**Welcome to the Northern California Soaring Club!**

**So, you’ve decided to learn how to fly sailplanes. Fantastic! You’ll be joining a special group of people and will never look at clouds the same way again.**

**Here, I’d like to share a few tips for you to learn as quickly as you like and always know what step lies next.**

*\*\*\*I am not a CFI. These are purely learning process tips that I would like to pass on from being a student about to take his check ride\*\*\**

Intro flight

* You’ve probably done this by now. Take a photo during but not too many! Sit back, try out the controls, ask questions, and don’t be deterred if you get motion sick. It can take people a little while to get used to the motion.

Begin flight lessons

* Purchase a log book
* Understand having multiple flight instructors
  + The positive: You’ll have access to a broad knowledge base from really experienced instructors. This also is easier on the instructors and they are less likely to get burned out on instructing with our club
  + The negative: Your learning will likely take a little longer without one consistent instructor.
  + What to do about it: Currently it’s up to students to inform your day’s instructor of what you’ve been up to with other instructors. The more detailed you can be about what you did and how the other instructor rated you, then likely the better.
* Scheduling process, etiquette
  + We use an online calendar for the planes and private pilots. For students, you should email the day’s instructor 1-2 weeks ahead of time. It’s discouraged to sit on lessons several weeks.

At home

* Begin reading the FAA’s [Glider Flying Handbook](https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/handbooks_manuals/aircraft/glider_handbook/media/faa-h-8083-13a.pdf) (it’s big, but it’s an easy, interesting read)
* Watch sailplane videos on youtube to get excited, this [Norwegian guy’s videos](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giJdNLORNwA) are a good start (remember this isn’t all just hard work after all!)

With each lesson

* Show up early!! This helps your flight stay on time, but also helps you understand the airport’s operations. Grab a club radio (ask the field manager) and listen to all the scenarios play out in the air. This is hands down the best free learning you’ll get.
* Talk beforehand with your instructor about what skills you’d like to work on. At the beginning of your training, ask you instructor to recommend what beginners have the most trouble with. Start there.
* As you progress, ask instructors to rate your abilities across the stages of flight (takeoff, on tow, thermalling, aerial maneuvering, landing pattern, final glide, touchdown, etc…)
* Before flying and working on those skills, visualize them in your head step by step. Even act them out, sitting in a chair at home. This will help you begin to realize how to use your feet in the new way that flying requires.
* Record it, if possible. GoPro’s can really help you review a lesson, and even ‘chair fly’ it at home in front of your TV/computer. *Beware, we don’t allow suction cups on the canopy of glider KP. Use caution on the other planes, or use a clamp to the seat. Ask your instructor first.*

Coming up to Solo

* You’ll need to get a student solo license in person at an FAA office. Ask your instructor a few weeks ahead of expecting to solo.
* Demonstrate to your instructor that you are capable of being Pilot in Command. You should begin making your own assessments and decisions instead of waiting for your instructor to tell you what to do next.
* Wear clothes that might get cut or wet (ask your instructor if you dare :D)

Post Solo

* Congratulations!
* There’s a lot more to do :)

Written test

* Begin studying in earnest for the written test.
* Download this test prep software - “Groundschool - FAA written test prep” by Dauntless software. The site is a bit confusing, but you can find it [here](http://www.dauntless-soft.com/products/groundschool/)
* Get a sign off from your instructor for the written test. Each instructor will have a different ask of you to be sure you have the knowledge down. Ask them directly.
* Schedule your test. Go to [www.catstest.com](http://www.catstest.com) (Computer Assisted Testing Service - CATS). You’ll have to go to a local small airport. Cost is ~$150 per test.
* Take your test, good luck!

Post solo flying

* Now it’s time to get serious about dialing in all aspects of your flying
* Read the [Practical Test Standards](https://www.faa.gov/training_testing/testing/test_standards/media/FAA-S-8081-22.pdf) to see what you will be examined against by the FAA examiner.
* After you pass your exam with the FAA examiner, you will be a licensed glider pilot who needs to make, and be responsible for, all the decisions for every flight. Now that you are a solo student, you should start working on these skills and demonstrating them to your instructor as you get more confident in each area of flight. Your instructor should push you to make decisions more independently as well.
* Ideally, show up each day with a plan in mind of what you’d like to work on and how. Your instructor may have other ideas for the day, but sharing this with them will shift you to independent decision making faster. A key thing post-solo students do that slows them down, is staying under their instructor’s wing for too long. Find your own pace and move forward comfortably.

Preparing for the checkride

* Work with your instructor to decide when you are ready. Ground school with your instructor will be needed. Not all instructors have time outside of weekend flying for this, find out who is can help you and fly with them a few times before you think you’re close to ready for the checkride
* There is a document helping students prepare for checkride that the instructors have. I’ll let them link you to that when appropriate. I’d recommend finishing the FAA Glider Handbook before moving to that step
* Fly!
  + This is a great time for a couple solo flights to just picture yourself as a licensed pilot. Be in charge, make smart decisions, communicate, direct, listen, and fly the airplane with an appropriate level of confidence and safety.
  + My last flight before check ride I was in the pattern with three Cessnas, landing #3 out of the four of us. I communicated appropriately and made base turn at 1000’ to accommodate - something I had never done before, but my skills handled it just fine. I felt very ready after that flight.

Check Ride

* Today is the day!
* Rule #1 - The Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE), usually Dan Gudgel for us, *wants* you to pass!
* Be prepared.
  + While the DPE wants you to pass, it is your job to impress them. Your instructor should let you know what to prepare, make sure to carve out time in the week ahead to be fully prepared. This is the most logistically important week of your training, it’d be a pain to re-schedule this thing!
* Be calm.
  + You wouldn’t be getting time with the DPE if you weren’t ready, if you and your instructor didn’t think you were ready.
  + Your body knows how to fly the plane. Use your mind to look around and be aware of your surroundings, the DPE will throw some unexpected things that will require you to make quick decisions.
* Be happy!
  + Very soon you will be a licensed pilot :)