



So you've caught the big way bug!

Advice for those who have comfortably reached intermediate level and want to progress further.

Now is the time to start being really honest about what your big way aspirations are. It's like choosing a career in a way. You have to know what you want to do in order to work out what steps you need to take to get there. E.g. qualifications, practical experience, the right people to know for references and finally the contacts so you know when the perfect job comes up!

Here are some suggested goals and advice:

Simply want to be seen as a solid 'walk-up' big way jumper?

If you want to develop and maintain the skills to participate in end of day formation loads or big ways that mark milestone jumps for your friends, simply continue taking opportunities to join UK events, work on building core skills and stay current.

Consider intermediate skills progression events and upper intermediate challenge events in particular.

Attend beginner events!

That may sound odd, but there is no better place to push your limits than on an event where there is no pressure to dock!

- How do you know how fast you can dive until you go too fast?
- How can you learn how to recover from scenarios in the most efficient way if you never risk it enough to be caught out?
- How can you be 'current' dealing with the unexpected if you always know what to expect?

All of these skills are what build your reputation as a solid intermediate skydiver.

Want to get involved in more European events/big ways?

If you want to be part of good boogie load organising rather than always ending up in the lower level walk-up loads, the following extra advice will help.

- Try to get experience with different organisers and start to network with and contact the people who organise at some of the European events.
- Continue to jump with us and other UK organisers. This is where your references for these early overseas events are probably going to come from. You can get there without them but the journey may be much longer. Start building your Skydiving CV now (see pro forma on the website). Make note in particular of your largest formations, number of jumps in different group sizes, what exit and formation

positions you are best at, which organisers you have jumped with and which of them will act as referees.

- Use the Skydive Choreography self-assessment form to help you identify the specific skills you need to work on.
- Hunt down good coaches who care about your goals and want to help you progress.
- Seek intermediate events which focus on greater discipline and multiple point completion. E.g Club records, multipoint 16-20 way, intermediate/upper intermediate level weekend organising.
- Look for events/organisers that will teach you how to fly specific types of slots.

Events to consider

Consider events run by us at upper intermediate level, big way camps in Perris, the Swedish big way camp, Christmas boogies with good load organising like Empuria or Seville, SPACial invitationals or places like Zhills or Perris that offer year round DZ load organising.

Use the Skydive Choreography Big Way Beginner events to target your weaker areas, push your limits and build strength and confidence e.g. Take lead to the base and sweatshirts to the outside of a formation. Then try it the other way round!!! Perfect two or three exit slots at least.

Working towards your first 100+ way?

You are very unlikely to be able to 'walk up' to your first 100 way without following the expected stepping stones to some extent. This isn't because such events are exclusive or cliquey, it's because every organiser has a responsibility to keep their dives and events safe and deliver what they promise! The best way to do that is to only place people on them who they know well or have received good references for.

If you try to get on events with only your own opinion to back you will be far less likely to succeed in your goal.

The Perris big way camps in particular have been designed as an ideal stepping stone onto your first 100 way events. Prepare for these by attending Skydive Choreography big way skills and multi aircraft skills events, the Swedish Big way camp and other events where the focus is on developing your core multi aircraft formation skills.

Make organisers part of your journey

Whichever goal you are trying to achieve, an excellent approach is to contact the organisers for the event you aspire to be on, briefly explain what you hope to achieve and ask them who's references they will accept or what advice they can give (do remember to keep all of this short and sweet though).

This approach will engage the organiser in your progression goals from the start and they will be more likely to help you out and remember you in the future.

Use boogies to meet key organisers

Boogies that offer different group levels are a great place to get seen even if you can't get on the group you aspire to straight away. Talk to the organiser of the group you want to be part of, ask them to consider you or watch you on video. If you are flying well the likelihood is they will give you a chance. If not, they will remember you and you might get on the group next time (or at the next boogie they are going to).

Continue to 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:

- 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 land safely after it.
- Finally, the tunnel is a great place to practice big way skills too. Why not consider our tunnel programme/exercises. These are dedicated to developing large formation flying skills.

About references

If you plan to use an organiser as a referee, be sure to ask them first. Most organisers will tell you roughly what they will say about you and which events they will provide good references for. Remember that a referee will always be honest with another organiser. This means if their opinion is not as good as you think it is you could end up being remembered for all the wrong reasons. If it is better than you think though, they may suggest you push yourselves towards slightly more prestigious events than the ones you are aiming for! It's well worth checking either way.

Finally, choose the right canopy!

Think carefully about your canopy choices as you progress into the big way world.

Your new canopy may be ok for the 20-30 way events at a UK dropzone, but:

- Are you going to be comfortable landing it downwind? You may be faced with this scenario if for example the landing direction of an 80 way was set before you took to the skies and changed before you landed.
- What about landing it in turbulence, or at a high altitude - fast landing DZ like Eloy or Perris. Then add 100 other canopies – how do you feel then?

If you can't afford to own two canopies, err on the side of caution for the events you WANT to be part of in the future.

Caroline Hughes

caroline@skydivechoreography.com

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