

ENJOY THE FUN OF FLYING AMERICAN STYLE FIGHTER KITES

If you've never flown an American style fighter kite and want to begin having the fun other fighter kite flyers are having; here's what to do to get started.

A. Buy or make an American style fighter kite that will easily fly in LESS wind speed than you typically experience in your area.

One of the most important issues to consider when selecting a kite to either buy or make is the wind speed it is designed to fly in. Especially if this will be your first American style fighter kite, choose it primarily based on the wind speed it will fly in. 95% of the time it is best to choose a kite that flies easily in light winds; 2mph to 6mph. This is even more important if you are unsure of the typical wind speeds of your area.

In fact if the kite is designed for stronger wind than you have at your flying area, it may be impossible to get the kite to fly.....or....if you get it to fly, it will be for very brief periods each followed by a crash! In my experience this one aspect is the cause of 99% of new flyers' difficulty in learning to fly an American style fighter kite.

Choosing a kite that is capable of flying in less wind than you typically experience at your flying area is an important consideration that will assure quicker flying success and the most enjoyment from flying an American style fighter kite.

B. Buy flying line and a 'gator' style flying reel and wind the flying line onto the gator reel. The photo on the right is of two gator reels. A 'gator' reel has a flat side and a flared side. (See the article about flying line and reels for detailed information.)



C. Make two pre-flight adjustments to your kite. Making these two easy adjustments will virtually guarantee your kite will fly well the first time it's launched.

a. Position the tow connection loop, this is the loop you tie your flying line to, so when the kite hangs by the tow connection loop it is at a slight angle with the tail hanging lower than the nose. The angle should position the nose of the kite about 1-1/4"-2" (31.75mm – 50.8mm) above the tail of the kite. An easy way to do it is to rest the tail of the kite on a table, then measure or estimate how high the nose is above the table.

b. Put a slight 'rocker' shaped bend in the spine. If the spine is bamboo, the spine's bend is created by putting the front face of the kite against your stomach, then gently press on the backside of the spine at several points holding the pressure for a few seconds at each point. The bend should be a slight rocker and should begin at the nose of the kite and extend about 7" (177.8mm) toward the tail.

D. Attach a 6'-8' long x about 1/2"-1" wide ribbon streamer to the tail end of the kite's spine. Use a small piece of tape, and attach the streamer to the back side of the tail of the kite's spine. The streamer can be made of crepe paper, strips cut from plastic shopping bags, ribbon etc.

A streamer tail added to the kite slows the kite 'radical' or 'unpredictable' behavior and allows the new flyer an easier time 'taming' or controlling the kite. After flying the kite until it is 'easy' to maneuver; cut about ½ of the streamer off. And after flying the kite with the shorter streamer for awhile, remove the tail and the kite's behavior will not be as likely to surprise you.

- E. Attach your flying line to the kite's bridle tow connection loop.** If you don't have a snap/swivel on the end of your flying line, prepare the end of your flying line by making two loops at the end of it. First make a 7"-8" long loop in the end of your flying line, then make another loop about 1" long at the end of the first loop. Make the loops by tying an overhand knot. Using the larger loop, larkshedd the line to the bridle tow loop. (Read the article 'flying line & reels' for details about various easy methods for attaching your flying line to your kite's bridle)
- F. Head out to fly your kite.** Select a place that does not have large trees, buildings or other obstacles up wind of your flying area. This will provide you with the smoothest wind and smooth wind makes controlling an American style or any style fighter kite much easier.
- G. Stand with your back to the wind.** Be certain you can feel the wind blowing against the back of your neck.
- H. Position your reel at your feet.** Place the flat side of the gator reel on the ground in front of your feet. This is the proper position for the reel in order to have the most flying success. (Read details about reel placement in the article 'flying line & reels')
- I. The easiest way to launch your kite** is to take a friend with you and have your friend walk your kite down wind about 60'-80' while you are letting flying line spool off the reel to allow your friend to take the kite down wind.

Then have your friend hold the kite by the tail end of the spine with the nose of the kite pointed straight up. When you are ready for the kite to fly, grip the flying line and pull it firmly while yelling to your friend to let the kite go.

The kite will ascend if the nose was still pointed up when you pulled on the flying line. If the wind is strong enough, the wind alone will launch the kite from your friend's hand if you simply hold the flying line taut and signal to your friend to release the kite.

- J. If you are flying solo, the easiest way to launch your kite** is to walk your kite downwind about 40' or so un-spooling line as you go; your flying line reel is at the place you started walking with the kite. Prop the kite against a bucket, pole, box, etc with the tail of the spine at the ground and nose pointed straight up. After it is propped up, walk back to your flying line reel and when you're ready, pull hard on the flying line and the kite will ascend.

Another method is to hold the kite in your hand with your arm extended above your head and as far in front of you as possible....with your other hand, hold the flying line. When you are ready to fly, give the kite a gentle toss into the air and allow the wind to take the kite. In order for the kite to be taken away from you by the wind, you need to allow the flying line to slip through your fingers.

- K. When you notice the nose of your kite pointing up** pull or tug on the flying line. This will accelerate the kite upward. As soon as the kite is about at the peak of its altitude, allow more flying line to slip through your fingers so the kite can be taken by the wind farther away. You want the kite to continue climbing in altitude, so continue with tugging on the line when the nose is pointed upward.
- L. The higher your kite is, the less chance for a crash.** The reason for wanting your kite to climb is to reduce the chance of a crash. The higher your kite is, the more time you have to react to its behavior. So if it begins to dive you will have time to stop the dive, allow the kite to recover, and resume flying.
- M. When your kite is in a nose dive headed for the ground, DON'T PULL ON THE FLYING LINE!! Pulling on the flying line at this moment will only intensify the crash!**
- N. WHEN YOUR KITE IS IN A NOSE DIVE HEADED FOR THE GROUND THE ACTION TO TAKE IS TO**

RELEASE OR LET GO

OF THE FLYING LINE. LET THE LINE BE SLACK AND ALLOW IT TO FLOW THROUGH YOUR FINGERS FREELY. THIS WILL STOP THE KITE'S DOWNWARD FLIGHT and allow the wind to take the kite out away from you.

As the kite is going away from you it will turn with its nose pointed up. When that happens, tug on the flying line again to get the kite to climb. At the top of its altitude with that tug, allow some slack in the line and hold the line very loosely. This will allow the kite to be pushed by the wind away from you. Then, when you see the nose pointed up again, tug or pull firmly again to get the kite to climb some more. Repeat the process.

- O. There are only two actions by the flyer that control a fighter kite's flight:**
- a. PULLING in or RETRIEVE flying line. This is how you make the kite fly in a straight path. The direction of the path is determined by the direction the nose of the kite is pointed at the moment you begin to pull on the flying line.**

NOTE: When fighter kite flying, it is NORMAL to have your flying line lying all over the ground at your feet when you're pulling or retrieving line.

- b. RELEASE the flying line allowing the flying line to slip freely through your fingers. This allows the kite to be pushed away from you by the wind.**
- P. It sounds simple and it is.** Doing it successfully usually takes a few practice tries to get the feel of it. However, once you get the feeling of what action to take with the flying line to control the kite, you've got it!