

## **002 Strapping in for comfort and safety**

### **(Preparation for Flight)**

Aim: To learn how to correctly and comfortably strap into a glider.

We shall look at how we get into the glider, strap in and make ourselves ready for flight.

#### **Initial Preparation and Getting In:**

We all come in different shapes and sizes and our familiarity with gliders differs so there are a few considerations to make before we even start getting in to the glider:

- Is it ready to be flown? For now, we shall assume your instructor has checked this.
- Do we have everything we need; Glasses, hat, suitable clothing.
- Check we have no loose articles in our pockets that might fall out and drop into any gaps or controls.
- Check there is nothing in any pocket that will cause discomfort if seated and strapped in for long periods.
- How do we correctly get the canopy open? There are cautions about having the canopy open make sure it is securely open (and never left open and unattended) and know how to avoid knocking it shut when getting in.
- We normally need to wear a parachute See the notes on their use and get instruction on the specific parachute you will be wearing. Notice the seat is often shaped to accommodate a parachute, it can be uncomfortable and risky for your spine if you don't wear it.

**BGA RP17.** Serviceable parachutes should be worn by the occupant(s) of gliders operated from BGA sites, subject to the glider being fitted to accept the occupant(s) wearing parachute(s).

- One wing down on the side you are getting in on will make it easier than having the other wing down.
- There is a minimum and a maximum pilot weight for the front seat; we must check we are within the limits or fit ballast if too light. If ballast is not required, check it is not fitted.

- Some seats are adjustable; check that the seat is adjusted for our size. Rudder pedals should be adjusted properly so you can achieve full deflections comfortably. If you fly the aircraft frequently, learn where these positions are for future reference.
- Check the seat cushions are suitable / adequate for our size. Cushions behind your back should not easily compress or become dislodged, an energy absorbing cushion on the seat is essential to protect your back in the event of a heavy landing.

## PILOT SAFETY

BGA RP38. It is recommended that all gliders, whether club or privately owned, should be equipped by the owners/operators with cushions containing energy absorbent materials. (Conventional soft foam actually stores energy and can be dangerous in an accident). The cushions should have attachments compatible with the glider for which they are provided and be secured so that they cannot move or foul any controls, even under extreme attitudes or accelerations.

- Check where the straps are lying and loosen them off so we can get to them once we are seated in the glider.
- Check where we can stand and areas to avoid to ensure we don't damage the glider getting in and out.
- Some gliders will lower onto a nose skid or wheel when your weight is added to the cockpit, be prepared for this.

Your instructor will take you through these considerations then get you to climb into the cockpit.

### Strapping In:

- Once seated, we need to check that we can comfortably reach all the controls without stretching and that any adjustments are made to ensure comfort. Then we can locate the straps and strap in.
- Locate all the straps and draw them roughly into position, some harnesses have 4 straps and some have 5, make sure you have found them all. The crotch strap if fitted, can easily jam the controls in flight.
- Locate the central locking mechanism and your instructor will show you how each strap is fitted
- Fit the lap straps first, then the shoulder straps.
- Firmly tighten the lap straps first, checking the buckle is central and correctly located and not sitting too high or too low across the stomach / pelvis region. The lap straps (2 or 3) are designed to hold you firmly in the seat, you should not be able to "submarine" out of the straps in a collision situation.

- Check how the buckle assembly works / locks.
- Then tighten the shoulder straps. These are fitted to prevent your torso moving forward in the event of forward impact.
- Check you can still reach all controls (including the release knob) and that full control deflections are possible.
- Check how the harness is released. Some have a facility for partial release of the shoulder straps. Some are single action, some require two steps.
- Check how to tighten and loosen straps without releasing the harness.

#### Tips:

Practise strapping in and making adjustments to ensure comfort by getting access to your glider when it is not being used. The sooner you learn how to do this correctly the better, as we can then move on to other exercises.

#### Need To Know:

- How a correctly get in and out of the glider.
- How to correctly fit and adjust the straps, ensuring you are seated comfortably and in easy reach of all controls.

#### Further Reading:

- The Glider Pilot's Manual; by Ken Stewart. Pg 30. Preparation for flight.
- BGA Laws and Rules Recommended practices.