



Brighouse Model Aircraft Club



NEW TO THE HOBBY

Read our Beginners Guide Here

1. Know the Law. Regrettably in our increasingly litigious society, flying R/C model aircraft is not a free-for-all. Laws are in place which govern its practice. When, where and how you can fly and even to some extent what models you can operate, are all areas where some element of control is imposed. While it might not be necessary for you to have an in depth knowledge of these terms and conditions, it is imperative that you are aware they exist. The British Model Flying Association (BMFA) is the governing body for aeromodelling across the UK. Peruse its website (www.bmfa.org) and the member's handbook for more information.
2. Get insured. Third party public liability insurance cover is a must for flying model aircraft. Many model flying clubs will insist you carry the same insurance as the rest of its members. Primarily this is done so that the committee can obtain extended indemnity to cover all officials, something that can only be attained when every member of a club carries the same cover. Given that the BMFA will arrange your insurance for you, most model clubs in the UK are affiliated to the organisation. Not only is the insurance there to protect your interests, it serves to protect the injured or damaged party and the landowner of the field you choose to fly from. Third party public liability settlements can be very high indeed!
3. Think twice, pay once! Almost every novice I've met (of a certain age) wants to start with a Spitfire or 'something that looks like a real aeroplane'. Do not rush to the model shop to buy one. Also, try to avoid buying from a pseudo model shop located in a high street shopping centre. Generally, they only sell park flyers and cheap foamie jobs and whilst there's no doubt that these are true R/C model aircraft, the type doesn't always represent the best way to get started in the hobby. Frequent the same model shop as the members of your local club and you'll know you're onto something half decent. This, of course, leads us nicely to...
4. Get help! The BMFA, your local model shop or the increasingly active internet can quickly put you in touch with your nearest model club or flying school. Visit the flying field but try to avoid turning up by chance. Make advanced arrangements to meet somebody and ask lots of questions. Don't wait to be approached as, in general, clubs (not just model flying clubs) are often a little

backward in coming forward. In a club environment your training will be free of charge and will most likely be undertaken by a volunteer instructor. In contrast, as a commercial organisation a flying school will charge you for lessons, the benefit being guaranteed flights. You need to decide what is best for you, however, in each case don't forget to investigate the facilities and available flying times before you sign up.

5. Listen to the guy leading by example. Avoid the chap doing all the talking, struggling with his engine or fixing his already battered model. Every model club has at least one such person. If you can, make your first approaches to the guy doing the trouble-free flying. If you follow bad examples from the off you can quickly suffer the same short comings. Take time out to speak to other novices to garner their opinion of the model club. How long have they been learning? Are they getting enough flying time? Is the club oversubscribed? All questions which will have a bigger impact on your success than you may at first realise.

6. Avoid second-hand equipment. Particularly to start with. Classified ads or eBay are the worst places to buy gear if you don't know one end of a model aircraft from another. Sure, flight-boxes, starter motors and fuel carry a low risk of being too poor to use, but people do tend to tinker with radio gear and some are not very good at it. Note that radio gear may also have had more than its fair share of crashes, especially if sold in a tatty trainer.

Take the advice of the fliers at your club, especially on which model to choose. All trainers may look the same but some are better than others and, surprisingly, many clubs have a favourite. With engines, you pretty much get what you pay for so buy the best simple engine you can afford. With 2.4GHz radio equipment now firmly established as the way forward you'd be advised to adopt the new technology. Currently you'll be buying into a brand as there are incompatibility issues between manufacturers, so choose carefully and avoid picking equipment you can't source locally. Electric models are also much more viable as trainers these days but the equipment required to operate them is quite different. Again, take advice from your new club-mates, follow their lead and remember that only **electric** and **4 stroke** models can be flown at Clifton.

7. Shop around. It's always worth shopping around these days. See what your local hobby store can offer you, then compare online prices to see if they can match them. I'll go out on a limb here and ask you not to buy online if you can get the bits you want locally. That may not be a popular choice but consider this: Your model shop may not be able to go as low as a mail order business price, however, what value do you put on postage, the increased risk of damage and the convenience of being able to take your purchases back to the shop? Support your local model shop where you feel you can or it might not be there when you most need it.

8. It's not as easy as it looks. This is true and is the biggest reason for most first timers dropping out of the hobby. At the flying field it may well seem as if the

flyers are casually moving their thumbs around while their model performs no end of awe-inspiring tricks but, trust me, in the early stages a ten minute flight will leave you mentally fried.

For training, some clubs use the buddy box system (two transmitters joined by a wire) which can help with confidence, as can practice on computer based R/C flight simulators. There is, however, no substitute for real life practice and garnering of information from any source you can, be it the internet, DVD's, books or, of course, RCM&E, one of the better radio control magazines. Be prepared to give the hobby the time it deserves. If you're a renowned 'hobbyist' who flits from one whimsical pastime to the next, note that model flying is going to ruin your golf handicap!

9. Set yourself reasonable goals. Don't promise yourself that you will have the art mastered over the summer. Refer back to point 8 and concentrate more on getting over early disorientation issues and incorrect stick inputs. Get these basics down and you can begin to concentrate on perfecting your take-offs and landings.

Age is an issue. Sad but true. If you're an octogenarian, don't expect to pick this game up as quickly as some Nintendo trained hooded teenager - it's just not going to happen. Remember though, that age and experience can often overcome youthful ability in a hobby such as aeromodelling.

10. Enjoy the hobby and don't get blinkered. There are many facets to model flying, from powered flight through gliders, to helicopters, electric flight, indoor models and jets. As you progress you'll develop a style to your flying or a hankering for a particular type of model. Strange as it may seem given everything I've said about finding local fliers, getting off your own flying field can help broaden your horizons. Take in a local model show and speak to participants. Check out the trade stands and quiz the traders on their model ranges. All of these things can really lift the lid on the amazing hobby you've chosen.