

Topic of the month: May 2025

Circuits

This is not a refresher on circuits. You have all been taught how to fly a proper circuit and if you do need a refresher, please speak to an instructor.

This month's topic highlights some points to be aware of in your circuit and which have been observed or been the result of an incident report.

1. When flying a circuit, always think of options. Do not fixate on the chosen path. Something unexpected could happen and you have to go to plan B or C.
2. On your final approach, do not fly low over the launch point. Always stay well clear of the caravan and lined up gliders to the left or right, depending on the launch point setup. The only exception to this are long landings, when you are still at least 100' above the launch point on your final.
3. Don't fly along the downwind leg towards the high key point. You may encounter another glider on the downwind leg. If you are at the wrong side of the airfield and want to get to the high key point, keep well clear of the path a glider on downwind would take. But better still plan how to get to the high key point well in advance, so you don't get caught out on the wrong side of the airfield.
4. At Portmoak we do not enforce a circuit direction. Always keep a good lookout, another glider can be head-on when on the base leg. To avoid crossing plan to land on your side of the launch line if possible.
5. In east wind it is often difficult to see an approaching glider on a right-hand circuit from the launch point until they are well on the base leg. As pilot you will be able to see and hear what is happening at the launch point. Adjust your circuit if necessary. As launch controller listen to radio calls and don't proceed with a launch if a pilot called downwind.
6. When the sun is low, plan your final approach to be at an angle to the sun, not directly into it. The glare can make it very difficult to see where you are going. Make sure the canopy is clean. Dirty canopies further reduce visibility when flying into the sun.

