

How to Become a Glider Pilot



If you have just had your first flight in a glider, and want to do more, this leaflet explains how to go on to become a glider pilot.

Club Opening Times

From April to September the club is open 7 days a week, and through the Winter the club is open at weekends plus 1 weekday (whichever day looks the best weather). Weekday flying is run by professional instructors and winch drivers operating a [5-Day Course](#), and if you wish to fly in the week you need to ring the office to book a place, and they will advise you of availability and cost. You can also see availability [on the bookings rota](#) on the website.

The very best next step options are:

- A. Book onto a 1-day “[Introduction to Gliding](#)” Course. This gives you & 1 other the exclusive use of a glider and instructor for the full day, with as much flying as you can handle) & is a great way to experience what gliding and the Midland Gliding Club is all about & make some great initial progress right away.
- B. Book onto a [5-day Course \(April-Sept\)](#) with our professional instructors, which allow you to make significant progress. Club members get substantial discounts on these courses. Again, all flying and instruction is included.
- C. You do also have a 3-month temporary membership included with your flight today, which enables come to the club and learn to fly at normal club rates. Members pay for each launch, currently £12.50, and then 65p per minute for the hire of the glider. You can also join as a member at any time during this period. There is a course each weekend day of 3 pre-solo pilots who have an aircraft and an instructor for the day.

How does the gliding day work?

Gliding is a team activity, and we rely on members taking part in the ground operation to launch the gliders as well as flying. Most people turn up to unpack the hangar, and then fly and help out at the launch-point until the end of the day, and then pack the hangar. We realise this isn't always possible but ask that you either help unpack the hangar at the beginning of the day or help pack it again at the end of the day.

Booking your flying (weekends) / Before the day

- As a new pilot wanting to book on to the weekend pre-solo course, you would email bookings@midlandgliding.club, or call the office. The slots available and who is on duty can be seen on the [Duty/Bookings Rota](#) on the club website www.midlandgliding.club. If you just turn up you will most likely be able to get a flight, but the pilots booked on the course will get priority e.g. if there is restricted flying available due to poor weather.
- Everyone who is booked on for a flying day will be added to a WhatsApp group a couple of days beforehand – this is where the instructor will share any updates on start timings or plans for the day's flying, usually the night before, or first thing on the day.

The Duty Team – Who's Who?!

There is a team of volunteers on duty each weekend day consisting of two or three instructors, a winch driver and a Launch Director. The Launch Director is stationed at the launch point and organises the jobs that need to be done such as keeping the landing area clear by retrieving gliders, fetching cables, hooking cables on to gliders, driving the retrieve winch etc. You should make yourself known to the Launch Director who will be able to direct you to learn these skills under supervision of an experienced member.

On The Day – Key Timings

- **Hangar unpacking:** The day usually starts at about 9am with unpacking the hangar. Once all the aircraft are out of the hangar and parked safely they are fitted with batteries and parachutes, and a Daily Inspection (DI) is carried out on each aircraft. This is like a daily MOT test to check that all systems on the glider are functioning correctly and it is safe to fly.
- **Briefing:** Once all DIs are completed there is a briefing, usually at 9:30am. **Pilots who intend to fly are expected to attend the briefing**, but if you miss it you should approach one of the instructors for a briefing. The briefing covers the weather, where the equipment will be positioned on the airfield, NOTAMs (Notices to Airmen that give details of possible hazards and no fly areas, for instance air shows and parachute drop zones) and how to deal safely with any other issues relevant to that day such as wet airfield or strong winds.

How Do I Make Progress?

All pre solo pilots have a blue Progress book, in which you record your flights, and the instructor makes comments on your progress. There are also a series of exercises that you need to go through. At the end of each day, ensure your instructor fills in your logbook and signs off any exercises that you have completed, so that the next time you come, your instructor will be able to carry on where the last one left off. Once the instructor is satisfied that you can fly safely & have completed all the pre-solo exercises, you will be able to fly solo.

You will also have ground briefings on each flying exercise, as well as on theory of flight and meteorology. You will soon realise that gliding is largely about being able to predict the weather very accurately, and that glider pilots spend a lot of time looking at the sky!

Checks: Once you have flown solo you will initially need to have a “check flight” with an instructor on each day you wish to fly solo, but as you progress these check flights are required less frequently.

After Solo – What Next?

- **Gliding is what you make it:** Everyone has different goals they may like to pursue, and gliding has so many opportunities and challenges for you. See the “What Next” flow-chart for full details of all the paths open to you at various stages. Whatever your goals, we can coach you towards them.
- **Bronze Flying Test, & Cross-Country Endorsement:** This enables you to fly cross country (out of gliding range of the airfield) & depend on your wits and skill to fly to another airfield or around a triangular course. Many pilots prefer to fly locally and stay within easy reach of the airfield, whilst others wish to fly away from the airfield. On good days you will see pilots setting out on tasks of 100s of kilometres across the country, sometimes having to land in a field or at another airfield, and you will see trailers setting off to retrieve them.
- **Silver, Gold & Diamond Badges:** These involve, flying over a certain distance, for a certain length of time, or achieving a certain gain of height. For a Diamond, you have to complete a height gain of 5000 metres and a distance flight of over 500 km.
- **Aerobatics:** We can teach you to master the skills involved in controlling the aircraft through loops and other manoeuvres, and even take part in aerobatic competitions.
- **Competitions:** Many pilots take part in competitions, and several pilots from Long Mynd have competed in the World Gliding Championships.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the office on 01588 650206 or email office@midlandgliding.club