

Foundations of Flight

Basic Back-Fly Position

Brought to you by Brianne Thompson of Axis Flight School at Skydive Arizona. Photos by Niklas Daniel.

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Purpose

- ▶ Good introduction to freeflying
- ▶ Increase your fall-rate range
- ▶ Maintain your fall rate if you lose stability during a freefly jump

Execution

After having performed a half-barrel roll to your back (see "Foundations of Flight—the Barrel Roll," April 2011 *Parachutist*), put yourself in the proper position, described below from feet to head:

Feet: Position your feet perpendicular to your body with your toes flexed toward your knees (dorsiflexed). Your heels should be below knee level. As you are learning this position, try to prevent your feet from touching or angling in on each other with the heels turned in, which can cause your lower body to wobble and turn.

Knees: Your knees should be above your hips and vertically aligned with them. If your knees are close to your chest, you will create drive in the direction of your feet; if your legs are straightening, you will create drive in the direction of your head. Control your fall rate by widening or closing your legs.

Hips: Keep your hips parallel to your shoulders. If they are not, your spine will bend and you'll no longer be in a neutral position.

Back: Your spine needs to be straight in order for you to be neutral. If you bend your spine side to side, you'll induce a turn.

Shoulders: Keep your shoulders relaxed, level with one another and parallel with your hips.

Chest: Tilt your ribcage back slightly (e.g., produce a "proud chest") to produce lift with your shoulder blades so you can relax your arms.

Head: To maintain lift from your upper back, allow your head to rest on the airflow by relaxing your neck.

Elbows: Keep your elbows above torso level. Just as when belly-flying, you want your torso to do most of the work so you no longer need your arms to fly.

Hands: You should be able to see the backs of your hands in front of you or at least in your peripheral vision. Place your hands higher than your head, and focus on feeling the wind on the back of your forearms. Do not turn your palms into the wind, as this will contort your elbows and shoulders.

Helpful Hints

▶ It is essential to maintain firm input with your legs (i.e., fly with "strong legs") to have a solid, neutral back-fly position. By pushing your heels into the wind, you will take greater control of your lower body and prevent any unwanted bobbing or turning.

▶ Many jumpers make the mistake of lifting their chins and straining at the neck in an attempt to look at their legs (or in the tunnel, to protect their heads). However, this causes them to lose a lot of lift on their upper backs, which results in drive in the direction of their heads. To counter this drive, they then "hang" from their arms by rotating their palms down toward the airflow. This may stop the unwanted motion, but it is extremely uncomfortable and hinders mobility. If you keep your head back and relaxed enough to rest on the airflow, you'll avoid this common mistake. ♦



To view the back-fly instructional video, use the QR code to the left or visit the Foundations of Flight page at parachutistonline.com.