

Topic of the month: May 2024

Keeping wings level during the ground run

Before and during the ICL we had several launches where pilots did not release when a wing touched the grass.

So, this month I would like to remind you all of the importance of releasing when unable to keep the wings level during the launch.

When to release

During a launch, whether is winch or aerotow, always keep your hand on the release and be ready to abort the launch when a wing goes down. You must release before the wing touches the ground.

A wing touching the ground during a winch launch can be **fatal**. Have a look at the videos on the BGA website.

<https://members.gliding.co.uk/safety/safe-winchng/simulations/>

While the wing touching the ground during the early stages of an aerotow can sometimes be recovered, it is very bad practice to try and recover from a wing drop rather than releasing. You get a false sense of "I can recover this", but eventually it will bite you, and on a winch launch it can kill you.

Why do wing drops happen

There are 2 main reasons for wings touching the ground:

1. The pilot thinks he can level the wings again before disaster strikes
2. The pilot is not aware that the wing already touched the ground

The first reason can apply to experienced pilots who think they managed to level the wings before in this situation and can do it again. Unfortunately, this can lead to serious and even fatal accidents and there is no reason to hang on to a cable or rope if your wing drops, **ALWAYS RELEASE IMMEDIATELY**.

The second can happen especially to novice pilots or when you are flying a type you haven't flown before or not for a long time. The reason for this is that you must judge the distance between ground and wingtip by the angle of the canopy against the horizon.



For each glider the angle at which point the wing touches the ground is different.

The picture shows the view from a K21 as the wing touches the ground. Get a wing holder to show you the angle by holding the wing near the ground and then also touching the ground. This way you get a feel for the angle at which point you need to release.

It is worth doing this whenever you are about to fly a type of glider you haven't flown before

or not for some time.

Advice for Wing Runners

Wing drops are more likely to occur when there is a crosswind. The wind will force the wing you are holding up or down. If you are resisting this, the wing will move in the direction of the force as soon as you let go and the pilot may not be able to counteract this.

- Stop the launch and tell the pilot if you are resisting an up or down force at the tip.
- Run with the tip while holding the wings level.
- Think about how the crosswind will affect the glider and hold the correct wingtip.
- Make sure you have been trained before taking on the task.

Why stop the launch? Because most wing drops occur immediately after the wing tip runner lets go.

Safe Flying

Wolf