- Minimise noise by jumping in small groups. Don't invite crowds along.
- if you are planning a daytime jump for the purpose of selling footage, don't bother. The market is saturated with BASE jumping footage. You will only sell footage if it is extremely high quality and you are doing something that no one has done before. Getting a site shut down for a small amount of money is selfish.
- When visiting a new area, ask [[Philosophy/ContactTheLocals | local jumpers]] about how to jump their sites discreetly and safely. If you want to deviate from their methods, give a logical reason as to why your method may be better. Be prepared to swallow your pride. They may come to jump in your area one day!!!
- Use BASE specific equipment. Standard skydiving gear will eventually fail in the BASE-jumping environment.
- Don't cause damage to persons, property, or the environment (vandalism / accidents). Repair any damage. Treat any natural, sacred, or religious site with respect. Use minimal impact bushwalking techniques and ask landowners if you can walk on their properties.
- Cooperate with authorities and accept their rulings. If you think the rulings are unjust, attempt to change them through legal means. Unless safety is in question (i.e urgent medical treatment is required) try not to associate jumping activities with any authority.

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- Help promote the sport by being professional and teaching people the right things. Pass your knowledge and experience onto others. If you don't have experience and ability then don't teach.
- If any of your jumping colleagues are injured you should stay with them. There are a variety of injuries that if treated quickly will not have any long term or lasting affects. These same injuries can lead to death if not treated immediately.

If you burn a site (i.e close it down because you didn't follow these principles) you will get a bad reputation in the BASE jumping community which will severely limit the options you have in the sport. In some countries, BASE jumpers who burn sites are literally tarred and feathered and then blackbanned by experienced jumpers. Remember that experienced jumpers can give you contacts for other experienced jumpers around the world which invariably gives you easy access to sites you would otherwise not have access to.

Legally speaking, you can't BASE jump in many countries. But the jump itself is generally not the illegal part. It is trespassing, endangering people's safety (public menace), and a plethora of other charges that lead to court appearances. There are sites worldwide that specifically prohibit jumping and the fines can range from several hundred to many thousands of dollars. Throw in the cost of court appearances, gear confiscation, and possible jail terms and you could get into serious financial strife.

Nobody should condone breaking the law. But considering the fact that people will BASE jump regardless I have provided this information to limit the negative affects on society. For those law abiding citizens out there who would like to become BASE jumpers you can legally get training and gain access to sites in places like the USA and Europe. You should still follow BASE ethics if you jump legally.

Conclusion

BASE jumping is the most exciting activity known to mankind – protect its existence and promote your safety by following the BASE ethics.

To ensure the future of BASE jumping and its objects, jumpers should strive for:

- No injuries or accidents
- No damage to persons, property, or the environment (vandalism / accidents)
- No negative interaction with authorities and the public.

Although you can't rule out injuries and accidents you can minimise them through proper training and common sense. The last two points are simple.

Tom Begic served as Safety Officer of the Australian BASE Association for 6 years. He has been an active BASE jumper for 11 years, logging approximately 700 BASE jumps, including multiple world record big way BASE jumps. Tom held the record for most BASE jumps in a single day from 1999 until 2002. He produced the pioneering BASE video Beyond Extreme, which won the first ever international BASE film festival. As one of the earliest BASE wingsuit pilots, he flew a wingsuit of his own design from terminal cliffs as early as 1999. He is also a top level CRW competitor, having represented Australia on several occasions at CRW World Championships, and winning several Australian CRW championships.

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