

general info for the aspiring pilot



your instructor

Tasked with treating you on a personal level and fitting the training to suit you, your Instructor is the key to your development as a pilot. You will not be allowed to go too fast for safety not too slow so that you become bored. If you are not happy with your rate of progress you must tell the Instructor.

If you have previous aviation experience make sure you let your Instructor know, but accept that all aviation sports differ and you must follow his or her advice. Any contradiction must be discussed at once to avoid confusion.

Finally, remember that you are not in competition with your fellow students - no two people will progress at the same rate and you must not make the mistake of over-reaching yourself.

logging your flights

A log book is a handy sized notebook set out to enable you to record details of dates, flights, gliders, duration, conditions, etc. Its value to the pilot is that it enables him or her to measure their progress from faltering first flights through soaring and other milestones to cross-country achievements, and actually know how much flying they have done in a particular period. You'll normally receive a BHPA log book when you begin to train to Club Pilot (Novice) level. Later you'll need log book evidence to qualify for certain ratings and endorsements.

your health and fitness to fly

It is not true that hang gliders and paragliders can only be flown by strong young men. Nevertheless you need to be fit and active with your muscles in good trim, and have good co-ordination and an alert, reasoning mind. It's one of the few activity sports that doesn't disadvantage women - being more to do with brain than brawn!

Initially, you have to be prepared to expend energy. Often your first few days out on the hill will bring to your attention numerous muscles that you never knew existed; and all of them will ache. Walking up a steep, rough hillside carrying a hang glider or even a much lighter paraglider is not the least like strolling along a city pavement.

It would not be fair on the school if you fainted or dropped dead during your first lesson - and it would not be much fun for you either. So although no medical examinations are required you should be in good health. This means that you can answer NO to the following questions:

- Have you suffered from epilepsy, fits, a severe head or back injury, recurrent fainting, giddiness, fits or blackouts, high blood pressure, a heart condition, diabetes or psychiatric disorders? Are you currently taking any medication?

If you are unable to answer no, you should go to your doctor for advice - and take it. You should also remember that any of the following may make you temporarily unfit or cause difficulty whilst flying:

- Severe asthma, chronic bronchitis, sinus or ear trouble, regular severe migraine, rheumatic fever, kidney stones, severe motion sickness, a donation of blood, drink or drugs.

Even if you are as fit as the proverbial flea, you may well get tired, and in typical British weather, thoroughly cold. If you fly when tired or cold your brain will work much more slowly and your muscles will respond in a lethargic way, however willing your spirit may be. On the hill, cold may not be too much of a problem with all the walking that you will be doing but, in due course, when you start soaring, it will be hazardous if all your decisions and actions keep turning up several seconds too late. If you are getting chilled or tired, land as soon as possible; better still - don't take off.

common sense and good practice

All paragliding and hang gliding takes place in the countryside, whether in the uplands of a National Park or the flat expanses of a friendly farmer's field. It is in the interests of all concerned, not least those in the free flying movement, to enjoy the sport with the least friction with others or damage to the environment. The following guidelines are designed to minimise our disturbance of the rural landscape; follow them and you can be sure of being respected by other pilots and the public.

Animals

Avoid all livestock. If they tend to migrate to one area, try to avoid disturbing them there.

Do not fly from a site where livestock are about to bear their young (e.g. lambing, calving and foaling). This is usually the late February to May period and varies with the breed and locality. Check with the farmer if any livestock is likely to be startled.

Dogs should never be taken onto any site unless the landowner's permission has been obtained. They must be kept under control at all times.

Conduct

Drive considerately - you are easily identified with a glider on the roof or flying stickers on the car.

Park your car with due consideration for others, especially when loading or unloading. Find a proper parking space (not the grass verge). The admission of vehicles to flying sites is discouraged.

Use only recognised gates and paths. Do not climb over walls, fences or through hedges. Always leave gates as you find them.

Don't leave litter, throw away lighted matches or cigarettes or pollute streams.

Finally, keep your eyes and ears open for any change - in the weather, in your flight or in yourself.

hang gliding, paragliding and the law

All flying is controlled by the Air Navigation Order (1989). The Aerial Collision Avoidance Regulations (page 40) are part of the Rules of the Air laid down

by the Order, and although it is aimed mainly at powered craft we are required to comply so you must know some of the basic regulations. You must not fly over a town below a certain height; nor over a large crowd; nor at night without lights; nor in certain airspace areas; nor tow to a height exceeding 60 metres without permission - etc. etc. Your Instructor will brief you thoroughly on those which apply directly to hang glider and paraglider pilots. The dispensation under which pilots can fly with power is more strict; again your Instructor will brief you on the law's requirements.

the red streamer system

A red streamer will be issued to you when you attain your Club Pilot (Novice) rating. Over the years the red streamer system has proved to be a very simple and effective way to help novice and low-airtime pilots. Attaching a red streamer to your hang glider kingpost or paraglider harness tells other pilots that you are new to the sport and require special consideration in two ways.



In the air you will not want to be crowded or flown too closely to. The red streamer is easily seen and tells other pilots to keep their distance and give you due courtesy. On the ground the red streamer alerts Coaches and experienced pilots to keep a special eye on you and offer help and advice when appropriate. Often more experienced pilots will observe a subtle change in the weather or some aspect of your equipment that may require adjustment and be able to advise you before it gives rise to a problem.

We hope all readers of this handbook will progress to become red-streamer pilots - and in due course to become accomplished pilots themselves and help others who are just starting out on this most challenging and rewarding of sports.

final advice

Enjoy this exhilarating experience and get as much as you can from it, but please, please, please don't ever think it is a do-it-yourself sport. It looks easy in the hands of the expert - but then so does disarming a bomb. If you aren't sure about a technique ask an Instructor - he is the only one who can actually train you how to do it.

Don't be tempted to fly outside your level of competence - and remember that learning also means asking, asking and asking again. Most pilots are only too keen to help, but you have to approach them.