

# Gliding Airfield FAQs



## **Friendly Gliding Club**

Big Airfield

Nearest Town

County

Postcode

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In association with Women Glide UK

## Introduction

Well done for choosing to go gliding, it's a fantastic sport! Here's some essential information that will help you get the most out of your day:

### *Things you really need to know*

- You get to fly the glider and take lots of pictures!
- No medical is needed but don't fly with a blocked nose/sinuses.
- Airfields are exposed – bring sunglasses, sun cream, warm clothing and waterproof shoes!
- Food and drink – bring drinking water; food may or may not be available, check with the club or bring your own.
- Gliding clubs can't always take card payments – bring cash or cheque.
- Airfields can be dangerous! In particular, gliders approach silently from any direction – it's important that you read, listen to and follow instructions.
- It's probably the best sport in the world – have a great day!

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Here's all the details that are useful to know...

## Health Requirements

There are no specific medical requirements for training in gliders. It is your responsibility to tell the club if you have any medical condition that you think would affect your ability to fly. As a general rule, if you are fit to drive you can fly a glider.

It is recommended that you **DO NOT fly if you have a cold or blocked nose**; the changes in air pressure as you fly can be very painful.



## What do I need to bring?

**Clothing** – Bring suitable clothing. Airfields can experience the extremes of all weathers, with little shelter. It's recommended that you wear something you don't mind getting wet or dirty. Kilts, skirts and dresses are not compatible with parachutes (or climbing in and out of gliders), so if you must wear these, bring trousers or shorts to change into. Sturdy shoes (e.g. hiking boots) are highly recommended – the grass may be wet or muddy.

**Winter:** Waterproof boots or sturdy trainers (to keep your feet dry and warm), warm trousers, jumper or fleece and a windproof jacket are essential. Bring more clothes than you think you'll need. Gloves and a warm hat are also highly recommended, as are thermal underwear.

**Summer:** Sun hats with a narrow brim, sunglasses and light clothing with long sleeves/trousers are the recommended attire. Sunscreen is essential on sunny days. If you have one, bring a water bottle or reservoir and drink regularly, particularly before and after flying.

**Food** – You will usually find hot and cold drinks, snacks and sandwiches (hot bacon, sausage and egg rolls are usually available during winter) for sale at the launch point or clubhouse. You are also welcome to bring your own packed lunch.

## What do I need to bring ? (Continued)

**Money** – Cash (or a chequebook) is essential as Gliding clubs are not always able to take payment by card. Please bring change if you intend to purchase food.

**Log Book** - If you have one, don't forget your logbook to record your flights on the day.

**Camera** – If you ask your instructor, they will let you take pictures from the air during your flight!

**Spare clothing** – Always useful to have an extra jumper, no matter the time of year!

## What should I expect once I get to the airfield?

When you arrive at the airfield it will most likely already be set up and running. Most airfields have an office open at the weekends; you should make yourself known and ask for directions as to where to park and how to get to the launch point. You will probably be asked to fill out any paperwork at this point.



## **Who does what at the airfield?**

There will usually be two people running the airfield; the Duty Instructor and the Duty Pilot. The Duty Instructor oversees the running of the airfield and keeps an eye on pilots under instruction. The Duty Pilot organises the airfield – who flies when and in which gliders, who drives the winch and the retrieve vehicles. Both the DI and DP are volunteers like everyone else and will appreciate offers of help.

## **What will happen during my flight?**

Before you fly you will ideally have been introduced to your instructor and briefed on what is to happen. When it is your turn to fly, you and your instructor both put on a parachute (you will be shown how to do so correctly before you fly) then you will climb into the cockpit and get strapped in.

The instructor will go through pre-flight checks with you before the take-off, and explain what is going to happen during the flight. Once the instructor is satisfied that everything is ready, they check with the Launch Controller that it is safe to launch and a cable is attached to the glider. Another person will then attach a winch cable or aerotow rope to the glider. The Launch Controller will then signal to the winch driver or tug pilot to start the launch.

## The Flight

After the launch, the instructor will fly the glider to where they think there will be some lift - to ensure the flight will last as long as possible, although in high summer flights may be time-restricted to allow other pilots to fly. Your instructor will demonstrate the effects of the controls and instruments. They will encourage you to have a go and fly the glider.

Students usually take a small number of winch launches in one session (or one long soaring flight). If there is time at the end of the day and everyone has flown, there may also be the opportunity to fly again.

Once back on the ground, your instructor will hold a short de-briefing session where they will go through the flight with you and answer any questions. You will be given the opportunity to fill in a progress card and logbook as a record you can refer back to on future dates.



## What should I do when I am not flying?

Gliding is very much a team activity, even though only a few people may fly at any one time. The airfield is run by volunteers, so the more people help out, the more people can go flying. People who help out (as opposed to sitting in a quiet corner all day) also say they have more fun!

Ask the Duty pilot if they can find something for you to help with – be it cable retrieve, launching or logging. Hands are always needed to move gliders around, too!

## Safety information

If in doubt – ASK. You'll look less silly asking a simple question than you will if you break something (or someone).

This section may be a bit dry but it is important that you read and understand it. If someone shouts at you to do something, it's generally for good reason – they are usually happy to explain why once the danger has passed.

## **Crossing the airfield**

First and foremost, flying gliders are almost completely silent. When walking or driving on the airfield, unless told otherwise, stay to the edge.

If you need to cross the airfield (e.g. to get to the launch point or a stationary glider) always look for aircraft coming into land or taking off. Once you begin to cross the airfield, KEEP LOOKING. If you see an aircraft come into land, stay where you are. The pilot will have seen you and will expect you to do this, so can avoid you.

## **Launch cables (Swap for aerotow ops?)**

The cables that tow gliders into the air are attached to very large engines and should be handled with great caution. Cables are reeled in at up to 80 mph (128kph) and if you get caught by one whilst moving it can kill you. Always keep clear of ALL cables. If the launching cable is wrapped around another cable, both can accelerate away.

An audible “beep” can be heard coming from the launch point when the cables are live. The lights on the front of the launch point will also flash.

Before first handling them yourself, ask somebody to show you what to do with cables and how to hook onto gliders.

## Parachutes

Parachutes are one of the more obvious, if least-used, safety items. They therefore need careful handling in order to ensure they are fully functioning in the unlikely event they are needed. (A running joke is that parachutes are only there for comfort, as they fit nicely into the parachute-shaped groove in the cockpit seat!)

Never lay a parachute on the ground. Any dew or groundwater will immediately soak into the fabric, which will result in damp and mildew damaging the delicate parachute.

Always pick up a parachute by the right-hand strap, so you don't accidentally pull the "D" ring and activate it.

To put on a parachute, pull both shoulder straps on (as though it is a rucksack), then attach the leg straps and finally finish by doing up the chest-strap. To take a parachute off, just reverse the procedure. (It is recommended that you always do the chest strap up last, and undo it first, in case you accidentally pull the "D" cord in high wind).

## **Glider Safety**

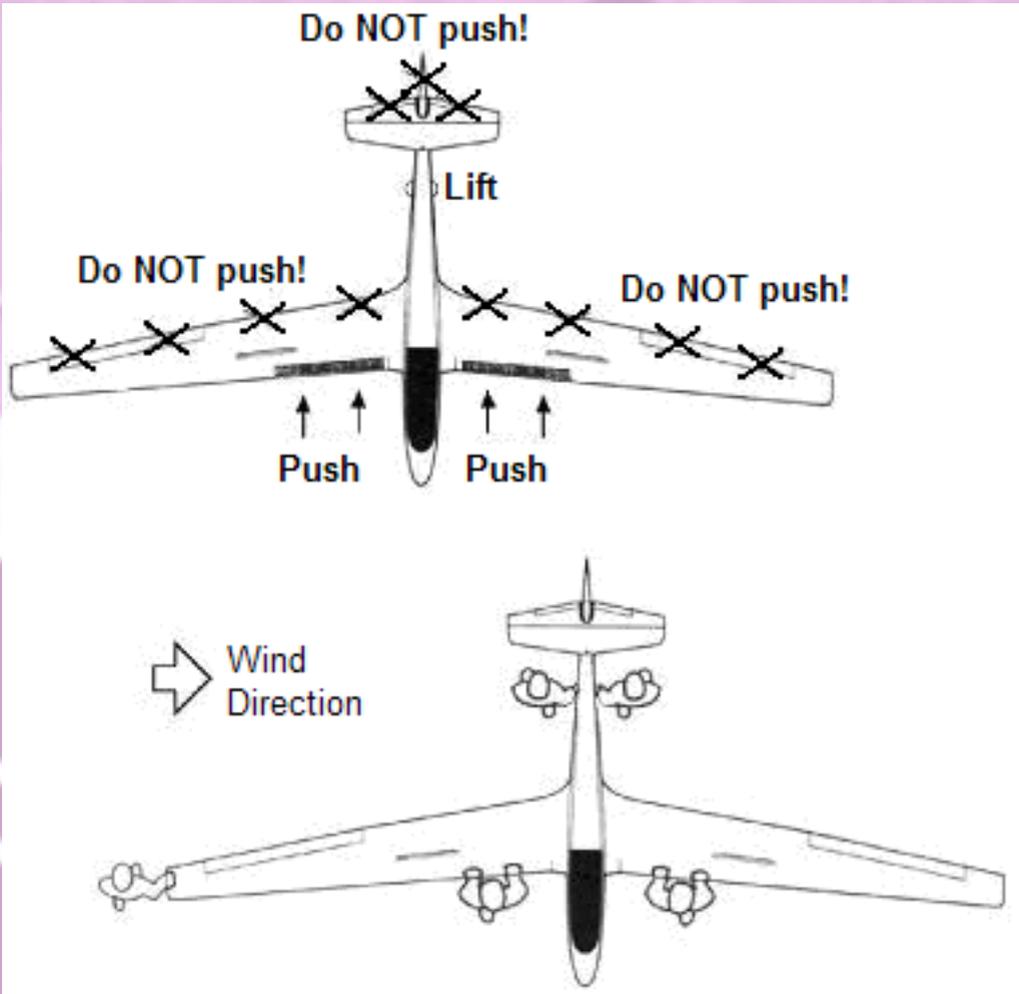
Gliders are extremely strong but they can be easily damaged if handled incorrectly. This important section explains how to handle gliders in order to prevent unnecessary damage.

Gliders need to be moved when taking them to and from the hangar and when pushing them back to the launch point.

Gliders are very strong in the places they need to be, so that they can support their own weight during flight. However, to minimise that weight they are more fragile elsewhere. The canopy and the trailing (back) edges of the wing and tail plane in particular are very fragile. Never put any force on these areas. The canopy is very expensive and should be locked closed or supported at all times.

## **Moving Gliders**

Gliders are normally moved backwards, by hand - pushing on the front (leading) edge of the wings, close to the fuselage, which is the strongest point. Some gliders may also have a handle just in front of the tail.



One person holds the upwind wing tip - this person is in charge of the glider and its movements. If the wind gets underneath a wing, it can flip the glider over; it is easier to prevent a wing from lifting up than it is to stop it from coming down. If for any reason you need to change wings, it must be clearly understood who is supporting the wing. Shout "Your Wing!" to the person taking the other tip. They will reply "My Wing!" as they take it.

## Towing a Glider

Over long distances, a glider may be towed **forwards** behind a car. One person will be holding the wingtip whilst another walks by the nose ready to prevent the glider rolling too far forwards.

## Tow-out kit

Occasionally gliders will have a complete "Tow-out kit". This means that a glider can be towed **backwards** by a car, without assistance. A "wing dolly", a sleeve attached to a large wheel, keeps the wings off the ground whilst the glider is towed using a tail wheel/tow bar arrangement.

## Parking gliders

If a glider is to be left on the airfield unattended, it should be parked so that any wind is coming across the wings and slightly from behind. For wooden gliders the into-wind wing should be weighed down by one or two tyres to prevent it from being caught by the wind, lifting up and flipping the glider over. Fibreglass gliders should be left with the into-wind wing up.