

SITFLY EXITS

MOST SITFLY EXITS ARE ACTUALLY UNINTENTIONAL BACKFLY EXITS. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE RELATIVE WIND...

WORDS ALLY MILNE

Sitflying in groups is one of the most popular types of freefly skydive, but getting people together on exit can often be done without great forethought or experience of different exit techniques. Do you always fall onto your back when making a sitfly exit, or would you like to learn some more imaginative or technical methods of getting out of the plane? Perhaps you want to start launching mixed VFS formations? In which case, read on – this is the article for you!

Like every exit technique for any body position, you need a good set-up in the door, good presentation to the airflow and a good timing count for a successful launch when jumping with others. We are going to look at the simplest method first – a standard solo face-to-tail sitfly exit – and then look at the basics of a few other different ways you can exit in sitfly.

BACK IN A SECOND

Most people on a sitfly exit end up backflying and this is down to both set-up in the door and presentation to the airflow. The key when setting up in the door is to get the body in a sitfly position before exiting. If your set-up is upright or standing up, you would have to quickly put your body into the correct position on the airflow. However, if you are already in the correct position, you do not have to do this in the weak sub-terminal air. To perform a backfly exit, the air during the door set-up should be hitting your body on your rig or the back part of your torso. To perform a successful sitfly exit, the undersides of your thighs should be presented to the airflow. In a standard face-to-tail exit, this requires you to tilt forwards while keeping a body position that should still have good 90° angles between your torso, thighs and lower legs.

The reason for this is the initial forward speed of the aircraft and your downwards



“ It should appear that the ground fills your centre of vision. Don't worry – this means you're doing it right ”

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1 QFX on the hill, by Ewan Cowie. The visual perspective is often different on an exit

2 Good presentation during a mixed linked exit, by Ewan Cowie

3 A good 2-way sitfly exit setup. Turn your head 45° to the right while looking at this photo – see how the fliers are presenting their freefall positions to the relative wind. By Chris Cook

acceleration. You will probably already be familiar with this concept – it is often referred to as 'the hill'. It has a steep gradient on the exit and will have completely flattened off after approximately 10 seconds.

Little force or effort should be required to place your body into the airflow. However, it may take some strength to get set up and hold the float rail in the airflow, especially if the run-in speed of the aircraft is fast. Use too much force when stepping off the aircraft and you may be introducing a turn during the exit, which is difficult to control when flying in the sub-terminal airflow. The aim is to keep still – unnecessary arm movements, such as 'winding down the car windows', do not assist your stability. When you exit, the air should be hitting you where

it would normally hit you when sitflying – at a weaker rate, however, until you have accelerated to terminal velocity. Your visual perspective at this point can be confusing because, when looking forwards, it should appear that the ground fills your centre of vision. Don't worry – this means you're doing it right. If you were to see either the horizon or, worse still, the plane, then you would not have tilted far enough forward. If you are jumping with someone else, then you can look at them until you have accelerated to terminal velocity (which is when your visual perspective is as per normal).

ALRIGHT, WHAT'S NEXT?

Once you have mastered the standard sitfly exit, it can be too easy to fall into the trap of always using the same exit

jump after jump. Next, we are going to look at another solo exit that is slightly more challenging because you are facing the front of the aircraft – into the airflow.

The basics that we learned for rear-facing exits also apply here. Get a good set-up in the door in your sitfly position. Once out, present your thighs to the airflow. For facing this direction, you will need to lean back. A useful tip is to have your right arm (which is holding onto the float rail) as straight as possible. When jumping with others using this exit, the angle of your torso should be parallel. It is useful to have your left leg floating onto the airflow as you exit rather than helping support your bodyweight. You should exit shortly after you are in the correct position as it may be difficult to hold yourself in the correct position for too long. →



Once you step off and place yourself onto the airflow, your visual perspective should be of the aircraft flying away from you. By keeping this in your vision, it can help you maintain heading control.

GRIPS AND TIPS

A more complex and rarer technique is the floating side-on sitfly exit. As with the other techniques, thigh presentation to the airflow is a must. This can be helped by placing your left foot high up the front edge of the doorframe. The visual perspective for this exit type would show the horizon initially at 45° and, to prevent confusion, it is better to maintain eye contact with another person in your exit group.

Exit techniques where a flyer or group of fliers hop from inside the airflow are also possible. When hopping into the airflow, you may introduce unnecessary motion that may cause you or others to roll off the sitfly position – only use enough effort to get yourself onto the airflow. Once on the airflow, you are looking to get the airflow immediately in the correct place and maintain the air presentation to the thighs.

When taking out a sitfly formation with grips, all of the previous points about presentation are still valid for all fliers in the formation. However, the grips add another layer of difficulty. Gripped sitfly exits actually are a level of difficulty above head down linked exits. New VFS teams



4 Successful launch of VFS Random 'T Bird', by Ewan Cowie

5 Although this jumper is sitflying from the perspective of the cameraman, he is actually backflying on the relative wind. By Ally Milne

are advised to launch an all head down exit, grip switch and transition down to the first point when the first formation contains one or more sitfliers. This prevents time being lost on a failed launch and having to get people back together when sub-terminal.

When launching gripped exits, the grips should be held tightly and all fliers must be prepared to fly strongly on exit – others in the exit group may be pulling on them in the initial few seconds. When subjected to pull force on the grips, the key is to keep the presentation to the airflow constant and prevent the pull from making the body (mainly the shoulders) asymmetrical. This can induce unwanted turns and also causes people to bail from the sitfly position. Also, by keeping your hips toward the centre of the formation, this prevents you from being

Sitfly exit pro tips

- Stay strong setting up in the door
- Present thighs to the airflow
- Keep airflow on thighs during exit phase
- Hold still and fly strong

With thanks to:

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pulled off sitfly and potentially onto your belly – it is easy to let the hips slip back.

Like all aspects of freefly, there are many combinations and techniques that can be combined to form different and new ways of exiting the aircraft with your friends. By learning different ways of exiting, you will be improving your skills level and opening up new possibilities both for your solo and group jumping. If you need any further help, assistance or advice, then your CCI or local BPA FF Coach should be able to point you in the right direction. ●

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