

# feelings

BY ROB MCMILLAN

**Are you the type of pilot that lands as if you've just driven up to a set of traffic lights at a great rate of knots and then ripped on the hand brake? Or do you flap your arms and pretend that you are a bird? Are there different techniques to use in different conditions? What are some of the better ways to land safely...**

A good landing always begins with a good approach. Your inevitable arrival may be made easier by the fact that to a certain extent you can control the time frame that you spend in the air. So by practicing techniques (ie. Hanging out, brake turns, rear riser) that have been mentioned in previous articles you should have more time to assess how you will fit best into the landing pattern.

Before you leave the planet you should make a plan based on the current conditions and spot. You should also have an alternate plan should you need to land off. Be very aware that throughout your descent you must continually assess whether your plan will be successful.

**2,000ft Decision Time.** You should be upwind by now and close to the wind line. Know which landing area you are going to be able to land at safely. Assess your speed, sink and your likely effect on the pattern as early as possible as it will create an environment that is safer for everyone. Avoid getting to the approach point and then trying to figure it out. The earlier you make this decision the better.

**1,500ft Holding Point.** If you get to around this area and the pattern is looking worse, you should either land further upwind, use an alternate or 'hold into the wind' to hopefully increase the separation between landings.

**1,000ft Approach Point.** If your spot is good then you should plan to fly to the approach point first, then to the landing area. This will ensure that you can fly the pattern with everyone else rather than joining on the base leg or final glide. The approach point should be upwind and off the wind line.

## **Which way is everyone going to land?**

Does your DZ have a circuit pattern rule? (Land to the North in light winds, right hand circuit in a southerly etc.) Does the pattern allow you to approach over the least amount of obstacles? Did you talk to the others on your load before you went up as to which way it would be best for everyone to approach from? It doesn't take much time nor much energy to work things out before you embark the aircraft. If someone is following you, you can advise them about which way you intend to go by kicking the appropriate leg. Make sure you both know these signals before you leave the ground.

## **Landing in Traffic**

Imagine a line that divides one side of the landing area from the other. The line may pivot through the centre of

the landing area depending upon the wind direction. Imagine this line as a double line on a road... Don't cross to the other side, because it is unsafe to do so, especially if pilots have been foolish enough to approach from different directions. If you imagine the landing area with multiple parallel landing strips rather than a central target, then collisions and 'near misses' can be avoided. You may need to shorten or extend your base leg in order to land on the closer or further runway.

## **Which way do I land in light winds?**

It is not necessary to land into the wind every time you land your wing. Though it is important that you follow the leader to avoid collisions on approach and landing. Think parallel runway rather than central target. Sometimes jumpers tend to swarm like flies to a piece of s\*^t, buzzing from every direction. If the leader has chosen to foil everyone else's plans and land in a different direction than planned, then your load as a team needs to debrief and examine jumpers habits and intentions and ensure that everyone's safety is not compromised again.

## **Types of Landings.**

**Float Landings.** Are best to try in moderate wind conditions and are useful for off field landings where you are uncertain of the hazards on the ground, eg. rocks and ruts. As you are approaching your touchdown point, begin to float your canopy by applying a little brake. When your airspeed matches the wind speed, you will seem to float in the one spot. If you apply too much brake then you will generate a lot of lift. When the lift runs out there is only one place to go, so be careful, not to apply too much. As you float to the ground, finish off the flare.

**Crosswind Landings.** When landing crosswind, it is important to keep looking towards your intended path or even a little further towards an upwind direction. Favour your upwind toggle just slightly more than your downwind toggle, not so much to turn your parachute but to keep your canopy pointed more into the wind. Generally speaking, your body and its functions will tend to follow your head, so be mindful to stay focused and not look straight down at the ground or towards downwind. Keep flying and remember that your body position can significantly influence how good or how bad your landing may become.

As always there is always a lot more to talk about. Seek local knowledge to open your mind's eye.

*Never gamble a hand with a man named Doc. Never get into a drinking match with a bunch of Australians.  
(Thanks Uncle Erik)*

Rob McMillan  
self portrait



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