

Midland Gliding Club – Daily Operations



Aim: To gain an understanding of daily routines associated with gliding club operations.

The Club generally operates on a completely voluntary basis at weekends and public holidays and with professional support midweek. There are a minimum number of people required to get the operation going and once you have the necessary people, operations can get underway.

Pre Planning

When are you free to go flying and how long can you be at the field? You need to allow a couple of hours for any training / flying session, and the same amount of time again to assist field operations. Avoid rushing so you are in the best frame of mind for your flying. Preparation will always be a key factor in achieving the aims you set for yourself.

Midweek it is advisable to check the instructor will be available, and book in. The instructor will be relying on your attendance, without it he may not have enough people to operate. If you turn up “on-spec” he will try to accommodate you, but it may not always be possible. If the weather is unsettled, the instructor will take the opportunity during the rain showers to complete your ground school.

At weekends and public holidays, the club has a roster of volunteers to coordinate the people necessary to go flying. Check the roster and ensure you introduce yourself to the duty instructor. He will be able to offer advice on the suitability of the conditions for your level of experience / training, and ensure you meet others who can help with your ground handling training.

Suitable weather

On the day, the first thing to check is that it is a suitable day for flying. Our weather conditions can vary greatly during a day so what may start out fine may not last or what starts off wet can be suitable by midday! The best conditions for learning in are those with little or no wind, good visibility with clearly defined horizons. Mornings are usually like this. Evenings are generally calmer as well so if out for an afternoon, waiting till the end of the day can often be well worthwhile as the winds die down and the air gets smoother. If it is wet and windy, you can save your money by not flying but do still consider a visit to the club to watch others and help out or to maybe get some ground school training in.

If you are booked on a day course with the instructor, he will expect you to attend regardless of the weather. If you are planning a casual visit then cancelling your visit will not create a problem.

Setting up

Given the voluntary nature of the sport, it is desirable to help either set up for flying or stay to help pack up at the end of the day. The earlier you arrive and help get organized for flying, the earlier you can get started and the more flying that can be done in any given day. Too often, the best part of the day for learning is missed because we have had a bit of a slow start to the day. As a rough guide, it takes about an hour to get set up for flying and you can get about 3 training flights done in one hour. Add to this some time for briefing and discussion before going flying and some debriefing afterwards and you can be actively involved for 3 hours from when you arrive at the field. For training, we aim to start at between 0800 and 0830. (8am and 8.30 am) and gear ourselves for training before the soaring conditions develop. Setting up begins with getting the gliders and equipment ready. Tasks to be done include:

- Checking the airfield and airspace are available; any restrictions on use.
 - Opening up the hangar and clubrooms.
 - Prepare and position the retrieve winch. Radio and lights checked, timesheets, pens.
 - Removing the gliders from the hangar and preparing them for use.
 - Cleaning, fitting batteries, inspecting ropes checking equipment like parachutes.
 - Completing Daily Inspections of each aircraft and tow vehicle.
 - Position gliders, vehicles and gear out on the airfield. (Drivers should be trained or under supervision)
- Usually, a minimum of 3 people are needed to safely get aircraft out of a hangar and positioned out on the field.

To go flying, you need to have:

- An Instructor
- A retrieve winch driver

- A wing runner / log keeper / assistant. This is a bare minimum. Ideally, you have a few more members to help ensure things run smoothly.

The Flying List

A flying list is made to determine the order of flying so put your name on the list as early as possible. You will usually fly when your name comes up but there are occasions when the Instructor may elect to fly you earlier or later depending on the prevailing conditions so be ready to go if called early and don't be frustrated if delayed as it will be done with your best interests in mind. Once your turn comes, it is usual to do 2 or 3 flights as this offers the best training value. If conditions allow soaring, 1 flight may well be sufficient to cover enough exercises for the day. If you have a full day at the field, you may get a second session later in the day after you have had time to absorb the previous flights. The less time between flying sessions the better so if you can do a morning and an afternoon at the field each day of the weekend for a number of consecutive weekends, you will progress faster than dragging the training out over several

Flying operations

Once operations are underway, there are several ongoing tasks to be done to ensure things run smoothly, efficiently and safely. Gliders need assistance with launching and specific training will be given for doing this. The operations need to be co-ordinated and this is often easily achieved by nominating a "Duty Pilot" who will control the order gliders are launched and ask people to help with associated tasks. There will be a "Time keeper" to ensure flight times are logged and the base radio is monitored for communications with gliders and winches. Instructors will be briefing and debriefing pilots in between flying and students like you will want some time to prepare for a coming flight. All up, it can be a busy place. Teamwork and voluntary cooperation are critical to the enjoyment of everyone's time at the field.

Packing Up

Flying should be timed to finish so all equipment can be put away in daylight. This reduces the risk of losing equipment, leaving it lying out on the airfield, or damaging gliders and equipment manoeuvring it in poorly lit confined spaces like the hangar. Things to do include:

- Towing gliders and equipment back to the hangar. Put covers on.
- Placing batteries on charge. Clean bugs and dirt off aircraft.
- Checking the timesheet is accurately completed. Get your flying times.
- Close and secure club facilities.

Instructors and experienced pilots will help you learn the various tasks listed above. Gliding is a team sport when it comes to getting the flying operations organized and running. Be involved; sharing the workload helps all enjoy the rewards of gliding. Ask if you are ever unsure of what can be done and how to do something.

Paying for your flying

We prefer you to operate with an account in credit. You can get a statement if you call the office midweek. Club budgets are pretty lean and can't tolerate bad debts or even late payments as the big bills like insurance and maintenance are paid in advance and fuel bills also require prompt payment so don't treat the club as a bank and remember that your treasurer is a volunteer who does not want to have to chase you for bill payments. It helps to always check the flying log sheets to ensure the details are correct afterwards.