



PREPARING FOR SIV

INTRODUCTION

SIV courses can transform your flying, making it safer, more efficient, and more enjoyable. The courses are an investment though, costing you money, time, travel, and emotional energy. So, to help you make the most of your investment, here are some ways to prepare your body and mind for your course at Flyeo. They will also help with your flying generally or preparation for competition.

Much of this advice will seem obvious, as high performance is generally about doing the simple things consistently and well. It's amazing how many pilots finish the day thirsty, tired or sunburned because they have been so focussed on the goals of the course.

You'll see that a lot of the recommendations are about not breaking an established routine. If any of them feel like big changes, then try them out well in advance of the course. We want everything to feel like business as usual on the day.

MONTHS AHEAD

Develop and practice checklists and rituals

- The launch is busy, and you'll be focussed on the upcoming flight. We know that no matter who you are, your heart rate will be high on take-off. This state of 'sympathetic activation' impairs working memory and performance.
- Checklists help overcome lapses in working memory and avoid errors of omission in a stressful environment. Physical and mental rituals calm your mind to improve performance. For many people, an effective ritual is one that combines the physical (e.g., how you stand or what you hold or touch), breathing patterns (e.g., deep or calming) and mental patterns (e.g., mantras).
- Adapt this checklist to suit your own launch process. Think of every mistake you've made before launch, then pick the common ones and put them on your checklist. Eventually, going through the checklist will become a calming ritual in of itself. Print it out, laminate it and put somewhere on your harness.

Helmet	Wing
Reserve	Lines
Sun / Cold	Brakes
Radio	Twist
Instruments	Wind
Zips	Look and Call
Buckles	Smile – Breath
Speed bar	Launch

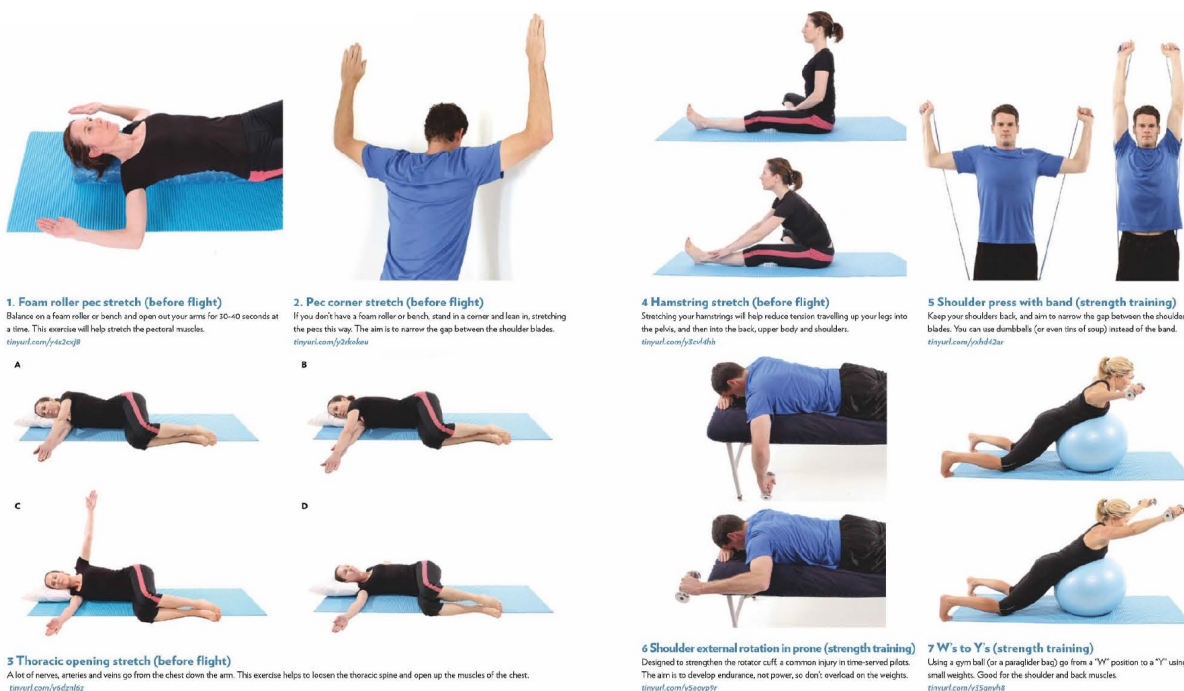
In this example checklist, the pilot works through the column on the left to the side of the launch while getting ready, then the column on the right when their wing is laid out to go.

Smiling and taking a deep breath is a ritual that gives a fractional moment of calm for peak control at the moment of launch.

Work on shoulder, back and hamstring endurance and flexibility

- The neck, shoulders, back and hamstrings all work together in a chain. Keeping them strong and flexible helps prevent shoulder or back pain during the course, and in long flights.
- Minimising cumulative fatigue of your arms and core muscles helps maintain fine control of the glider during repeated runs.
- Increasing your general physical fitness will also improve your G tolerance, concentration and stamina. A broad mix of cardiovascular, strength, and flexibility training is the best fit for paragliding.

These exercises were developed specifically for paragliding with Consultant Shoulder Physiotherapist Ian Prangley and originally published in Cross Country Magazine.



Learn the Anti-G Straining Manoeuvre (AGSM)

- A typical 6-10 m/s spiral dive will induce 2-4G. An effective AGSM can reduce the effects of G by up to 3G, giving you a lot more bandwidth and comfort during the manoeuvre. It's simple to learn, but like everything, needs practice to become automatic.
 - Remember that G tolerance varies. It will be reduced at the start of the season, if you are tired, dehydrated, ill, cold or hungover.
1. *Anticipate the G forces as you go into the manoeuvre.*
 2. *When you start to feel the downward pressure, tuck your legs up against your harness, and tense your legs and abdominal muscles.*
 3. *Breathe in and begin to say the word "Hook". About three-quarters of the way through the word, before hitting the "K" sound, close your throat and hold your breath for 2 seconds, building the pressure in your abdomen even more.*
 4. *Strongly exhale, finishing the word "Hook"*
 5. *Rapidly inhale, beginning the word "Hook" again*
 6. *Repeat until you feel the G forces release.*

Enjoy a relaxed flight or visit the launch or SIV landing

- If you arrive with sufficient time, and the conditions are appropriate, then have a relaxed flight the day before the course. Even a top to bottom will help you get used to the area. As you fly towards the main landing, note the SIV landing on the edge of the lake, and the wind direction and strength at that time of day. This will give you even more bandwidth for the first flight of the course.
- Even if you are unable to fly, just visiting the launch or the SIV landing by the lake will help take a little off the pressure off the following day.



Eat, (don't) drink and sleep

- Eat a normal dinner and make sure you are well hydrated.
- Avoid alcohol or, if you usually drink most evenings, then have a maximum of 2 units of alcohol. Hangovers are dehydrating, tiring, reduce your capacity to learn and focus, increase your risk of motion sickness and reduce your G tolerance.
- Go to bed at your usual time, aiming for at least 7.5 hours sleep.

When travelling from a different timezone, build in enough time to adjust

- It takes roughly one day to adapt to each hour of time difference. So, if you are flying in from the USA, you may need five days to fully adjust to the time difference. Holiday is always precious and pressured, but if you want to maximise your performance in the course, travel over early and give yourself time to adapt.

EACH MORNING

Eat a normal breakfast, including your usual intake of tea or coffee, and at least one glass of water

- You will have time to digest before the first flight, and a proper breakfast will set you up well for the day.
- Caffeine has measurable effects on sports performance, so it's best not to either quit or take up coffee drinking on the day of the course. Avoid energy drinks like Red Bull, unless they are part of your usual routine.
- Start your day hydrated, so it's easy to maintain during the day.



TO PACK

1. 2L of water: leave the bottle in the van, and only keep it in the back of your harness if it's in a soft container, in case of a hard landing.
2. Lunch: a mix of complex carbohydrates and protein (the classic French ham cheese baguette is ideal.)
3. Healthy slow-release snacks (e.g., trail mix)
4. Cash in case you want to buy additional food or drink at the beach
5. Small tube of sun cream
6. Cap or hat
7. Sunglasses

Apply factor 30+ sunscreen

- The sun can be strong in Annecy. Sunburn is dehydrating, distracting, energy consuming and leads to long-term skin damage.
- In theory, SPF numbers reflect how long you can spend in the sun, but they are fairly meaningless due to variation in skin types and environments, so pick a high number e.g., Factor 30 or greater.
- Suncreams are either physical, containing zinc or titanium oxides or chemical, containing para-aminobenzoic acid. Both types can cause irritation and allergic reactions, so find a brand that works for you while you are at home, then bring it with you to the course. Don't change brand on the day.
- If you are sunburnt, then use simple painkillers and aloe vera cream for treatment. Drink a little more fluid, don't pop any blisters and remember that sunburnt skin offers you no sun protection at all.

EACH DAY

Visualise the flight during the bus ride up

- Take some time to visualise the flight, including successful completion of the SIV task. The more detailed and immersive the visualisation, the more effective, so imagine you are directing a film: think of angles, sounds, smells, sensations, feelings. Make it as vivid and realistic as possible.
- Sit in the front of the bus if you tend to motion sickness. It's a windy road.

Look after yourself through the day

- After landing at the beach, eat and drink little and often. The goal is to stay fed and hydrated through the day, without any big swings in blood sugar or ever feeling thirsty. Water is fine, but if it's a particularly hot day, or you are sweating, try to consume a little salt alongside it (crisps or salted peanuts are ideal). Water requires some solute (salt and sugar) in or alongside it, to be absorbed efficiently from the gut. Note that artificial sweeteners are usually metabolically inert, so are not helpful here.
- Put on a hat, stay in the shade if possible and apply sun cream through the day.

Aim for at least 7.5 hours of sleep

- The link between sleep, circadian rhythms and performance is indisputable. Sleeps helps consolidate the learning and maintains performance through the days. Sleep requirements vary between individuals but 7.5 hours is the typical minimum to avoid building a sleep debt.



Where does this advice come from?

Matt Wilkes is a paraglider pilot, and a doctor specialising in human performance in extreme environments. He has a masters degree in Mountain Medicine, and a PhD in pilot physiology and safety. Matt has been the leader of several large international expeditions, run high altitude clinics in Nepal and flown all over East Africa with the AMREF Flying Doctors. He is a contributor to Cross Country Magazine and advises the British Paragliding Racing Academy.