

# Gliding

## The Sport of Gliding

The art of flying without an engine, using only rising air, is the challenge of gliding. Each flight is unique, and requires fast, decisive responses with no second chances. Achieving a goal provides an enormous sense of satisfaction.

Gliding is a social sport requiring confidence and initiative. I joined my University team to become a qualified pilot, and with determination, I have accomplished this and more: soaring above 6,000 feet and flying over five hours continuously.

My current ambition is to glide cross-country during 2005 and, ultimately, to become an instructor, and compete in the Junior National Gliding Championships.

## An Introduction to Gliding

### What is gliding?

The sport of flying without an engine. It's like sailing, but three-dimensional. Unlike sailing, you can't stop for a while and carry on later.

### Why glide?

It's a challenging sport, where you have to work with (or against) the elements. You can also fly around the country and compete in races. You get to soar with the birds and have none of the noise of a powered engine.

### Is it safe to fly without an engine?

Yes. In many ways it is safer as there is no risk of engine failure. It is also much quieter by comparison. There are also none of the dangers associated with carrying fuel.

### How do you get in the air?

You get towed up and released by a plane ([aerotow](#)) or take a [winch launch](#) to 1,000 feet - 1,500 feet typically. A winch launch can have you in the air at 1,000 feet in around 30 seconds.

### How high do you fly?

Often 1,000 feet to [4,000 feet](#). Up to 10,000 feet is not uncommon. Lower than 1,000 feet, and you should be in a landing sequence.

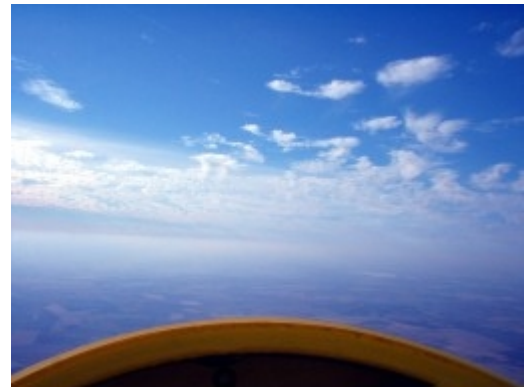
### How fast do you fly?

Typically 60 to 90mph; up to around 170mph.

### How far can you go?



[Cambridge Gliding Club's SZD Puchacz two-seater training glider](#)



The view of Cambridgeshire at 3,000 feet from the cockpit of an ASK8b single-seater glider



The interior dashboard of CUGC's ASK8b glider

Cross-country distances of several hundred kilometres are common in the UK, but of course, depend on the weather conditions and air space restrictions

### How big is a glider?

Gliders typically have a wing span of [15m](#) to 25m and have space for one or two people.

### How long can you fly for?

As long as you can find lift, which depends on the weather conditions. Typically between 10 minutes and seven hours.

### How do you land?

Much like any powered aircraft. All gliders have [airbrakes](#) which control your rate of descent by disrupting the airflow over the wings.

### Where do you land?

Preferably at a gliding club [airstrip](#) or aerodrome runway. Otherwise, you land-out in a suitably flat and empty field, and then take the glider apart (de-rig) and tow it away in a trailer by car.

### Where can I try gliding?

At a gliding club, which are usually away from built-up areas. Have a look at the [British Gliding Association web site](#). Most gliding takes place outside of controlled air space.

### What sort of people glide?

Gliding attracts people of all professions, backgrounds and ages.

### Can you wear glasses?

Yes, so long as you can see to the DVLA driving standard.

### Is it expensive to glide?

Gliding is much cheaper than powered flying, as there is no fuel and minimal maintenance costs. Most instructors and ground crew running a gliding club are volunteers.

- [Introduction to Gliding presentation](#)
- [Gliding Photographs](#)



The front seat of a two-seater ASK21 glider: strapped in with a 5-point harness and parachute



An ASK21 glider on final approach to land, with airbrakes deployed



A Puchacz glider taking a winch launch



Sunset at the Cambridge Gliding Club

[HTML 4.01 Transitional Conformant](#)

---

Last modified: Monday, 28 March 2005

[John Kut](#)