

Starting to fly

Although the standard which you will be expected to reach will be the same in every school, the actual training programme and methods may vary. This is because they are determined by the craft (hang glider or paraglider), the type of launch method (hill or tow), the site, and the weather on the day.



Ground handling

Once you have mastered controlling the glider on the ground ('ground handling') - which is not as easy as it looks! - you will be taught to take off and land correctly. Your first flights will be in a straight line only a few feet above the ground. (If you are learning on a hang glider these flights will often be 'tethered', with the Instructor able to control the glider through his tether rope.)



Tethered hang gliding PHOTO BILL MORRIS

When you show that you can safely and confidently get yourself into the air and down again, the Instructor will start to progress you to take-off points higher up the hill. With this extra height you will be able to learn how to turn.

A few days of practice should see you well on the way to completing the tasks for your Elementary Pilot award. You'll also be introduced to a limited amount of flying theory, usually fitted in around your practical flying instruction, and you'll complete a very simple exam paper on the topics covered. Achieving the Elementary Pilot award is the first step on the ladder of the BHPA Pilot Rating Scheme outlined below.

The Pilot Rating Scheme (PRS)

The BHPA Pilot Rating Scheme has been devised to encourage pilots to progress their personal flying skills and to provide a quick and simple means of indicating their proficiency level to others. There is one 'progress award' for you to complete, and then three 'ratings' proper.

- Elementary Pilot award (EP) Awarded by your school during your training to mark the successful completion of the introductory stage, and to indicate your suitability to undertake the further school training required to gain your first rating.
- Club Pilot (Novice) Marks the end of your formal instruction and qualifies you to leave the school environment and fly within BHPA member clubs. Still a relative novice, as you continue to perfect

your skills you should seek advice and guidance from Coaches while you work towards your Pilot rating.

- Pilot (P) Now you can consider yourself a fully-qualified pilot in the true sense of the word. You will possess well-rounded skills and abilities, along with enough experience to know how and when to exercise them! You should hold this rating before embarking on cross-country flights.
- Advanced Pilot (AP) A rating for the above average pilot who is a total master of his or her craft and enjoying to the full the challenges the sport can offer.

Your instructor will sign off your EP and CP tasks as your training progresses and will explain how Club Coaches will carry on this function once you have gained Club Pilot (Novice) and left the school.

Changing disciplines and craft. Because of the wide diversity of aircraft types and launch methods used within the BHPA - from tow-launched round canopies to hill-launched, rigid-wing hang gliders - your ratings will be specific to the craft category and launch method [E.g. 'Pilot' rated, Paraglider [Hill]].

Changing launch method. If you wish to add an alternative form of launch to your rating this is done by completing a short Endorsement course. A 'Hill' endorsement for tow-trained pilots will typically involve a weekend or so with an Instructor in a school environment; a 'Tow' endorsement for hill trained pilots can be undertaken at a tow school or within a tow club (a pilot will need to have five hours and 75 flights logged to gain a Tow Endorsement with a club).

Changing glider type. If you wish to qualify with a different craft type (e.g. swap from paragliders to hang gliders) then you will need to start from the beginning again, although your Instructor will obviously take your experience into account during your training.

The BHPA coaching scheme

If you decide to take up hang gliding or paragliding seriously, you'll find the BHPA Coaching Scheme essential to your ongoing progress in the Club environment. Every club, large or small, has a number of voluntary Club Coaches who have attended a two-day BHPA training course. They take over from where the school Instructor finishes, and are our post-ab-initio specialists. Their job is to provide encouragement, education and guidance for qualified Club Pilots (Novice), especially those fresh from a school.



Friendly free advice from those who know

PHOTO: ALAN RUSSELL/ZEDPHOTO.COM

Good clubs provide new members with a list of coaches and how to contact them. A newcomer may also find that s/he has been assigned to a specific coach, perhaps living in the same locality; other clubs will have less formal arrangements. Either way, a new pilot's first move upon joining a club should be to make contact with the Coaching Officer and make certain that a Coach will be available to

assist them, particularly on their first flights outside the school environment.

The Coaching Scheme is a voluntary initiative. It's an effective part of the Club environment and also helps a new pilot make friends and acquaintances within the club. In time you may even become a successful Coach yourself and be able to help other new pilots, but you'll be able to learn more about that later.

Joining a club

It is important that all newcomers to the sport join a club as soon as possible, even before gaining the Club Pilot (Novice) award. You can get to know your fellow pilots, get advice on the right gear to buy and the right places to fly.

Every year over 7,000 UK hang glider and paraglider pilots fly scores of hours without incident or injury. They achieve this because of the club-based structure of our sport. Instructors, Coaches and friendly pilots help novices through those first few hours of soaring when lack of experience and ignorance could expose them to danger.

Pilots fresh from school attach a red streamer to their gliders for their first ten hours or so to signal their novice status. More experienced club pilots will give them more room in the air, keep an eye on their progress and offer advice and help when appropriate.

Clubs in the UK mostly operate to protect the use of hill and airfield sites for their members. Your local club plays an important role in looking after the interests of both fliers and site owners. Clubs negotiate the use of sites and liaise with local authorities, councils and other air users. Most produce a regular newsletter and hold social and informative meetings, and many organise flying trips to overseas sites. A club can also advise you on how best to continue your training beyond the Elementary level detailed in this magazine - you may be unsure which type of flying you'd like to pursue or need more information on what it's all about. (We recommend that you seek such advice before making a commitment to further training).

When you have learned how to fly your hang glider or paraglider, please don't go off and try to fly it wherever you choose. If you do, you'll find that the local club which controls the site (almost every single hill and airfield site in the country is controlled by a club) will not be impressed. Every now and then a pilot who perhaps feels that clubs are not their style will try to go it alone - after all, our sport appeals to free-thinking individuals. Unfortunately for us all, these pilots who try to go it alone most often end up hurt, because they lack the backup and the common-sense approach which a club brings.

A club offers a welcome to the wider world of hang gliding and paragliding. It will normally offer a social side, from a drink after a day's flying to structured meetings with guest speakers. It will also offer a Coaching Scheme to support you when you have left your training school, and will introduce you to a range of pilots who can help you pursue your flying goals, be they fun trips abroad or starting to fly in competitions.

Your school should be able to inform you about local clubs in your area. A list of BHPA clubs can be viewed on the BHPA website at www.bhpa.co.uk; contact numbers of most clubs are also carried each month in Skywings.

BHPA membership fees

The Association aims, through careful management of resources, to keep membership fees as low as possible while providing the best possible service. Current (2006) subscription levels are as follows:

3-month Training Member	£40
Annual Member*	£77
Upgrade to Annual	£56
Family Member	£68
Concessionary	£57
Under 16s	£39
Non-flying Member	£40
Skywings subscription	£32
Joining fee (all categories)	£15

* Members attaining BHPA Pilot rating receive a £6 discount

Concessionary Membership is available to individuals under 18, over 60 or in full-time education.

Your training membership

Training Membership is valid for three months from the date of issue, extended to the end of the month of expiry. Those who wish to extend their Training Membership to the full twelve months and become Annual Members can do so at a cost of £56.

As a Training Member you will receive, by post, the next three issues of Skywings magazine. Your magazines should normally begin to arrive within 28 days of taking out membership. Contact the BHPA Office on 0116 261 1322, e-mail: office@bhpa.co.uk in case of non-delivery.



If you decide to continue with further training beyond the Elementary Pilot stage, you'll be invited to upgrade your membership to full Annual Member status when your Training Membership has run its course. You need to hold Full Annual membership to be issued with a Club Pilot (Novice) rating.

The BHPA insurance scheme

We hope that new members of our sport will become regular, proficient fliers and have years of accident-free flying. However, on occasions things can go wrong, and you may find yourself sitting on the roof of a house or dangling from a set of power lines. It is for these rare occasions that we provide within your membership third-party public liability insurance. The list below sets out some key points. If you have any questions, please see the Policy Summary which you will receive upon joining, or contact the Association's Insurance Officer, via our office in Leicester.

1. Cover is provided only when you comply with the BHPA's rules and procedures.
2. Cover is only effective whilst your membership is valid. No membership = no cover.
3. In the event of an accident, whilst you can reassure any third party that you are a member of the BHPA and that cover exists, you must never admit liability or make or offer any payment. Should you do so, you may become personally liable.
4. Any incident or accident considered likely to give rise to a claim, or any actual claim made

against you must be reported to the BHPA within 48 hours.

5. The policy does not cover any losses caused by deliberate or reckless acts on your part.

The purpose of this insurance is to meet the costs and any damages associated with claims made against you by an injured person or the owner of damaged property. However, please note that you will have to pay an excess of the first £250 in the event of any property claim against you. The cover is effected through a block policy held by the BHPA, and membership adds your name to it.

It should be stressed that the BHPA's membership insurance does not cover you for your own personal injury or medical evacuation - and we encourage any pilots wishing to fly abroad to take out their own Personal Accident cover independently. For example Airsports Insurance Bureau (see their advert in this issue) can offer competitive rates on insurance for flying abroad, and also policies for other flying needs such as equipment cover and holiday insurance.

The above information about BHPA insurance is intended as a guide only and is not a statement of the policy terms. For further details please see the Policy Summary or contact the Insurance Officer as above.



Skywings - your magazine

In addition to this Spring Training Issue you will shortly receive your first regular copy of Skywings, the BHPA's monthly magazine. Skywings is the Association's main route of communication to its pilots. More importantly, it is the forum for pilots talking to other pilots. The magazine is put together entirely from voluntary contributions from BHPA members. Amongst the ranks of Britain's free fliers are some very talented contributors of technical articles, photography, flying reports and much, much more. As a result the magazine's quality of content and presentation are ten times better than a relatively small sports association has any right to expect.

Skywings is always on the lookout for your contributions. If you feel you would like to send in an article, the following points should be borne in mind:

- Few articles are published without photographs. Digital camera images are usually good enough for publication - check with us first. We can also accept slides and prints.

- We can always use good quality photographs even if unaccompanied by an article. High quality shots of hang gliding are particularly sought.
- The length of an article is normally between 1,000 - 2,500 words. Articles are often edited to length, but not by just hacking large bits off.
- When you become more knowledgeable, or if you have expertise that you are bringing to the sport, technical articles are always welcome. If you think you may be able to help here, ring up and discuss what you have in mind.
- Much of our input arrives by e-mail or on disk - we can accept most formats. If you don't have access to a computer, just write clearly and legibly on old-fashioned paper.
- Not everything that is received is included in the magazine. Often good articles are held over, if they aren't urgent, to make room for up-to-date reports - particularly in the summer months. Incoming material (except letters) is always acknowledged, so you'll know what we are doing with your masterpiece.

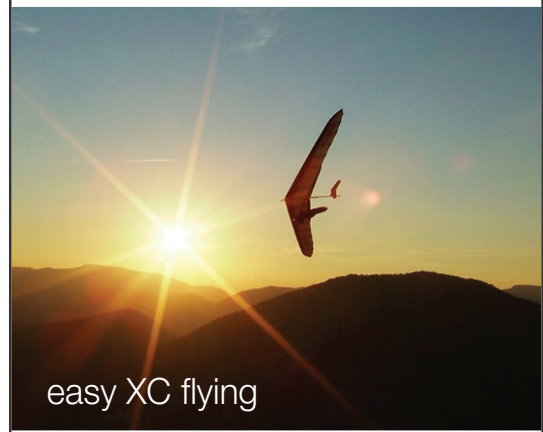
[[what's your idea of heaven?]]

- The production process runs a long way ahead of publication. When you are reading the latest magazine I'll probably be working on the ones two and three months ahead. Just remember that the deadline is usually around five weeks before publication.
- Letters for publication for the Airmail page are held to the last possible moment, usually about the 15th of the preceding month, to enable responses to the previous month's magazine to arrive. It's best to keep letters as short and succinct as possible.

Articles, competition reports, stories, travel writing, new ideas, problems, cross-country reports, etc, are all welcome, as is just about anything else. Also we are happy to run details in the news pages of anything which is going on which you may like brought to a wider audience. So think about contributing, and remember... it's your magazine.

And if you want to continue to receive Skywings but don't want to continue with more advanced training just yet, a 12-month subscription costs £32 (contact the BHPA Office). The magazine is not available on the news-stands or in shops.

JOE SCHOFIELD, EDITOR, SKYWINGS MAGAZINE



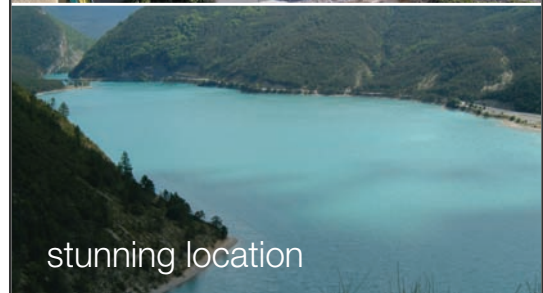
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Hang gliding and paragliding are available to many people with disabilities through the BHPA's 'Flyability' initiative PHOTO: GEORGE RANSOME

Flyability

Many people think that flying hang gliders and paragliders is impossible for people with disabilities. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Flyability is the BHPA's disability initiative. It promotes hang gliding and paragliding opportunities - including dual flights and training scholarships - for people with disabilities, and strives to bring disability awareness and education to the whole of the BHPA membership. It also has the contacts, expertise and enthusiasm to solve any problems that may be presented when training disabled pilots alongside able-bodied ones.

Steve Varden, Flyability's original co-ordinator, learned to fly hang gliders despite difficulties caused by his own disability (athetosis cerebra palsy). Within the BHPA there are a number pilots with more or less severe disabilities. Through their own determination - and the support and enthusiasm of school proprietors, instructors, fellow students and friends - they have addressed their individual, specific problems in adapting to flying and have become respected and valued members of the free flying community. Since the advent of Flyability, many, many people have become aware of the problems those with disabilities face when participating in flying.

Sometimes the problems faced are immense, at other times less so. In each case the difficulties involved in helping people with disabilities to overcome the freedom of the air have been overcome - by ingenuity, trial and error, patience and effort. Determination to succeed, and the goal of sharing the dream of flight, will always win out. To a BHPA instructor, the best indications of a student's potential as a pilot are motivation, attitude and dedication. They probably won't even

mention physical ability or agility at all. The message from the free-flying community to anyone with disabilities is: 'You can fly!'

Alongside the work of actually training people with disabilities to fly, Flyability runs Disability Awareness weekends and provides disability awareness input to BHPA courses. It has also assisted clubs and schools in getting funding from local businesses and charities to buy suitable equipment such as tandem gliders. Flyability also promotes and funds tandem flying for people with disabilities who may be unable to fly alone. Tandem Air Experience flights and solo Student Pilot Scholarships (over 55 have been awarded in the last few years - see below) are the main use of its charitable funds. If you (or someone you know) could benefit from Flyability's work, talk to your school's Flyability contact, write to co-Flyability via the BHPA Office (address on page 68 or e-mail contact@flyability.org.uk), or visit Flyability's website at www.flyability.org.uk. Impossible is not a word that Flyability folk understand. If you really want to... you can fly!

Flyability pilot scholarship scheme Flyability recognises that people with disabilities often have lower incomes and higher living costs compared to the rest of society. With this in mind, Flyability can contribute up to £350 towards a would-be pilot's training costs. Where possible, a student with disabilities will train at a BHPA registered school alongside able-bodied student pilots. To apply for a Pilot Scholarship, contact the BHPA school of your choice and complete the first part of the application form (available at www.flyability.org.uk). With this completed, contact Flyability and tell them why you simply must fly! Entries (in addition to the form) can be on paper, audio, videotape, etc. Flyability Scholarships are open to UK residents only.