

Information for Beginners

The Georgetown Aero Modelers Association (GAMA) would like to offer the following suggestions as a guideline to hopefully help you avoid some of the pitfalls, disappointments, and mistakes many of us experienced when we first got in the hobby. We hate to see newcomers, with high expectations, come to the field with planes and equipment that is not airworthy or totally inappropriate for a beginner to learn to fly on. This can lead to great disappointment and may discourage a beginner from continuing in the hobby.

RC flying is a **wonderful** and fulfilling hobby and can provide many hours of fun and relaxation. However, as with any endeavor, there WILL BE moments of despair and disappointments. The most important thing to remember and to be willing to accept if you become involved in this hobby is that it will require considerable time and effort and a continuing expenditure of money! The rewards are great, BUT they are not free. The RC aircraft hobby, like many other hobbies/sports, requires a considerable initial investment in time and equipment as well as continuing costs for club membership, insurance, maintenance, fuel, batteries, and other accessories. Mistakes (and you will make them!) are often quite expensive.

Remember, **crashing your airplane** is not an issue of IF but is simply a matter of WHEN! In this hobby, you MUST accept the fact that there will be mechanical and radio/electronic malfunctions, sudden and/or unpredictable weather events, and **OPERATOR MALFUNCTION** (aka: dumb thumbs) that will result in crashes and mishaps.

BEFORE INVESTING IN AN AIRPLANE AND RELATED EQUIPMENT, PLEASE visit with experienced flyers. They don't know all the answers, but their experience, expertise, suggestions, and opinions will give you valuable information and a variety of options to assist you in making decisions for your initial purchases.

Beware of "glossy" ads in magazines and catalogues that advertise airplanes as indestructible, easy to fly or say you can buy in the morning and be flying that afternoon. Many of these ads are designed to SELL a product and are unrelated to the reality of successfully learning how to fly an RC airplane. Your local hobby shop is the best place to make your initial purchases. Not only will you be able to look at the actual equipment you will be purchasing, their knowledgeable staff will also be able to answer your questions and provide reliable information for selecting the right plane and equipment for a beginner.

Consider the following before buying used radios (especially older radio equipment) and engines unless you have considerable electronic and/or mechanical expertise in RC radio and

engine operations. Often, parts and accessories may be difficult to obtain or no longer available for this older equipment and there is no warranty. Also, some older radios (pre-1991) can be illegal to use because of FCC rule changes. Although many older radios may function perfectly ok, they may not be compatible to more modern and readily available "buddy boxes" (which are almost mandatory to assist beginners in learning to fly). Used equipment can sometimes be a good deal, but shop around, compare prices for new equipment, and evaluate before making any decisions. Used airplanes are not as risky as radios and engines because you can pretty well visually inspect them inside and out for damage or defects.

Your first airplane should be a docile "trainer" type. Quality trainers are usually the best, least expensive in the long run, and easiest aircraft to learn how to fly on. A good trainer type aircraft should have a high wing with flat bottom, tricycle landing gear, and be of wood construction and covering material that can be repaired. AVOID trying to learn how to fly on more exotic, sleek, scale, and/or aerobatic aircraft. They may look COOL, but they usually require more flying skills than a beginner initially possesses. After you have learned to fly and your skills increase, then move up to a "fancier" airplane.

It is HIGHLY unlikely you can learn to fly on your own! (Unless you have lots of money and airplanes!) Seek the assistance of an experienced pilot to help you learn to fly. Although GAMA does not have "designated instructors", there are a number of members in the club who not only have years of RC flying experience but frequently volunteer to help newcomers learn to fly. GAMA, along with a number of individual members, also have "buddy boxes" to assist newcomers in the instructional process. Basically a buddy box is a transmitter case without any electronics, but having all the controls of an actual transmitter. The buddy box is connected to your transmitter by a cord. You hold the buddy box while the instructor holds the actual transmitter. When the instructor activates a button/switch on the transmitter, this transfers control of the airplane to your buddy box to allow you to fly the plane. However, if you get in trouble, the instructor can rapidly resume control and stabilize the aircraft. Presently, GAMA has buddy boxes that are compatible with Futaba, Hitec, and JR brands of transmitters and we would suggest your initial radio be one of these brands.

A NOTE ABOUT CLUB MEMBERS WHO ASSIST YOU AS AN INSTRUCTOR.

Remember, your instructor is an unpaid member **volunteering** his time. He is genuinely interested in helping you enter and enjoy this hobby. He will be an accomplished flyer with considerable experience and will use all his skills to help you learn to fly. **HOWEVER**, please understand that there is **ALWAYS** risk involved in flying any RC aircraft. Beginners airplanes are usually new and initially un-flown and/or untried in their present configuration which adds an additional risk. Also, the very construction and design of "trainer" type aircraft that make them

ideal for beginners also causes them to be less responsive and capable of recovering from control errors that WILL BE committed by ALL new pilots. Even with "buddy boxes" there may be situations where even a capable and experienced instructor may not be able to recover from and avoid a crash/mishap. Last but certainly not least, EVERYONE is human and humans sometime make mistakes, regardless of whether they have 1 week or 50 years flying experience. In the unlikely event a crash or mishap happens to your plane it will have been unavoidable or an honest mistake. It will NOT have been a deliberate act and your instructor will feel as bad about it as you will (maybe more so). But, if you are going to get into this hobby and obtain the assistance of GAMA club members to help you, these are the risks you must assume and accept.

COME JOIN US!

On a more positive note, **RC FLYING IS GREAT!** There is nothing like the thrill you will experience when you first solo AND that will make any disappointments or mishaps worth while. ALSO, as a GAMA club member who has soloed, you become eligible, along with over a hundred other club members who, each time they fly, engage in intense and highly competitive efforts to win the very **PRESTIGIOUS** dumb thumb award!

You are WELCOME to come by GAMA Field anytime and watch the members fly. Introduce yourself as a prospective newcomer to the hobby who would like some information. Because ALL RC'ers love to talk about their hobby, this will get you all kinds of advice, conversation, and maybe even some useful information! There are nearly always members out on the weekends and holidays. Also, you can contact any of the club officers for information and assistance. A list of current officers, copies of the club newsletter, membership application forms and other information is available on the bulletin board at the field.