

FOUNDATIONS OF FLIGHT | 2-WAY PHALANX TO OPEN ACCORDION DRILL

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



Two-way formation skydiving drills such as this one are beneficial because both flyers get an opportunity to work on their personal skills. The ability to fly relative to another jumper is essential for all formation skydiving disciplines, no matter the size of the formation. Slot flying is an essential skill whether you are practicing for an FS competition, are an aspiring AFF instructor or camera flyer, or just want to improve your fun jumps. This drill allows participants to explore the phalanx and open accordion formations.

Formation Descriptions

The Phalanx

The flyers should share the same heading while flying with their spines parallel. Flyer A is at the front of the phalanx, and Flyer B is at the back of the phalanx. Flyer B has a left grip on Flyer A's right leg. (Photo 1)

The Open Accordion

Once again, both flyers' spines are parallel; however, they now have opposite headings (facing each other). The jumpers take right-to-right or left-to-left arm grips. (Photo 3)

Execution

Once the flyers build the phalanx, Flyer B flies to a right-handed open accordion on Flyer A.

Flyer B side-slides to her right while moving forward to induce a slight carve, ending 180 degrees from the original heading. Flyer B should see a side-body picture on Flyer A on the way there. The goal of this inter picture is to keep the flyers in close proximity to one another.

Flyer B then side-slides to a left-handed open accordion. She then continues to side-slide while simultaneously extending her legs to go forward and carve to build the second phalanx. Meanwhile, Flyer A works on flying a strong base by maintaining the same heading and fall rate while not moving or translating.

Once the flyers complete the sequence, they can switch roles by executing solo 180-degree turns to reset the drill. Or if the flyers want to maintain their roles on this jump, Flyer B can switch the direction she flies during the drill.

Helpful Hints

Maintain eye contact and good communication throughout the moves to assist with proximity and slot flying. Avoid looking at the grips directly; use your peripheral vision. This is a drill to work on movement and stopping in order to improve the individuals' slot-flying skills. Stop and fly each slot or formation before taking a grip.

Flyer B, the dynamic flyer, should concentrate on precise starts and stops with level control and light grips. Flyer A, the stationary flyer, should maintain a constant fall rate with precise heading control and uninterrupted communication. The phalanx is the more challenging formation when it comes to maintaining heading and communication with your partner.

The authors intend this article to be an educational guideline. It is not a substitute for professional instruction.