



There's nothing like the feeling of successfully learning how to fly RC.

PRO TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED IN RC

10 dos and don'ts for success

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With so many easy to build and fly trainers and sport planes available today, this is a perfect time to get started. Especially with electric-powered sport airplanes, the amount of bench work is minimal. "Plug and play" model airplanes come out of the box completely ready to fly without any assembly required. For many the hardest part is deciding which model plane and radio combo to choose.



For many, the hardest part is choosing their first RC airplane and radio system. The FMS Ranger shown here is a great first airplane.

Here are 10 pro tips that will help you get started and highlight some basic techniques you'll need to know to become a successful RC pilot.

THINGS TO DO

1. GET INVOLVED

Our RC hobby is a very social experience and there are many organizations and clubs around that will be very helpful in learning your RC pilot skills. There are hobby shops that specialize in radio control and they can guide you to the closest RC club. Becoming a club member, you'll quickly find out where local instructors tend to gather. Hobby shops are also where you'll find and learn about suitable airplanes and other needed supplies. Clubs are great for making new friends and to find other useful hobby resources. Reading *Model Airplane News* is also a perfect place to start.



The best place to start and gain information is at a local hobby shop or an RC club.

2. LEARNING THE ROPES

Nothing will speed your progress more than good one-on-one time with an experienced RC instructor. Having someone help you avoid those first few common miscues and hiccups will greatly speed your flight training. It will also be much less expensive than trying to learn to fly by yourself as having an instructor will help prevent you from having to buy replacement trainers before you successfully solo. An experienced modeler will help you assemble your model and set it up properly. From installing the radio gear and connecting the pushrods to the control surfaces and making sure your model is properly balanced, all this is important to being successful.



To learn the ropes find someone who will be an instructor and show you what's involved.

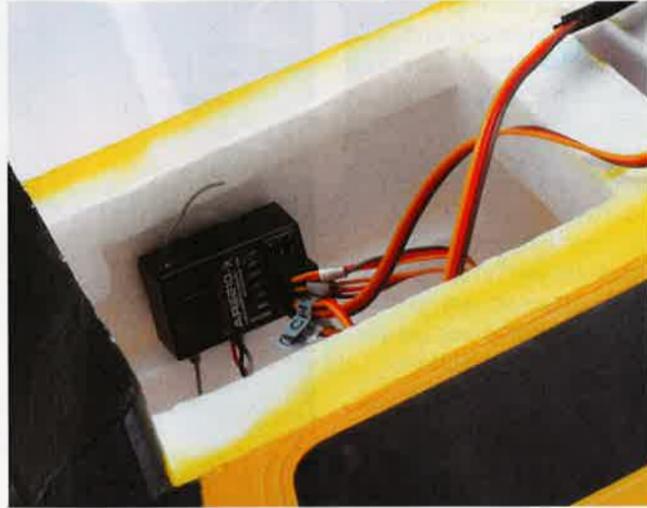
3. HAVE A PLAN

Work with your instructor and develop a training plan that works for you. Each session should have a specific goal that helps you build on previous flight successes. As with most things we want to learn, you'll have to walk before you can run.

First work with your instructor and learn how the airplane operates. Go over important safety points and always turn on your transmitter first. Move the throttle stick all the way down and make a habit of keeping your fingers away from the propeller while connecting the battery. Be aware of your surroundings and make sure nothing is near you and your airplane that could get caught in the propeller.



To develop a plan you have to know how your airplane works. Understanding the power system and the LiPo batteries is an important first step.



Make sure you install your radio system correctly.

4. LEARN AT THE FLYING FIELD

Start by taxiing your model around the field. This will teach you how much power is needed to move the model and how the rudder controls the model's direction. With your airplane on the ground, you'll learn how much rudder is needed to steer and how to manage the throttle smoothly. Another thing you should learn is to be aware of the wind direction and how it affects your airplane. To maintain control and maximize your airspeed always takeoff and land into the wind.

Once you and your instructor are comfortable with your control of your airplane, you can progress to takeoffs, level flight, turning and banking, and learning how to fly at various altitudes and airspeeds.



At the flying field you can start feeling out your airplane's control responses by taxiing and using the throttle and rudder.

BUDDY BOX TRAINING

The best way you can learn how to fly RC is with a buddy box system. Older buddy box training systems used a cable connected between the instructor's transmitter and the student's radio. Today's newer systems operate wirelessly. The buddy box allows the instructor to take control of your airplane by simply releasing a spring-loaded switch. If you get into trouble, your instructor can quickly correct the plane and then give control back to you. Compared to using a single radio (where an instructor has to take the radio from the student's hands to regain control), the buddy box system is much easier and safer.



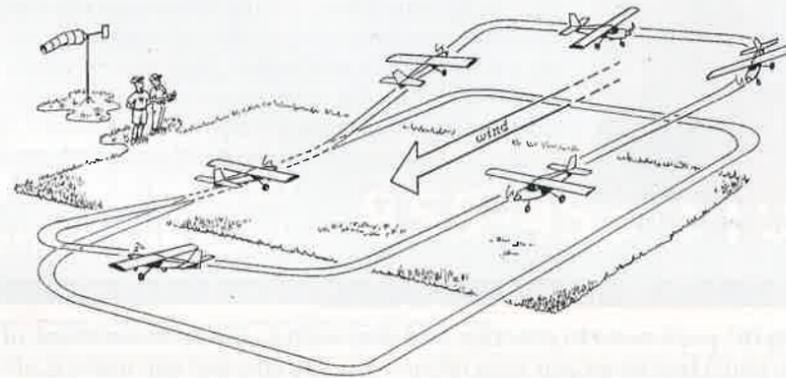
Once in the air, your instructor will climb to a safe altitude and give you control.

5. FLIGHT INSTRUCTION

In the beginning, all your training flights will start and end with your instructor in control. Until you are signed off for solo flight, your instructor will control the model during takeoff and will fly it to a safe altitude before giving flight control to you. As you gain more experience and you can consistently anticipate your model's needed corrections and responses, you'll be given more and more unassisted stick time. As you continue to make progress your instructor will know when you're ready to take off by yourself. It's a big step!

Most trainers and sport planes are designed to be stable, and once you fully advance the throttle, they will want to become airborne almost by themselves. Apply the throttle slowly while maintaining a straight takeoff path. If the plane veers off course, add a touch of rudder (usually, a little right correction is needed). Once the model gets light on its wheels, pull slightly back on the elevator stick; the model's nose will come up, and the plane will become airborne. Keep the wings level with small inputs of aileron, and let the model climb out at a shallow angle. If necessary, apply a little down (push the stick forward slightly), to keep the model from climbing too steeply.

Once in the air you'll learn to fly the traffic pattern. A good instructor will talk you through the various maneuvers and as you get more comfortable flying at lower altitudes, you'll transition to the landing pattern. The instructor will get you lined up for your first few attempts and will remind you to control the airspeed with your elevator (model nose high or low), and adjust your descent rate with the throttle adjustments. It will only be a matter of time before you make your first landing. It will be easier than you first thought. Once you solo and can fly your airplane unassisted, you'll want to continue working with your instructor so he can help you improve your skills with more advanced flight training.



Here's a typical traffic pattern. Always take off and land going into the wind.

THINGS TO AVOID

6. DON'T PANIC.

Remember flying RC is supposed to be fun. Don't be afraid to tell your instructor if you begin to feel stressed. Let your instructor take over. You have to take a lot of small steps before your comfort level will improve. Take a few minutes to calm down and then take back control.

7. DON'T FLY TOO FAR AWAY.

To maintain control you have to clearly see your airplane. The further away your airplane is, the smaller it will be and the harder it will be to see what corrections are needed. This is why you learn to fly your airplane in the traffic pattern around the flying field.

8. DON'T BE A ZOOMER!

There's one in every crowd: that guy who unexpectedly blasts off and zooms all over the sky with no rhyme or reason. This guy is oblivious of anyone else at the field or in the sky and is a safety issue. Don't be this guy! Have a plan, and then fly your plan. Be it to practice touch and goes or try some basics aerobatics, be aware of your surroundings and let people know what you are doing. Announce your takeoffs and landings and tell people what you are doing while airborne.

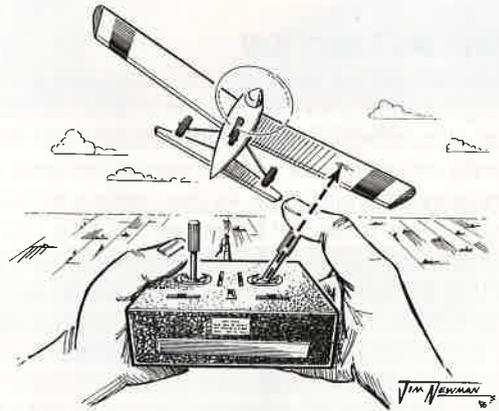
FLIGHT SIMS

Though not a substitute for true one-on-one instructor time, a lot can be learned with the use of a flight simulator program like RealFlight. Flight sims bring flight training indoors and help develop muscle memory and eye-hand coordination. Even when it is windy, raining or snowing outside, you can make some virtual flights. Often RC clubs will have flight sims available for use by the members and you can use them together with actual in person flight training at the flying field. Again here, don't be a zoomer! Practice safe flying and have a plan to learn one thing at a time until you can take off and land consistently.



9. DON'T GET REVERSED

A common trouble spot, especially in the beginning is keeping your right and left straight in your head. When you are flying away from yourself and the tail of the airplane is pointing toward you, your right is your model's right. It always is, but in your view of your airplane when you move the stick to the right, your model will bank and turn to the right. But, when the airplane is heading toward you, the model's response to your right stick movement, will seem reversed and the wingtip to the left will drop. A good tip to avoid reversal when the model is fling toward you, is to imagine you are propping up the lower wingtip with your stick to level the wings.



Control reversal is trick to learn to correct for. Use the control stick to prop up the low wingtip.



The best advice for anyone starting out is not to fly alone. You'll learn faster and it is also a lot safer.

10. DON'T FLY ALONE

There are a couple of reasons for this. First, you will have more fun flying with others and it is easier to learn things that will help you improve your pilot skills. Also, it is much safer to fly with others. Should something unfortunate happen, like cutting a finger with a propeller, or you crash your plane away from the flying field, there is safety in numbers. The fun factor increase can't be under estimated. You'll make a lot of friends along the way. And isn't that the reason you wanted to learn to fly RC in the first place?

BOTTOM LINE

As with anything else, to excel at flying RC you'll need to practice and stay with it. It's an investment of time and effort. In the end, the satisfaction you'll feel when you take off and land by yourself will make it all well worth the effort. You'll be a properly trained RC pilot with the whole world of RC aviation to enjoy. ✦