

Oxford University Gliding Club Frequently Asked Questions 2021

Last updated: 29th September 2022

I have never flown any kind of aircraft before. Can I still join?

Absolutely. Your instructors will have had plenty of experience teaching people who have never flown anything before. In fact, many of our members have joined OUGC without having had any previous flying experience and are now solo glider pilots. When joining OUGC your instructors will give you a progress card. This is a simple checklist to monitor your progress. Your instructors will always have a good understanding of your level of experience before every flight. Being inexperienced does not take the fun out of gliding.

We are unable to offer membership to students under the age of 18.

Do you have to have any special skills or talents?

There are no special skills or talents required for gliding. You only need motivation to fly and be part of a team!

I have a medical condition or a disability. Can I still fly?

Please feel free to contact one of our committee members directly to clarify your condition or disability and we will determine with our instructors whether you can fly.

There is a weight limit of 95kg for pilots under instruction/passengers. This is purely due to the limitations of the aircraft we fly.

Is it safe?

Any form of aviation carries some risk. However, we take many safety precautions to ensure that gliding remains a safe activity. Safety is the first consideration of everyone on the airfield at all times.

Why should I join Oxford Uni Gliding Club?

If you want to learn to fly for cheap and be part of a team, then gliding is for you. Gliding is a beautiful, pure form of flight that harnesses the natural energy in the atmosphere. When you go solo, you will feel like an airbender. Our community is also excellent. We also organise social events outside of gliding! By winning the varsity match, you can also earn a half-blue certificate.

Who can join Oxford Uni Gliding Club?

OUGC is open to all staff and students from Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University.

We are unable to offer membership to students under the age of 18.

How do I join Oxford Uni Gliding Club?

For your first flight you will need to book an “introduction day” and fill in a membership form via Eventbrite. During this intro day, you will be given a safety briefing and we will explain some rules of the airfield. You will then get to fly!

<https://www.ougc.org/how-to-join>

When does gliding happen?

On Saturdays and Sundays, and some bank holidays, when the weather is suitable. **Gliding activity happens for the whole day from 8.30am until ~6pm.**

Is gliding weather dependent?

Yes. We cannot fly in strong winds or rain, or if the height of the bottom layer of clouds (called *cloud base*) is too low. Sunny days are the best for long cross-country flights (lots of thermals). Some wind, some cloud and some showers are not a problem though. Winter is a great time to learn a lot as the airfield is generally quieter and you get lots of practice at launches & landings! **Assume gliding is happening unless you hear otherwise** - flying might happen even if for part of a day, rather than a full day.

Where does gliding happen?

RAF Weston-on-the-Green airfield, which is home to our parent club, Oxford Gliding Club.

How do I get to the airfield?

Via public transport & car share/bike/walk. For your first day we can help you organise transport for a small fee. More details are available on our website:

<https://www.ougc.org/how-to-get-to-the-airfield>

What does my intro day membership fee include?

We offer a special intro day membership so that you can decide if gliding is for you or not. Basically this allows you to fly for one day and covers your insurance and British Gliding Association temporary membership. If you want to do more flying, simply pay the difference to upgrade to annual membership.

Details of membership and flying fees can be found here: <https://www.ougc.org/fees>

What does my full year student membership fee / full year staff membership fee include?

British Gliding Association membership for 1 year, as well as members' rates access to the OUGC fleet, the Oxford Gliding Club fleet and instructors, our club trips, training weeks and expeditions.

We expect full members to attend the airfield for 2 full weekend days / calendar month. This allows our members to learn flying skills as well as contribute to airfield operations & build a good culture in the club. Everyone volunteers!

Details of membership and flying fees can be found here: <https://www.ougc.org/fees>

What does a typical day at the airfield look like?

A day at the airfield starts at 8:30am and ends at around 6pm. Gliding is a full day out! In the morning you will help take the gliders out of the hangar. Before each day of flying, the gliders complete a daily inspection (DI). The gliders are then brought to the launch point and then we begin to fly! An airfield is truly full of action. Whilst you are not flying you can take part in so many more activities such as helping to launch and retrieve the gliders. You will start helping to put the gliders back at around 5pm, later in the summer..

How much does a typical day at the airfield cost?

A short ~10 minute training flight costs about £12 including glider hire (£0.35/min) and launch fee (£7). It's a bit more expensive if you are a trial member on an intro day. Usually, the gliding club aims to fly students 3-6 times (between 20 - 40 mins total time, depending on weather and student:instructor ratio). Add in a few £ for transport, and you are looking at about £40 for a day of learning to fly. It doesn't get any better or cheaper!!! The amazing instructors are all volunteers, as is the winch driver and everyone else at the airfield.

Details of membership and flying fees can be found here: <https://www.ougc.org/fees>

What will I learn at gliding?

- Airfield safety and ground handling of gliders & glider pilots!
- Skills to keep the gliding day running smoothly and safety (e.g. running and retrieving cables, buggie driving, log keeping)
- Flying gliders, your first 50-100 flights will be with an instructor in a two-seater glider. Everything including launching and landing!
- Bits and pieces of knowledge about weather, the gliding community and general aviation
- Glider maintenance and cleaning (gliders are really pretty, we love them)
- FUN! 100%!!!!

What commitment is required to make progress?

Gliding depends on the weather, so the more you can commit too, the better, as not all scheduled days proceed as planned!

The minimum commitment we ask of our full members is 2 days per calendar month.

Flying at least one day every two weeks increases the likelihood of learning new skills each week, as well as developing muscle memory and finesse so that flying feels more natural. You can brush up on gliding knowledge in between coming to the airfield, which means you maximise practical demonstrations and exercises given by your instructor at the airfield.

How long does it take to go solo?

This depends on how frequently you fly. If you come to fly every week or once every two weeks, generally you could expect to fly solo by the end of the year (many members have achieved this). Flying more frequently not only improves your flying, but it also allows instructors to better understand how you can improve your flying. Progression to solo is based on proficiency, not hours. We have also had members who have taken part in camps and intensive courses which have had them flying everyday and go flying solo in as little as two weeks with previous simulator experience.

Are there competitions that Oxford Uni Gliding Club takes part in?

Absolutely, and you can take part in them regardless of your flying experience. Every summer we have varsity championships in which Oxford and Cambridge pilots compete. This is open to pre-solo pilots as well as experienced pilots. This is a great opportunity to meet pilots and instructors from the other place. Gliding is an official Oxford University Sport - by winning, the Varsity members of the team earn a half-blue.

<https://www.ougc.org/varsity>

There is also the Inter Unis - a competition which lasts for a whole week and is open to beginners and experienced pilots alike from UK uni gliding clubs.

<https://www.ougc.org/interunis>

Does Oxford Uni Gliding Club go on any trips, training weeks or expeditions?

Yes, we usually have training camps during the uni holidays and other trips throughout the year, such as events organised by UK Junior Gliding. OUGC has even been on summer expeditions to Europe.

<https://www.ougc.org/about-ougc-trips>