

Foundations of Flight

Kiting

Brought to you by Axis Flight School at Skydive Arizona in Eloy. Photos by Niklas Daniel.

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The term “kiting” refers to flying your parachute overhead while you’re on the ground. The exercise provides feedback on canopy control that you’ll be able to see, as well as feel through your harness and hands.

Purpose

Safety and Performance

- ▶ To learn how to control your canopy better after landing and avoid having it drag you in strong winds.
- ▶ To become more attuned to how your parachute works.

Execution

- ▶ Make sure winds are steady and in the 8- to 12-mph range, and find an open area away from anything that might cause turbulence.
- ▶ Release your brakes and stow them on the risers (stow your brakes in full-flight mode), which will prevent the toggles from tangling during the initial launch.
- ▶ Put on the rig and tighten your leg straps, collapse your slider and move it into a position that allows you to see the canopy, and disconnect your RSL in case you want to cut away.

Getting started:

With the wind at your back, spread your canopy out on the ground with the nose pointing toward the sky. The simplest way to get your canopy to begin filling with air is to put both front risers in your left hand and the rear risers in your right. Pulling on the fronts will make the canopy rise, while pulling on the rears will make it fall back to the ground. Don’t apply pressure to the fronts and rears simultaneously—this is the equivalent of pressing the gas and the brake on a car at the same time. Use your left hand to guide the canopy in the

direction you want it to go. If you ever feel like the canopy is overpowering you, pull both rear risers in toward your belly button.

Once the risers are in your hands, walk backward and away from your canopy while still facing it. You’ll notice that your lines tighten and that your lines and risers are crossed. As the parachute fills with air, your goal is to build a short wall on the ground with your canopy (at this point, you don’t want it to take off overhead). Maneuver the canopy so that the nose fills with air while the tail of the canopy stays on the ground.

Getting the canopy overhead:

Once you are comfortable with how your canopy is reacting, you can allow it to inflate fully. Once the canopy is overhead, release the toggles and fly the canopy with the brakes. Balance the canopy overhead by experimenting with brake and riser input to control the canopy’s side-to-side movement.

You’ll also need to manage the canopy’s pitch. If the wing falls in front of you, you’ll need to get it back on center by letting the brakes up into the full-flight position. If the wing surges upward and backward, or if it feels like it’s getting above your head too quickly when you launch, you will have to “shut down the power” by using your rear risers. (The amount of input depends on how quickly the canopy is moving and how high the wind speed is.)

Your goal is to react quickly, sensing how much input to apply by observing how the canopy is responding. Eventually, you can learn to control your inputs so that the canopy moves smoothly and at your will.

Helpful Hints:

Relax. This will improve the feedback from your hands and, ultimately, your harness. Soon, you’ll be able to anticipate the canopy’s next move.

Walk to help get your canopy inflated. This will increase your sensitivity and balance. Don’t try to “muscle” the canopy to get it overhead—just take a few steps back. If you need to reduce the power of the launch, step toward the canopy.



Once you are proficient, try to walk in various directions while keeping the canopy overhead. Eventually you will be able to turn around and face into the wind so that you’ll be looking in the direction that the canopy is traveling. ♡

To view the kiting instructional video, use the QR code above or visit the Foundations of Flight page at parachutistonline.com.