



THE VALUE OF GOOD TRAINING

Don't be too proud to learn

BY JON EISELE

"Mistakes are inevitable in aviation, especially when one is still learning new things. The trick is to not make the mistake that will kill you."

—
Stephen Coonts, *The Cannibal Queen: A Flight Into the Heart of America*

THE SPORT OF POWERED PARAGLIDING, also known as PPG or "paramotoring," is enjoying a golden age of unprecedented exposure, increasing popularity, and rapid growth in the United States.

Many topics inevitably thrive in various debates whenever paramotor pilots come together. However, every paramotor pilot has to start their journey somewhere, and the question of whether to seek professional training or embark upon "self-training" is arguably the most discussed, divisive, relevant, and important topic at the moment. This subject is fiercely defended by strong opinions and strong emotions from both sides of the aisle within the community. I, too, hold a strong opinion on this topic.

PART 103 AND THE ULTRALIGHT OPERATOR

For those unfamiliar with our unique sport, it might seem strange that there's even a debate about whether or not to get training. Many would assume that, like any aircraft that operates in the national airspace system, some type of certificate would be required. For example, even hot air balloons, which are considered by the FAA to be a lighter-than-air category aircraft, require an airman certificate to act as pilot in command.

The question of whether to seek professional training or embark upon “self-training” is arguably the most discussed, divisive, relevant, and important topic at the moment.

However, powered paragliders are described not as aircraft, but specifically as ultralight vehicles, which are defined and regulated by 14 CFR Part 103. Similarly, the FAA refers to the pilots of ultralight vehicles not as pilots, but as operators.



Instant feedback from the eye of an experienced instructor is one of the single most important ingredients missing from the process of self-training.



uma
Instruments
+1-540-879-2040
Aircraft gauges
TSO'd, Non-TSO
Electronic-Mech
Custom dials
Probes-Senders
MADE in USA
<http://www.umainstruments.com>

SA MTP 1908

2.556 x 4.736

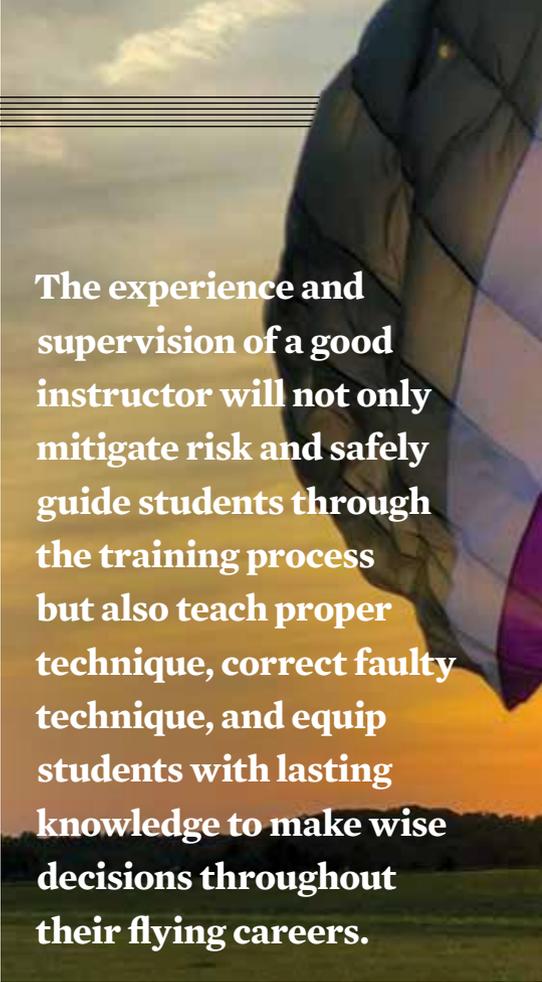
Part 103 was written in 1982 primarily to address the growing popularity of the sport of hang gliding. In a relatively uncommon move by the federal government, the FAA designed the implementation and oversight of Part 103 in a largely decentralized manner. It intentionally left the diverse ultralight community with a fundamental responsibility to self-regulate and assume the initiative for the development of safety programs. At that time, the sport of paragliding was still in its early infancy. The brave pioneers of powered paragliding wouldn't decide to add motors to their backs until several years later and were self-trained by necessity, not by choice.

Although qualifications, ratings, and training standards for ultralight vehicles are not federally required, controlled, or monitored, organizations such as the United States Powered Paragliding Association (USPPA) and U.S. Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association (USHPA) provide a standardized framework for instructor

qualifications, pilot training programs, and ratings systems, satisfying the FAA's mandate to self-regulate.

One of the classic pitfalls of paramotoring is that experienced operators tend to make difficult and practiced skills look deceptively easy — even simple. Although strictly legal, self-training or inadequate training may carry significant unknown risks to life, limb, and equipment.

Newcomers to the sport, including certificated pilots and sky divers, are strongly encouraged to seek competent and thorough instruction. While prior aviation and sky-diving experience do complement our sport in certain ways, they ultimately offer limited benefit in learning our specialized discipline when compared to a student without any prior aviation experience. For example, an experienced airline pilot would be no more qualified to fly a paramotor than they would be to fly a hot air balloon or lunar lander, without appropriate training.



The experience and supervision of a good instructor will not only mitigate risk and safely guide students through the training process but also teach proper technique, correct faulty technique, and equip students with lasting knowledge to make wise decisions throughout their flying careers.

EA VFA 1908

8.0 x 4.736



SA UAV 1908

2.556 x 9.778

THE BIG PROBLEM WITH SELF-ASSESSMENT

"The instructor who teaches himself has a fool for a student."

—
Robert Livingston, *Flying the Aeronca*

Research consistently shows that most people are generally terrible judges of their own abilities and simply don't know what they don't know. Not only do inexperienced people tend to reach erroneous conclusions and make unfortunate choices, but their incompetence robs them of the ability to realize it. As they say, ignorance is bliss.

This can quickly become a deadly trap for inexperienced paramotor pilots. Ultimately, in the process of self-training, beginner pilots really have no reliable or measurable way of knowing what information they might have overlooked. That oftentimes leads to the mistake that could ultimately kill them (or others). Though the pioneers of early aviation were

self-trained out of necessity, the process of discovering the safer and more effective methods of flying we enjoy today came at a heavy cost. Many of these lessons-learned formed modern aviation regulations. We typically refer to these as "blood rules."

In 2019, we have arguably reached the same point in the progression of the sport of paramotoring. The experience and supervision of a good instructor will not only mitigate risk and safely guide students through the training process but also teach proper technique, correct faulty technique, and equip students with lasting knowledge to make wise decisions throughout their flying careers.

Anytime.
Anywhere.
Anyway.



Print, online or mobile, 24/7,
we're here with everything
that keeps you flying.

*For iPhone and Android

Trade-A-Plane

SPA Trade-A-Plane.com • 800.337.5263

EXPERIMENTER

ULTRALIGHT WORLD



The process of learning to run into the sky can be a challenging but immensely rewarding experience.

COST VERSUS BENEFIT AND RISK VERSUS REWARD

"Whoever wants to learn to fly must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance – one cannot fly into flying!"

—
Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

When getting into the sport, every person must decide for themselves whether the cost of hiring an instructor is worth it. One of the more common reasons I see people choose to enter the sport through self-training is the belief that the cost of training is too expensive or completely unnecessary. Sometimes, this is due to the belief that they are able to teach themselves for "free" or that training is only paid for by those who do not have the necessary knowledge, ability, independence, or ambition to teach themselves. On the contrary, I have trained countless driven, independent, successful, and extremely intelligent students who, realistically, could have chosen to train themselves. However, these students also had enough self-awareness to realize that seeking competent instruction would allow them to progress safely and efficiently.

Everyone has a unique learning style, but as we've discussed, the tendency to overestimate personal ability is a basic human

condition. A good instructor will understand how to adjust their teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles and help each student reach their full potential as safely and efficiently as possible. Although most basic training courses generally range in price from \$1,000 to \$3,500, the potential cost of overestimating your ability to teach yourself, or learning through faulty instruction, can turn out to be significantly more expensive (and painful or debilitating) in the long run.

Aside from the obvious aspects of safety, health, and money, consider the time invested in training. Self-training, however possible, is not an efficient way to gain the precise skills and coordination required of our sport. Because we aren't able to clearly see our mistakes for what they actually are, feedback from the eye of an experienced instructor is one of the single most important ingredients missing in the process of self-training.

PYGMY

AWARD WINNING
BOAT KITS

CALL FOR A FREE CATALOG:
360-385-6143

www.PygmyBoats.com

For instance, a beginner can watch an hour and a half long training video on ground handling techniques and may have a thorough understanding of the skills involved on a conceptual or intellectual level. However, without the practiced eye of an instructor identifying and relentlessly correcting each of their mistakes, there is no way to reliably ensure that they are practicing the correct technique and making the most efficient (or safe) use of their time.

Therefore, there's a significant difference between 10-20 hours spent unknowingly practicing poor technique, and two to six hours spent relentlessly practicing perfect technique under the guidance and feedback from an instructor. This constant feedback not only rejects the incorrect physical response we aim to eliminate early in the learning process, but also reinforces the correct physical response we want to become habitual and exponentially reduces the amount of time required to reach a desired goal.

IN CONCLUSION

Two of the things that I appreciate most about flying paramotors is the amount of risk that we can mitigate and the relatively large degree of control that we have over our given situation. Unlike many things in life, the sport of paramotoring is largely as safe as the decisions we choose to make. It's largely as safe as the equipment we choose to fly, the conditions we choose to launch into, the altitude which we choose to fly at, and the maneuvers we choose to attempt. That said, the sport of paramotoring is not completely safe, and you're not always going to be able to anticipate or control every situation, make the right decisions, or be the best version of yourself 100 percent of the time. This sport can be deadly, and one cannot begin to make this sport safe based on bad, missing, or incomplete information.

If this sport is something you think you want to attempt, by all means, do it. I've seen things from my "lawn chair in the sky" that I cannot even begin to describe to my pedestrian

or fixed-wing friends. But please, do not be too proud or too enticed by the belief that you will save exponentially more money in the long run that you skip out on quality training.

Choosing the right instructor or school is equally as important as receiving training. Unfortunately, certifications in and of themselves, or bold proclamations of being the greatest instructor in the world, don't always guarantee true competence or thorough training programs. A reputable program will be built on a comprehensive syllabus that prepares the student for the next lesson and life after training. Most importantly, if you've chosen the right instructor, their reputation, livelihood, profession, and dreams will be based on that of your personal safety, success, and continued growth in the sport. *EAA*

Jon Eisele, EAA 739102, through ParAmerica LLC, has instructed at Paratour, Aviator PPG, ParaCosta, FlyMiPPG, Skyfield Flightworks, and various other schools throughout the United States. In addition to being a USPPA certified Paramotor Instructor, Jon is also a CFI.

SA Garmin2 1908

8.0 x 4.736