

Introductory Flights and Trial Lessons

An "introductory flight" is a paid-for gliding experience flight. A "trial lesson" is a paid-for first or early instructional flight. The following guidance reflects the need to minimise risk during introductory flights and trial lessons, as well as during other passenger flying. The list of Laws and Rules BGA documents includes "Introductory and passenger flying" requirements which should read by all pilots and instructors involved.

The pilot in command must satisfy him or herself that the aircraft, the weather, the launching conditions and the pilot's personal preparation and experience are suitable for the flight. A safe flight follows meticulous and risk averse preparation.

Are the circumstances suitable for a safe flight?

The safety of the passenger or student is paramount and if there is any factor that needs consideration with regard to the safety of the flight, there is no decision necessary - the flight should not take place.

Pilots/instructors carrying out introductory flights/trial lessons must;

- be current
- be familiar with the aircraft
- be current on the launch method to be used
- ensure the weather is suitable (see meteorological limits within these notes)
- be able to easily cope with the weather conditions
- check any pilot requirements and experience are valid

Some other challenges for consideration;

- Low Sun?
- Misting canopy?
- Are there adequate options available should a launch failure occur and are you current in handling launch failures in these conditions? No wind and a short runway can be very challenging
- Is there time available for the flight?

Conditions are not always suitable for introductory flights/trial lessons even if general club activity is continuing.

Whilst there are always those who will enjoy being thrown about whilst flying, the majority will not appreciate it. Situations best avoided are strong convection or turbulence, poor visibility, and any condition near the limits for flying. As you acclimatise to the flying conditions, it is all too easy to overlook a gradually deteriorating situation. If the first flights are to be a pleasant experience, they must be conducted in appropriate weather conditions. An introductory flight/trial lesson should be carried out maintaining the lowest risk possible. So;

DO NOT LAUNCH IF:

- Launching into cloud
- Launching in rain, or if the flight is likely to be in flown in rain.
- Launching with rain/snow/ice on the glider.
- Launching with misted canopy.

SEEK ADVICE FROM THE INSTRUCTOR IN-CHARGE BEFORE LAUNCHING IF:

- The wind is turbulent.(varying by more than 10 kts).
- The wind is strong (>20 kts)
- Cloud base is less than 1200 ft
- Flight visibility is less than 5km
- Launching above more than 4/8th cloud

All flights must normally be completed by time of official night.

Is the pilot or instructor prepared?

It is most important that the pilot or instructor prepares him/herself and the glider for the flight. The dangers of poor pre-flight preparation are well-known.

- Aircraft serviceability including a properly completed Daily Inspection
- Pilot and passenger weights – C of G position and max all up weight
- Seating position – control clearance
- Loose articles – cameras, mobile phones etc.
- Pre-flight checks
- Eventualities
- Cable position
- Conflicting air traffic
- Weather
- A plan for the flight

Is the passenger or student prepared?

The pilot in command must ensure that the person requesting the flight is briefed. The briefing should include;

- A description of the flight and the main risks
- Actions to be taken in the event of an emergency, including emergency egress and use of emergency equipment eg the parachute
- Precautions to be taken in the cockpit environment, including potential loose articles
- The plan for the flight including any limiting factors, eg unlikely soaring potential.

Is there a plan that minimises risk?

Good flight planning is essentially evaluating the situation, identifying significant risk, and taking action to reduce that risk. If the risk still exists, then an introductory flight/trial lesson is ill advised and should not be attempted. Remember the old pilot's adage; "a superior pilot uses his superior judgment to avoid those situations requiring his superior skill".

There are some established good practices, all of which are relevant to planning, that help to minimise risk during introductory flights/trial lessons;

- If interrupted whilst doing pre-flight checks, stop and start again. Don't rush.
- Care should be taken so that the glider remains within gliding range of the airfield and can comfortably terminate the flight with a circuit.
- Being too adventurous increases workload and in consequence increases risk. Pilots and instructors must stay aware of their responsibilities to their passenger or student and fly

well within the normal limits used when flying solo. If a pilots normal solo flying is "adventurous", it absolutely must not be during an introductory flight/trial lesson.

- During the flight be prepared to modify the plan if conditions dictate.

Aviate, Navigate, Communicate

Simultaneous flying and talking involves a higher than normal work load. There are additional pressures simply due to the presence of another person. Passengers/students are a distraction. This pressure could result in a pilot failing to cope with a situation that would otherwise be managed easily when flying solo.

If the flying gets difficult, **KEEP QUIET AND CONCENTRATE!** Remember to aviate, navigate and communicate, in that order.

Extract from the BGA publication "Managing Flying Risk Guidance"

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