

# **So! You Want to Fly R/C Model Airplanes?!?**

(If you DO, be SURE to read ALL OF THIS!!)

an article by: Dave Perry

Burlington Radio Control Modelers

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Local Club Information:

**SUDBURY MODEL AIRCRAFT CLUB**

**(S.M.A.C.)**

(Field on Garson-Coniston Road – Route 90)

NORTH

0 600m  
1800ft



Maki Rd

Lasalle Blvd

Garson Coniston Rd

S.M.A.C.  
FLYING  
FIELD

TO SUDBURY

TOURIST  
INFO.  
CENTRE

90

Kingsway

Southeast Bypass



Edward Ave

2 Ave

Ave

Coniston

Rideau Ave

Cedar St

Bryce St

Regional Rd 67

Allan St Government Rd

Nickel St

Barcentury

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SOUTH



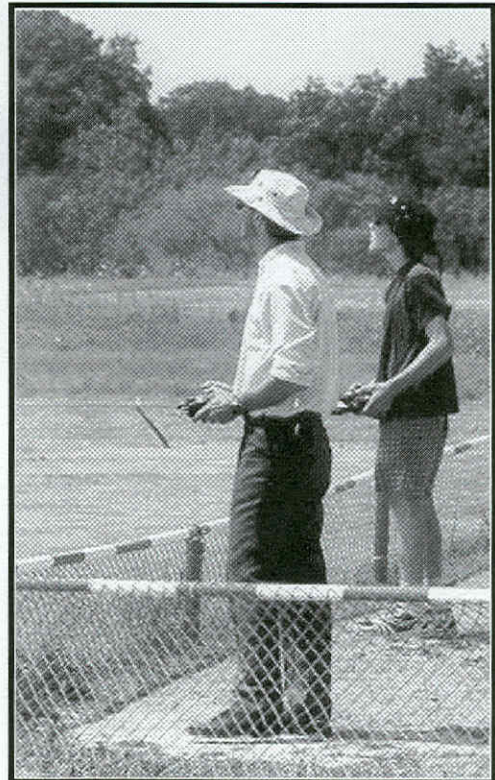
## So you want to Fly Radio Control Airplanes?

*If you do, make sure you read all of this!*

The intent of this document is to help those who are interested in getting into the hobby of R/C Flying. This is a great hobby/sport, and the sky is the limit. (Pardon the pun!) There are so many different aspects of this hobby to satisfy almost anyone. Scale, sport, R/C, control line, or just plane "flying for fun". You learn an incredible amount of really interesting technical information, and it keeps getting better the more you learn. No matter what you age, there is a way for you to enjoy this great hobby.

Every weekend while flying, I get asked the same questions by numerous spectators, *"How do I get into the hobby?"* I know from this point forward, that individual will probably go about it right, stay in the hobby, and, pass it on! On the other hand, so often have I heard people say, *"I used to be in the hobby. I bought a kit, built the plane, took it out and crashed it on the first flight."*

*"What we want everyone to do,  
is start off on the right foot,  
and stay in the hobby!"*



### A bit of Philosophy...

First of all, every thing that you read here is the personal opinion of the writer. I don't profess to be the world's greatest flier. However I have 12 years of R/C flying experience, and my track record speaks for itself.

While in this hobby, you should always look for ways of improving your flying skills by...

- learning from others that are better than you are
- learning from your own stupid mistakes
- learning from others mistakes
- pushing the limits of your existing abilities
- listen to those that are willing to help
- help others that are willing to listen and want to be helped

There are great numbers of excellent RC pilots out there with amazing talent. Unfortunately, there is only a small percentage of those who are willing to pass their knowledge on. In most cases, someone took the time to train them, and they should give something back! Once you are competent and confident, teaching actually makes you a better pilot. There are those who are very dedicated to preserving the hobby and deserve a lot of credit for volunteering their time to help others. You guys know who you are. My compliments and hats off to you.



So now that I have that out of the way, let's get on with the hobby stuff.....

## How Old Do I have to Be to Learn To Fly?

Some say that RC modellers never grow up. And that may be true to a point. But let me tell you right now, it takes skill and technical understanding to really do well in this sport/hobby. The younger you are the easier it is to learn to control the sticks. Kids today do so well with RC flying because of the excellent eye-hand co-ordination acquired from video games. The older we get the tougher it gets to develop good eye hand co-ordination. You eventually get there, it just takes longer.

The earliest age that I recommend children to start flying is 7 to 10 years of age, depending on their maturity. There is a lot of safety involved and I am always concerned about younger children with a short attention span. It only takes a split second for an accident to happen. This must be taken very seriously. It is also better if Dad or big brother learns to fly first and coaches but doesn't teach their son or daughter. Siblings tend to learn better from others and are usually not as intimidated.

The optimum age is 11 to 45 for developing good eye-hand co-ordination. If you are older than that, please don't be offended or get discouraged. I am speaking purely from experience. If you are older than 45, try your kids video games and see how well you score. If your scores start catching up to your kids on the games, then you should do very well with RC flying. In learning to fly RC, you want to get to a point where your control becomes a reflex action rather than a thought process. In certain situations, if you have to think about it what you are doing, you will probably crash.

Also another important issue in flying is having good vision for distance. If you wear glasses, make sure that your prescription is current, and your glasses are clean. Also wear good quality sunglasses. Long term exposure to the sun causes cataracts!

## What Does It Cost?

Since this is on the Internet and available to the world, I must qualify that everything discussed here is in Canadian dollars. For those outside Canada, one Canadian Dollar is about seventy cents in U.S. currency.

If you want to start from scratch, and you purchased everything new with the bare essentials, you can expect to spend between \$700 to \$1,000.

### Basic Flying Starters Kit would include...

- ARF (Almost Ready to Fly) An airplane that takes very minimal construction, high wing 40 size plane with a trike gear, (not a tail dragger) is the best to start with.
- A transmitter/receiver combination with 4 servos
- A 40 size engine and buy extra propellers.
- Misc. control rods, clevises, cyanoacrolate glue (industrial strength crazy glue), shrinkable covering, etc. (Note: some ARF's come with everything but the engine and the radio.)
- Misc. stuff like fuel pump, fuel, chicken stick, Nicad Glow Starter, flight box, etc.
- Optional but strongly Recommended - Expanded scale Volt Meter, (you'll see why later)

### You should have a basic set of tools like...



- Pliers - needle nose, box end
- Side cutters/End Cutters
- Small wrenches - metric and imperial
- Allen (hex) keys- metric and imperial
- Screw drivers - small to large - Slot & Phillips
- Utility knife, hobby knife
- Small files, one medium size file, sand paper
- Optional - Z bend pliers - these are great and will save you money (you'll see why later)
- Optional - [Hobby Drill](#) and bits, a must if your going to be in the hobby for a long time.
- Other power tools like a hobby band saw, drill press, and bench grinder are always excellent to have. Hey, this sounds like a Christmas, Birthday, or Fathers Day List. Leave this list around for someone to find!

It is really up to you how much you want to spend on tools, but the more you have, the easier it is to build and repair planes. After all, "repairs are not a matter of if, but a matter of when!"

## Where to Buy?

I am a strong believer in supporting your local hobby shops. It is so nice to be able to go purchase what you need when you need it. By not buying from them, they won't be around long, and then we are all up a creek. The owners of these small hobby shops have to eat like we do, so don't bleed them to death by shopping on price alone. Often the advise they give is worth a lot of money.

If you are out in the boonies, there are a lot of excellent Hobby Centres that sell over the Internet. See the [links page](#) on this site. Also check out the Magazines RC Modeller, Scale Modeller and MAAC magazine for advertisements.

Most local hobby shops that carry a substantial line of aircraft will give good advice on how to get started in the hobby. But if I were you, go to a club meeting first and ask to speak with either the Wings Director, or one of the instructors for some additional advice. Be informed about what it is that you are getting into, and what you are buying.

## Used Stuff

Now if you are strapped for cash, there are also some good used aircraft out there. In fact you can save 50 to 75% off the initial new set up cost. You can sometimes get real lucky, and come across a complete set up. It may be part of an estate sale, someone moving, or someone looking to sell what they have to move up in the hobby. My advice is, get someone who knows about the hobby, help you check it out first before you drop a dime.

Then JOIN A CLUB!

## Club Membership Fees

Now that you have invested money into the equipment, you may need some guidance in construction and on learning to fly. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO DO THIS ON YOUR OWN!**

**Join a club first.**

To join the Burlington Club with MAAC (the national insuring body), check out our membership page ([click here](#)). There are different rates for adults, seniors and juniors.



## Training

If you attempt to do this on your own, you probably will crash, possibly injuring yourself or someone else, and you will lose your investment of time and money. Your view toward the hobby will likely leave a bad taste in your mouth as well. A 5 pound airplane flying at 50 miles an hour in a dive, can kill someone. A propeller spinning at 12,000 RPM will easily remove a finger, or create a flesh wound that could cause someone to bleed to death. That is why you should never fly alone, even when you get your wings.



There are hundreds of years of experience in every club, and most members are willing to give free advice. Hang out at the flying field. Watch who are the fliers that demonstrate consistent skilled control of their planes. Watch who crashes a lot and who doesn't. Look at how well their planes are built. You can be the judge on who you want to get advice from. Some guys are great pilots but lousy builders, and vice-versa. There are many that are both good builders and fliers. Like every where else on this planet, there are those who speak like they know it all, and yet they can never prove it. If you want someone to take your investment up in the air, make sure you know who you are dealing with. Have them fly their plane first and show you that they are competent.

One of the issues that a lot in instructors glance over lightly is the **theory of flight**. This is the most important aspect of training. How can any student be a good pilot if they don't understand the basics? This should be a mandatory part of every wings program.

It is also strongly recommended that you use a buddy box system when training. This allow your instructor to take immediate control of your plane by releasing a kill switch on the radio he/she is holding. Our club has 2 Futaba buddy boxes and cords for use in the wings program. If you purchase just the cords, you can use another persons transmitter as the buddy box instead of buying a dedicated training controller. (dummy radio) Make sure that the make of Transmitters are the same and the cords are compatible. Also make sure that the control surfaces, directions and trims are set equal on both controllers before you fly.

Now, for the sake of the instructors, remember they are volunteering their time to teach you how to fly. Treat them with respect, and listen to what they are saying. You'd be surprised how much a bit of time over a cup of coffee will do after a training session. I call it my debriefing session. Most instructors take training very seriously. You should to!



Finally, you should know that there is a lot more to this hobby than what most people initially perceive it to be and I'm not talking about money. There is a great deal of appeal to the thought of flying your own plane freely around the sky. But you must earn that freedom by learning the technical aspects as well as developing an ability to control your plane in a safe and responsible manner. Well into their wings training program, too often I have heard students say "*I can't believe how much there is to know about this hobby*". Reality starts to set in as they realize, flying RC is not as simple as it looks. Even after one achieves their wings, I have seen too many inexperienced pilots rush out and purchase a low wing sport plane or war bird, thinking they have the ability to handle the plane. This is like taking a real pilot after getting his pilot's licence in a Cessna 150 and putting him into the cockpit of an F-15 fighter. You know what is going to happen.



Barry Armstrong Getting his Wings

If you want to have a lifetime of enjoyment from this hobby, my best recommendations are...

- take it slow,
- learn the technical basics,
- develop good eye hand co-ordination by playing video games or using a good flight simulator
- graduate from your high wing trainer only after you have mastered handling it well to a low wing sport trainer
- get plenty of stick time, the more you fly the better you get!
- read [Why RC Planes Crash!](#)
- and last but not not least, keep your head out of the clouds and your feet on the ground by being realistic.

I sincerely hope that you enjoyed this bit of advice on getting into the hobby. You will hear a lot more as time goes on. You will often hear 12 different ways on doing something if you ask 12 people. However, you will hear consistencies, and that is the truth to listen to. Now there is some real good advise.

All the best and Good Luck and don't forget to pass it on!

NOTE: p. 6 has no info relevant to this article, and is not included here.