



## So you want to become a big way skydiver?

Advice for those just starting out on the big way path.

If you are completely new to big ways it can be difficult to know where to start, what basic skills you need and how to progress safely.

As a general rule we recommend that big way beginners have at least 50 jumps post FS1, good tracking, confidence under canopy and consistently solid (even if slow) 4 way skills.

Once you are ready for the big way progression path consider the following:

### **Attend our Big Way Beginner events**

It's tough to get onto and stay on a big way if you've never done one before. That's why we created the Big Way Beginners event series.

At these events you start small, receive excellent coaching/assessment in a safe environment and watch your group sizes grow steadily as the event progresses. The result is the opportunity for you to build big way skills fast as well as meet part of the friendly family of big way jumpers in the UK.

This event works because we create a 50:50 ratio of low:high experience within groups. This gives your dives strength (something solid to build on) and makes the whole experience of slowly going larger, much safer. e.g starting with an 8 way where only 3 people are beginners.... then moving to a 16 way where only 6 of you are there for the first time is so much safer than a 16 way with 15 beginners! In addition to this we take complete focus off the grips by not judging your success by completions or number of points! Typically two of these events are run each year. Check our event calendar for details.

### **Go to more Boogies**

Our Big Way Beginner events are not your only option. Boogies in general tend to cater for multiple group levels (including beginners). The UK Langar Boogies for example are a good place to start, as are many low experience walk up dives.

Boogies that offer different group levels are generally a great place to progress. Different groups mean you can move up if you are doing well. Other events to consider are the multi level events run by Skydive Choreography as well as Skydive Spain and Empuriabrava Christmas Boogies.

### **Keep doing the smaller stuff**

There are walk-up load organisers scattered across the UK, not to mention people willing to jump with beginners. Get involved, but be careful not to go too big too soon. Beware those who claim to be load organisers but place you immediately on dives far bigger than you have ever attempted.

As a general rule, the less experienced you are the more at risk you are as groups get larger... however; the good news is that you don't have to be on a big way to learn big way skills.

Any FS that makes you work hard is good value as long as you have a solid person to work towards in the sky. You definitely don't need to be on a big way to practice falling relative to people you don't know!

It's good to jump with friends at the same level as you will gradually widen your awareness of others in the sky, but be sure to balance this with good early coaching and try to grab as many jumps as you can with people more experienced than you are – even if three of you get together and cover their slot.

**Golden rule: don't ever let the opportunity to practice in a safe, structured environment pass you by!**

## **Practice the basics**

You don't need to be in a big way to practice the skills you need. Large formations are like putting together a range of skills as if they were pieces of a jigsaw:

### **Here are some tips:**

- If you are jumping with friends (however few) try doing more unlinked exits – they make you work hard on approach skills and at least get you seeing some of the visuals.
- Do different exit slots – be comfortable presenting from a float exit as well as diving – it's all good practice.
- Every jumper who improves their referencing experiences a massive improvement in their overall skydiving performance. Every time you dirt dive a skydive (no matter what size), build referencing into your plan - just like you would for a 4 way. Think about simply looking to the opposite side of the formation before you pick up grips (on every point). It's a great habit to get into. Visualise what you should see on the way to altitude.
- Work on your tracking on every jump you do. Tracking is such an important skill on big ways and can be one that holds people back when they might otherwise be ready to go larger. Try tracking dives or specific coaching on this skill when you get the chance. Get used to seeing others tracking alongside you, try different body positions – copy their position (good and bad) - and see what happens.
- Invest in your canopy skills. The fastest way to get axed from a big way is if you are unsafe under canopy. Spend time learning about your canopy when your jump numbers are low and you'll still be talking about it when they're high! Skydive Choreography recommend the Safe Flight School basic course to anyone serious about being in a crowded sky – or in the sky at all for that matter! Replacing fear of your landings with respect for your canopy also frees your mind up to think about the skydive you are about to do, not whether you will survive after it.
- Finally, the tunnel is a great place to practice the basics for big ways too! Why not consider the Skydive Choreography tunnel programme/exercises. These are dedicated to developing large formation flying skills.

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