

FOUNDATIONS OF FLIGHT | RANGE-OF-MOTION DRILLS FOR BELLY FLYERS



Brought to you by Niklas Daniel and Brianne Thompson of AXIS Flight School at Skydive Arizona in Eloy. Photos by Niklas Daniel. Information about AXIS' coaching and instructional services is available at axisflightschool.com.

Once you are proficient at flying a solid, neutral belly position, you will eventually want to connect with your friends. But before attempting to take docks with other jumpers, challenge your own stability by performing range-of-motion drills. These drills will take you out of your comfort zone and force you to adapt your flying style in order to keep your body under control. This, in turn, will strengthen your body-flight skills through enhanced air awareness and balance.

Purpose

- ▶ To become more stable and mobile while belly flying.
- ▶ To gain the skill set necessary to begin flying with the entire body rather than just the arms.
- ▶ To gain the skill set necessary to take grips on other jumpers and to be able to rapidly recover from instability, whether self induced or caused by others, even on the hill.
- ▶ To counteract unwanted movement during maneuvers.

Prerequisites

- ▶ Proficiency in the belly neutral position (see "Foundations of Flight—Belly Neutral Position," February 2014 *Parachutist*).
- ▶ Ability to perform forward and backward movement, fall-rate changes, and left and right turns and side slides. (You do not have to be able to execute these perfectly.)

Execution

First, touch various parts of your body with one hand only. In order of difficulty, try touching your:

- Other hand
- Waist
- Knees

Once you're proficient at performing these skills with one hand, perform them using both hands at the same time. Once that is easy, attempt to touch the same points



across your centerline (e.g., right hand on left knee). If you can execute these moves, you're likely to be successful when you start trying to take grips.

Treat the exercises pictured like games rather than rigid drills. Play, have fun and explore where the end ranges of your mobility and balance are. Maintain fall rate and heading while:

1. Moving your arms in front of your body and twiddling your thumbs. (Keep your elbows slightly in front of and below your shoulders.
2. Flying with one hand at your side and compensating with the other arm.
3. Moving both arms out to your sides and compensating by bending your knees slightly.
4. Dropping one knee (to learn how to fly with your legs).



Helpful Hints:

When you begin docking on another jumper, you should not rely on that person to maintain stability (see "Foundations of Flight—Taking Grips," October 2012 *Parachutist*). Therefore, your goal in these exercises is to maintain stability, heading and a consistent fall rate while solo, which will translate to reliable performance on group jumps.