

Marika Wrembel
Gliding Scholarship

I had assumed that we'd begin our training with a sound theoretical background. The gliding course at Dunstable had other plans.

Upon arrival, after an introduction to airfield operations and manoeuvring buggies, daily inspections, conducting ourselves safely and responsibly and so on, we immediately immersed ourselves straight into the action: an aerotow. The most surreal experience ever to a teenager who had, before the scholarship, sat passively in the cockpit of a Viking for 9 cumulative minutes at most. In my life. Quadruple that time later, I find myself having landed with a mixed sense of exhilaration and motion sickness. But I wouldn't have had it any other way.

It was both a privilege and a shock to the system to have so much time 1:1 with an instructor, learning hands-on... except you're 2000ft above the ground.

Arguably this was one of the best strategies to learn anything. Not only the kinaesthetic, practical element to it, not even the defiance of that innate fear of heights we're all born with, but the permission (or in the case of having control of the cockpit, necessity) to stop doubting yourself and just try. Focus. From winch launching to landing, this is a mentality of unwavering temerity I can confidently carry forward to the rest of my life learning anything, now that I've started to overcome a learning curve as steep as gliding.

Over time my motion sickness went away as I took more control of the aircraft, which is what naturally happens if you have a technique to focus on rather than sightseeing, or turbulence. In fact, what I thought was turbulence before actually turned out to be a thermal in disguise, or a foreboding looking cloud to be the perfect interface for lift. Of course, adjusting so radically within the span of an intense week-long course to develop this more opportunistic, resourceful mentality took time and patience (and rather comfortable accommodation I am indebted to at London Gliding Club.) However, I am mostly grateful for my group of fellow students whose determination inspired me to try my best, and the patience of the instructors.

Although I am not as convicted in a career strictly in aviation, this experience has most of all taught me a mentality of determination but also taking opportunity, since a sport as dependent on the weather as gliding demands improvising. Hence, I have no fear for the future, following what interests me.

Why not see where the wind takes you when you have a gliding scholarship?