



43 Basic Head-Down

Pre-requisites

Reaching the point where the instructor can release you while you are flying head-down is one of the ultimate flying accomplishments. This is the true test of your flying stability in one of the most difficult orientations.

Prior to learning Basic Head Down and allowing the opportunity for your tunnel instructor to release you, you will need to demonstrate that you can consistently set yourself up on the net head-down, be under control while releasing the net to a neutral position, raise up off the net, and safely “bail” to a sit-flying position without losing control at any point.

Objectives

The primary objective is to be able to safely and successfully set yourself up on the net head-down, release and lift off the net, fly in a neutral head-down body position with no hands-on assistance from the tunnel instructor, and then successfully “bail” to a neutral sit-flying position without moving from the center of the tunnel.

Preparation

Similar to when you were learning supported head-down, you will enter the tunnel and set yourself up in the center, holding the net while you rotate to a head-down orientation. Once you are stable head-down, you will go through the release process as you have already practiced and then rise off the net following direction from your coach.

This process for the tunnel instructor is staged. It is likely that your instructor will assist you with a single grip and then release you once you are stable off the net. After some repetition of this, your instructor will then move to having you run through the entire process completely released.

Technique and Drills

Keep these key elements in mind when learning this skill:

- Position yourself in the center of the tunnel the same as for supported head-down
- Once you are given the signal from the tunnel instructor, release the net
- When the wind speed and your position allow, your instructor will give another signal for you to begin to rise up off the net
- Similar to when you were flying off the net with an assisted grip from the instructor, increase your surface area at your lower body first and then your upper body to create the lift necessary
- Continuously manage your body position to maintain a static position in the center of the tunnel
- You will want to aim to fly no higher than approximately three feet above the net
- If for some reason you feel any instability, too much unwanted drive, or the instructor directs you to – “bail” to a neutral sit-fly position by performing the head-to-sit front flip transition



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Post-Flight Questions / Suggestions

- How did your performance match the initial objectives?
- Were you able to maintain stability throughout the entire process from being on the net to flying off the net in a neutral position?
- Were you able to “bail” to your sit-flying position without moving from the center of the tunnel?
- What techniques did you feel comfortable with and what can you improve on during the next session?
- How long were you able to fly off the net? What can we change to help assist in making each flight longer?

What Skill is Next?

Once you have successfully completed the basic head-down check box, you will have truly passed an amazing benchmark in your flying career. Congratulations! From here there are many doors that will open for you with regard to what you can accomplish with your flying. Next, your coach will start working with you on head-down flying movements (turning, forward/backward and others) and also on the sit-to-head transitions.

