

One Question I've Often Been Asked Regarding Improving Flying Skills Is This One:

'What should I practice when flying by myself that will improve my control of the kite and also allow me to be competitive if I choose to enter any fighter kite competition?'

Whether you plan to compete in fighter kite competitions or not, practicing the following solo flying maneuvers so you can perform them predictably will add immeasurably to your fighter kite flying enjoyment!

Sometimes after reading the following flying maneuvers, people will make replies like, 'My kite won't do this or that, are you sure this maneuver can be done?' These flying skills are all skills that I know about first hand, I'm not telling you about skills I've never experienced, HOWEVER.....

In order to perform most of the flying maneuvers mentioned in this article, your kite must be tuned correctly. To me that means 'perfectly' tuned. It must not veer or pull consistently to either the right or left, it must fly straight. It must also be able to enter into a spin quickly. This is all determined by the tuning adjustments you make to the kite. You might want to brush up on tuning fighter kites by reading all the info about tuning and adjusting fighter kites you can get your hands on.

LEARN THROUGH EXPERIMENTATION HOW TO PRECISELY TUNE YOUR KITES!! You read it correctly, **experimenting is what it takes.** Adjust every adjustable aspect of the bridle and spine but only one aspect at a time, then fly the kite after each change you make and notice the difference in the way the kite flies and make mental or written notes about what you noticed.....continue with this until you feel you can predict what the kite will do when you make any specific minor adjustment. Yes, this takes time and *I know of no short cuts.*

The following skills can all be practiced and perfected by practicing. Practice, and tons of it, is the way to gain these skills. *I know of no short cuts.* These skills are not listed in any particular order and are not necessarily equally important one to the other. Select one or two and practice them, then add another, etc.

Before getting into the descriptions of the flying skills themselves, there is a non flying skill that is essential to solo practicing if you really want to improve your flying skills; honesty!

Be completely honest with yourself.

For example, it's easy to tell or convince yourself you made the kite change directions exactly when you wanted it to. However, in reality the kite, not you, actually determined the time of the direction change, you must be brutally honest with yourself! And be super observant of what actually is happening with the kite, the line and with your manipulation of the line. Being totally honest with yourself about what you are observing during practice is the fastest way to becoming a better flyer!

MANEUVERS TO PRACTICE:

1. Change the direction of the kite at any moment during flight. This means immediately and at the exact moment **you** want the kite to change direction. It does not mean; when given enough time, you can get the kite to change directions.

2. Fly the kite horizontally to the right and then to the left, from one edge of the wind window to the other with the wingtips no higher than 24" above the ground. The kite should be flying perfectly straight and its nose should rotate upward when the kite is at the very edge of the wind window.
3. Put the kite into a spin, then change the direction of the kite's spin on command. Again, this means immediately when you want the spin to change directions.
4. Get the kite to initiate a spin. When the kite is flying and not spinning, put it into a spin on command.
5. Get the kite to stop spinning on command. Get it to stop and float or cobra.
6. Be able to stop the kite dead in its tracks, on command, anywhere within the wind window no matter what motion the kite is in at the moment. Again this means the moment you want the kite to stop, not when the kite is ready to stop.
7. Change the direction of the kite's travel 180 degrees without having the kite spin prior to heading in its new direction. As soon as the kite's horizontal path is established, again change the direction of travel by 180 degrees, and repeat this until you get tired of it. Do it with the kite at different elevations.
8. Spinning the kite so the wingtips are no higher off the ground than 12". And become able to sustain that spinning for at least 30 seconds to a minute. And be able to change the direction of the spin during that period....of course, without ever having the kite touch the ground.
9. Fly the kite above and behind you. The kite should be far enough behind you that you almost lose your balance when you lean back to see it. And when the kite is in this position, you must be able to control the direction the kite travels on command and also control the direction of the spin and when the kite spins.
10. Fly the kite over your head and continue flying it when it is behind you until the kite is a couple of inches above the ground behind you. For this you need to continue retrieving flying line faster and faster as the kite goes behind you.
11. Fly the kite to either side of you so it is at the very edge of the wind window or slightly beyond it. Then control the direction of travel, spin direction and position of the kite on command when it is at the very edge of the wind window. Don't allow the kite to be pushed toward the center of the wind window, keep it at the edge.
12. Pulling or retrieving line at a very rapid pace. Whatever your current speed or rate of pulling, you'll be better off if you can double that speed at least. Practice reaching farther for each line pull and moving your arms more quickly and smoothly.
13. Be able to adjust the direction of the kite's travel very slightly when pulling in line without causing the kite to spin or radically change its direction. For example, make the kite change its tracking angle by about 2%-3% either up or down from its current path.
14. Stall the kite in any position in the wind window. This can be in the form of floating or in a 'cobra' position; it's best to know how to do both.
15. Maintain the 'cobra' position while raising and lowering the distance from the ground of the tail of the kite from touching the ground to much higher. During this 'cobra' the kite is not

spinning or turning, just standing upright with its nose pointed upward. This is easiest with light wind, having the kite directly down wind and the tow connection loop positioned a little lower than normal also helps.

16. Cause the kite to make an 'outside loop' at the edge of the wind window. This is effective both near the ground and at higher elevations.
17. When in a fast nosedive toward the ground, at the moment you want, make the kite float out away from you; it's best if you can do it with the kite floating no higher than 18" off the ground.
18. Fly the kite in a complete circle around you. For this it is best to practice it when the wind is 5 mph or less. The higher the wind speed, the more difficult this is to do. And until you actually do it one time, it is difficult to get the feel for it, especially in higher winds.
19. When in a fast nosedive toward the ground, as it approaches being 18" from the ground make it do a 90 degree turn either to the right or left without having the kite spin first. In other words, the kite will be heading down at a high speed then turn 90 degrees, either right or left and begin flying on that new horizontal path about 18" above and parallel to the ground.
20. Control the kite's direction and spin similar to how you would do it when retrieving line, but do it while lengthening the flying line. This is done by 'pumping' the flying line instead of pulling or retrieving it. Pulling or retrieving line shortens your line....pumping can provide complete control of the kite just like when pulling line but allows you to lengthen your flying line at the same time. Some flyers pump the kite using one hand, others use two. Once you get the feel of it, it's easy.
21. Control your kite and know exactly where it is located without looking at it all the time. The reason for this is that sometimes you need to watch the opponent's kite almost as much as your own without losing sight or control of your kite.

When you can accomplish these, others you will easily develop on your own. And in many cases you'll make up a skill that works better than one or more of these listed. **There is no 'right way' to fly fighter kites except the way that works best for you.**

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